

SKAVENBLIGHT

Issue 5

gazette



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Skavenblight Gazette

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Voices from the dark

Children of the dark, welcome to another issue of the Skavenblight Gazette.

It has been a bit of an uphill battle to get issue 5 to its finished state, but I'm sure you'll agree, it was worth it. There were some problems that reared their heads during the production, but we have sent out Clan Eshin adepts to deal with them, so problems should be no more. Expect more Skaveny goodness this year!

A lot has happened in the world of Warhammer since we last emerged from our burrows. Daemons, Dark Elves and The Warriors of Chaos have taken to the field of battle with brand new books, and soon the hated Lizardmen will join them.

The Skaven book isn't far off, with scores rumours and untruths flying around. The adepts must have been doubly busy. Misinformation doesn't spread itself!

For me, this year is looking extra Skaven filled. Not only is the new army book close, and the gazette is always in a state of mutation, but I have started to rebuild my Skaven army from the ground up. For the last couple of weeks I have been stripping paint from my old army, ready to turn it into a greater, grander Skaven horde.

The man-things won't know what hit them!

Of special note is this issue's cover, a sight never before seen. The legendary Clan Skryre Warprail!

I'll let the artist tell you a little more about it.

"I started out with several pages of various sketches trying to get the whole style of the thing into my head. It's tough, because you're talking something that is supposed to travel at high speeds without falling apart or exploding, but you're also talking about Skaven tech.

First off, I didn't want to just have it look like a standard, real world train. At first I was just shooting for a kind of inverted train on a rail, but as I developed that idea it became clear that it was resembling a boat. This would almost make sense, as boats are common enough in the Warhammer world, and for fill a similar transport function as the Warprail. However it had to look ramshackle, but at least solid enough to move without losing too many important components. I imagine the engineers and crew inside are fighting a constant battle to keep it moving, so I tried to make the hull patched together from mismatched sizes of coppery plates, and the prow reinforced in the case of anything blocking it's path.

I'm not entirely sure what the two huge pipes running outside the hull are but they looked pretty cool when I started toying with them, so they stayed. The big discharge rod sticking out the front, I imagined that device would work to discharge excess energy buildup as the warprail travels down its track. The rod would constantly be letting off snaps of warp lightning, doubling up as a handy path cleaner."

Thanks for downloading and continuing to support the Skavenblight Gazette.

For the Horned Rat!

Clanlord Trask
Sub Editor, Skavenblight Gazette

Ask Seer Squeek

by Seer Squeek

Skavenblight Gazette's very own Agony Uncle answering your questions

Dear Emissary of the Horned Rat, the Great Seer Squeek,

I'm new to the skaven and have heard a few tidbits of information on what I believe is called the doom wheel. I would be delighted if your excellency would enlighten me as to what exactly this "Doom Wheel" is and refer me as to where I may find the rules to this, what I would assume to be, devious device.

All Old World shall be consumed to satiate my hunger.

Dark Lord Nihilus

Dear Hungry Rat,

The Doomwheel is the Skaven equivalent of what the man-things would like to call 'working out'. Its purpose is to make sure that Skaven that are rather out of shape, or whom need to lose some pounds (such as yourself, if I have to believe the magnitude of your eating behaviour from your letter), are given the chance to do so by running... an awful lot.

A recently opened training facility by clan Skryre has one of these Doomwheels and after a short inquiry, they assured me that anyone who stepped out of the machine was fitter then before and never needed (though that could have been wanted, I'm not sure on that one) to use it again.

**Prefers a good book,
Seer Squeek**

Honorable Chosen of the Horned One,

My warlord has commanded me to purchase some of those fancy Clan Skryre weapon teams to accompany our clanrats to battle. I noticed however, that they charge slightly more warptokens for their warfire thrower than for a ratling gun. I find this strange as I often hear from fellow chieftains that ratling guns are more effective on the battlefield. Now I ask for your worshipfulness to lend me some advice. Who's trying to fool me here? Clan Skryre or my fellow chieftains?

Chieftain Stikkit of Clan Rikket

Dear Rebellious Rodent,

Assuming that the Warlord of your clan has left the option open as to what weapon teams are supposed to be hired, and this not being an attempt to question his motives (you might never know with Chieftains these days), there are several directions from which to approach your question.

Of course, the matter that will affect you the most is the effectiveness of the weapon on the field, and in that regard, the Ratling Gun seems to have the upper hand due to the more basic build of the weapon itself. Although I'm not into the analysis of the weaponry of clan Skryre, I believe the Ratling Gun fires its ammunition based on pressure, whereas the Warfire Throwers fire a liquid fuel, needing a mechanism that is a lot more intricate as that of the Ratling Gun.

Aside from the actual production of the ammunition, the difference in mechanism requires more rat-hours to be spent on the production of the Warfire Throwers, compared to the Ratling Guns. That in itself is one of the reasons that clan Skryre charges more for the Warfire Throwers than for the Ratling Guns.

My theory is that the testing of the Warfire Throwers just lets clan Skryre burn far quicker through their reserves of Slaves, causing the difference in the hiring price.

As to what weapon is more effective, I'd have to go with neither and stick to sheer power and raw might of the Grey Seer. Aside from the leadership bonus we bring to the battlefield, we at least make sure there are no Chieftains questioning our orders behind our backs.

**I know all,
Seer Squeek**



O Venerated Seer-Brother,

In my experiences with the man-things on the surface world, I have seen that some of the cold, dead ones in the dark Sylvanian woods and the smaller, weaker-looking clawed warp-things, seem to exhibit some forms of mental control over the other man-things, even those that are larger and stronger man-things. They appear to be able to get them to let their guard down, and often use it to their advantage.

What is it that makes the man-things act so? Neither the dead ones nor the warp-things have the appropriate fur or scent for true beauty, so it cannot be that...

And if we do find out what it is, do you feel that we, Skaven, can utilize something similar to our advantage when facing the man-things? After all, if the dead-things can do it with their limited intelligence, we Skaven should be infinitely better at it, yes-yes?

It would be worth sending slaves to the Moulder pens to try, if we could isolate those traits, yes-yes?

I await your wisdom, Seer-Brother.
Respectfully,
Seer SniquerSnaq of Clan Rhodentia

Dear Surface Dweller,

Even though my knowledge of the Vampires is scarce, the few encounters I've had with them assure me that the mental control, as you put it, could be better described as striking fear in their opponents. Then again, I wouldn't define beauty as a two hundred and fifty pound vicious predator with claws the size of my arm intent on feasting on your entrails and wading through your blood.

Their appearance works similar to ones approach to mental control, as the victims are paralyzed by fear, pinning them on the spot. Still, that is more a flaw of the Man-things.

I agree that harnessing the 'aura' causing their victims to be paralyzed by fear would benefit the Skaven race. However, that we'd let clan Moulder isolate those traits is a bad idea. I don't even to begin imagining the cost of employing such creatures, seeing the number of warp tokens they ask for their overrated Rat Ogre packs these days.

**Sleeping with the light on,
Seer Squeek**

Dear Seer Squeek,

I am very paranoid when it comes to protecting my heroes and lords and, as such, I like those lovely ward saves.

Out of personal experience, which do you think is better: The Foul Pendant or warpstone Amulet?

The debate can go every other way, seeing as there is a chance I could be throwing away major victory points.

An Uncertain Warlord

Dear Rat in Doubt,

Despite understanding a fondness of ward saves (something that comes with working for several generations by now from within the protective aura of my Screaming Bell), I have to say that there are various forms of 'protection' for the characters within your army.

One of the ways to have your characters guard themselves better is to lead the units they're attached to from the rear and start leapfrogging back and forth during your battles, to decrease the number of enemy troops in combat, but stay out of reach from enemy characters that could turn them into a kebab dish. (For a more clarified way of performing this attack I suggest 'Peek-A-Boo for Dummies', which should be available in the better scroll stores in Skavenblight).

Another way to increase the protection would be to invest in equipment from clan Skryre, increasing the range of your attacks. Most of the Grey Seers that have worked from the higher vantage point of a Screaming Bell will likely agree: The less enemies that reach you, the easier you (or better said, the minions pushing the Screaming Bell, of course) dispatch them in combat.

As to the debate whether the Foul Pendant or the Warpstone Amulet is more cost efficient, I personally have to say that both have their uses. Where the first is more reliant, the second tends to 'bounce off' more hits... Just remember, if one of the two fails, it's quite likely the Horned One wants a chat with you regarding your choice of equipment.

One Skalm a day keeps instant death away,

Seer Squeek

Dear Seer Squeek,

What PG rating is the 'Hand weapon grants a save'-rule?

Austorm

Dear Odd Question-Asker,

If you need the Skaven next to you to hold your hand in battle, while watching the fully armoured enemy marching into your direction, it will probably take me more time to grab the scrolls and look it up, then for them to really show it.

'The Workings of the Food Chain', next week in cinemas,

Seer Squeek

UnderEmpire Get Together 2008

Once again, welcome to a report of an UnderEmpire Get Together event. First up is a short introduction for those readers who might not be entirely up to speed with the why's and how's of this event.



The UEGT is an event that has previously been held in Antwerp (Belgium), where 9 members from the UnderEmpire.net forum (you know, the one that spawned this magazine) decided it would be fun to meet up in 'real life' and have some games. As could be read in Issue 3 of the Skavenblight Gazette, the event turned out to be a huge success and all participants were astounded and surprised at how much fun it had actually been to meet up and game with their online compadres. Therefore, it probably won't come as much of a surprise that, shortly afterwards, plans were being made to try and get together again. This time however, we wanted more attending members, more games and an even more memorable location.

“Shoddy bell mechanics.”

A year later, the UEGT has hit Nottingham. Warhammer World to be precise and with a perfect 13 attendees, it looked to become an even bigger hit than its predecessor. The location of Warhammer World had been a first choice from the start, since it enabled more people from the UK to come over and the event would be held straight at the “heart of the hobby”. Luckily, Brian Anderson (content manager at Warhammer World) agreed with us and we were able to reserve a big line of tables there, just to ourselves and for absolutely no money at all! With a local youth hostel nearby (The Igloo) to accommodate the large group of travellers, we decided that we'd easily be able to fit in five days of gaming. Four days for a tournament and 1 day for a giant megabattle.

In this article I'll give you all a few glances on what it was like to meet up with 12 strangers from the web and face each other during 5 days of all-out Skaven mayhem.

Travelling and Meeting Up

As you now know, this year's UEGT was to be held in Warhammer World, which happens to be in Nottingham, UK. Being Dutch, it took this reporter quite some effort and planning to be able to arrange (not to mention afford!) the trip from Eindhoven to Nottingham and back again. Taking along two other Dutch UE.net members (Skaven Lord Vinshqueek and EvilClown) at least helped to make the 8 hours of train-rides and station-waits somewhat bearable. Though to say that I was relieved to have arrived at Nottingham train station safely would be an understatement!

There to welcome us were Underlord Burrows (the most local member), Warlock Rageaganish (a Canadian, flown in all the way from Canada earlier that day), Warpsmith (all the way from Sweden) and Chieftain Cazgar and Glod-Unbaraki (both from other places in England).



Following Burrows on a 'short' walk through the city, we were taken to the youth hostel where we met up with the other members: Scarfester (co-organizer for the event), Thraskittar (another Canadian), Warlord Stinkhair (another Brit) and Akai-Chan (a UE.net regular).

With the line-up complete (and the beds claimed), the gang was set to be driven over to Underlord Burrows' parents' house where we were all welcomed and offered a traditional British BBQ dinner, where all the meat is barbequed, but eaten inside due to the rainy weather. Besides the great food, we all had a great time getting to know each other and drawing names out of a hat (a pirate hat!) for who would be facing whom during the first day of tournament battles. Afterwards, we all went back to the hostel and played some online games on Stinky's laptop until it was bedtime.

“Burrows was kicking my ass... softly.”

Warhammer World and The UnderEmpire Grand Tournament

Getting to Warhammer World by cars (provided by Scarfester, Glod and Thrask's dad) proved quite a challenge the first time we went, seeing as Glod (in the leading car) took a wrong turn somewhere and was forced to take a lengthy detour. We still managed to get there in the end though and all of us felt well rewarded for our travels as soon as we entered the main hall. Upon arrival, everyone took a few minutes to see the sights and check out the place and all the Warhammery goodness it contained. A few minutes wasn't enough however, but confident that we'd have plenty of time to look around at other times during the GT, we started gaming straight away.

The tournament was going to be 8 rounds of 5, 2000 points, 'pitched battle' matches. Having 11 players, there was going to be one at least person sitting out each round, with 3 people sitting out in the last round. This setup would allow as many people to play as possible, while keeping things (relatively) easy to work out for the judges. In order to ensure a certain Skaven element remained in the tourney set up, the judges (Scarfester and Bodacious) would be participating in the tourney themselves as well.

The system used to calculate the army scores however, was pretty much as fair as it gets. Each player was given an Army Score Form which they could use to rate elements such as the number of painted models, the quality of the painting and the balance of the list for each of their fellow players. These scores would later be added up and averaged out so that everyone would end up with an army score that reflected the combined opinions of their peers.

During the set-up for Round 1 most of us were already running around to get a good look at everyone's force and grade them sternly on our forms. Once everyone had set up and the rest of us were done taking pictures, Round 1 could truly begin.

After Round 1 followed the inevitable Round 2 during which your reporter (due to an unfortunate pirate hat draw) had to sit out. Luckily, sitting out a round at the GT didn't prove to be that much of a bummer, and actually turned out to be the perfect time to do some window shopping in the Warhammer World store, have a peek in the Warhammer Museum and help out on some actual rule-judging activities. Once that was done, everyone rounded up for some burgers at Bugman's and a late Round 3.



Gaming on for another 4 days (3 tourney days and a megabattle in between) was a complete success. Tempted as I am to give a blow-by-blow analysis of the week (you can check the UEGT forum at UnderEmpire.net for that!) I'll spare the readers these details and simply say that the rest of the week went by in a flash. The tourney battles followed each other in rapid succession and none of us (especially not the organizers) really had any time to be bored. When not pre-occupied with trying to avoid getting massacred by tourney competition, most of us took the time off to lounge around Warhammer World and feast our eyes on the many cool Warhammer things on display. On the nights we couldn't spend gaming in the 'World we went back to the hostel and infested the basement for games of pool, Thud (Discworld boardgame that Glod brought), various games on Stinky's laptop and BloodBow!

“Misfire every turn, magic does nothing, basically lkit's day off!”

Tournament Conclusion

Eventually, all good things must come to an end and the UEGT is no exception. After some complicated calculations, Scarfester and myself were finally ready to announce the tournament results. Mind you, with 11 people playing 7 battles each as well as calculating average painting points from those players over 5 categories, this wasn't an easy task. Luckily, the many hours of preparation and tweaking paid off and we were left with clear winners for the 5 available awards.

The award for Best Army went to Glod-Unbaraki. As can undoubtedly be seen in pictures accompanying this report, Glod brought along an exceptionally characterful army that was chock-full of cool conversions and evocative painting. I'd recommend anyone to check out some of the pictures on UnderEmpire of this unique force.

For Last Place, we ended up with none other than myself. Yes, I am ashamed to admit that my army was completely overpowered by almost all of the other lists out there. Even though Glod gave me a scare by losing his match against me, his efforts to oust me from my place in the rear were nullified by the last three bloodbaths that inevitably followed.

A word of advice: If you plan on winning in a Skaven VS Skaven game, take at least some magic and shooting.

Thraskittar ended up at Third Place. He had brought a Bubonic Court list from the Lustria book which did exceptionally well against the majority of his opponents. The sheer number of frenzied troops (that don't run from shooting or magic) and hard-hitting Censer Bearers proved too much for most to handle and definitely earned their place in the top 3.

Second Place was the army of Underlord Burrows. Burrows chose to go with a very symmetrical and balanced list that focused on lots of magic by a Grey Seer and two Warlocks coupled with the shooting support of a fair bunch of Weapon Teams and the close combat prowess of two Plague Monk units and their Censer Bearers. Along with the large number of sacrificial Clanrat and Slave bodies that made up the core of the army, and the tactical mind to take advantage of them, Burrows was definitely one tough nut to crack and his second place was well deserved.



Now, this is something you might have seen coming from the comments earlier, but yes, Scarfester ended up first. I'm still going over the tournament records as I type, since the results must have been tampered with somewhere! In all honesty though, Scarfester played one heck of a tournament. Taking his time for tactics and fielding a force much like the one Burrows used proved the winning combination this time around. Despite the heavy number of miscasts suffered by his Grey Seer, the forces of Clan Vexscar persevered and pulled out with solid results at almost each engagement. The addition of the army points for a nicely executed and coherent paint-job ensured the victory to be complete.

The awards consisted of some plague monks converted and painted by myself, as well as framed certificates to make it all seem a little more official. Everyone who didn't get a prize got to take home a prizemonk anyway, since more were made and painted up with 'UEGT' and '2008' to make for some nice memorabilia.

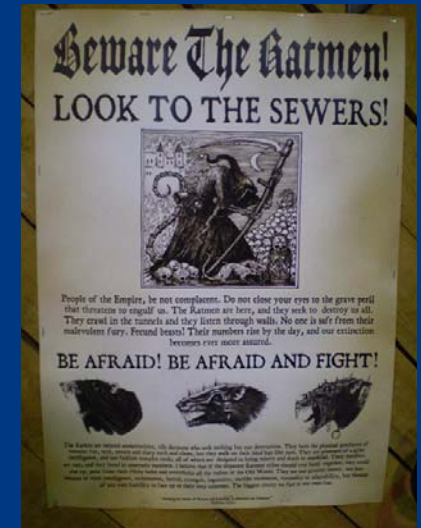
“Go! Go!
Speedhammer!”

Parting Ways

After the tournament was finished, the UEGT was almost near conclusion. Spending the last day on a trip through the city, the gang finished off with a few beers, games and music at the hostel. Everyone went to bed knackered after such an intense week, while knowing that the next morning was going to be the last day of the UEGT.

And indeed, the last morning only left room for some short goodbyes, as most of us had to leave for some early trains/planes in order to get back home in time. At such a time it's only possible for a co-organizer to bask for a while in the afterglow of a successfully run event. Like last year, it was astonishing how well everyone had gotten along with each other, and how a bunch of random strangers from the internet can travel across borders and find so much in common with one another.

Finally though, with the sappiness out of the way, I was at last on my way home on the train. Because, as awesome as the week had been, getting a chance to kick back and use one's own language (not to mention doing so on topics that do not revolve entirely around man-sized rodents) is a gift to be relished... until the next UEGT, that is!



Griggle Rustplate, Death From Afar

By Clanlord Trask

Legends of the UnderEmpire

In the UnderEmpire, death can come from many quarters. Cave-ins, treachery and the horrors of the dark are but a few of the many ways a Skaven can meet his end. But at least you can see those coming.

Griggle Rustplate literally came out of nowhere. Obviously an Engineer of Clan Skryre, he is now known as one of the deadliest Skaven in the UnderEmpire. He is not strong, fast, tough or possessing any of the other physical traits generally associated with Skaven success, yet he does have a major advantage over most. He has in his possession a highly modified Jezzail and aiming rig, allowing him to make pin-point and fatal shots.

Piercer, as it is otherwise known, is a marvel of modern warpstone based technology. It is in fact a standard Jezzail design, augmented with a backpack mounted warpstone generator and a telescopic, warpstone crystal display head piece. Since it is based on existing Jezzail technology, it is an extremely reliable and deadly piece of machinery.

There is some contention as to the origin of Piercer, though. While Griggle claims to have built it himself, some other Warlock Engineers point to peculiar oddities on the mechanism. Certain workings of the rig display symbols of unknown origin, the backpack power source runs on a strange hybrid of warpstone and an unknown substance, and the whole thing seems much lighter than a regular jezzail.

Some speculate dwarf or human involvement, though collaborating with other races on such a deadly device is extremely rare. Other whisper of technology stolen from something deeper and darker, but such claims are unsubstantiated.



So far Griggle has refused to share Piercer's design with anyone else, much to the ire of the rest of Clan Skryre. Many insist this is in an effort to retain his monopoly, while Griggle maintains that it is because of the rare nature of the materials needed to make Piercer. This, coupled with the specialist skills and techniques needed to construct a working rig, makes mass production not a viable option.

Either way, with this device, Griggle has found employ as a marksman and sniper. Often contracted to take out rival Warlords, usurpers and enemy commanders, nowhere and no-one is safe from Griggle. Piercer allows him to target even the tiniest gap in a suit of armour from an impossible range.

Griggle's success has come with a price, though. His foray into the assassination game has raised the ire of Clan Eshin, who see him and his device as a threat to their power base. If Piercer could be mass produced somehow, then they would become obsolete, and the clans influence would quickly slip away.

The adepts routinely go out of their way to discredit Griggle, or make him look bad, in the vain hope that eroding his reputation will cause his downfall. There have been many attempts on Griggle's life by Clan Eshin, and he bears the scars of many close scrapes. But somehow Griggle always survives, and he continues to be a thorn in the paw of Clan Eshin.

What follows are some guideline rules for including Griggle in your games of Warhammer. It shouldn't be too hard to adapt these rules to other settings that Griggle would be likely to appear in, such as Mordheim or Warhammer Quest. These rules are not official.

Griggle Rustplate

160 points

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	LD
5	3	5	3	3	2	3	2	8

Weapons: Griggle is armed with a hand weapon and Piercer.

Armour: Griggle wears light armour.

Griggle can be fielded as either a single character, or in a unit of Jezzails.

Special Rules:

Piercer

Piercer has a range of 64". Any hit by Piercer automatically wounds, doing D3 damage with no armour saves. Ward saves and Regeneration can be used as normal. If you roll a 1 to hit, Piercer has jammed, and Griggle has to spend a turn fixing it. Griggle cannot do anything next turn as he fixes Piercer, and loses any Patience bonuses accrued.

Patience

Griggle can choose not to do anything during the turn while he steadies his shot. This means that, in the next turn when he fires, he may ignore all modifiers to hit. For example, a single character in a wood, at long range, would be hit on Griggle's standard roll. The long range and the woods have no effect.

Perception

Griggle can pick Characters and Champions out of units, ignoring the normal targeting rules.

Power-struggle

At the beginning of each turn, make a LD test for each Clan Eshin unit within 12" of Griggle, or the unit he is in. If they fail, they can do nothing that turn as they taunt and belittle Griggle. Griggle also loses any Patience bonuses he may have gained as he retaliates back.

AVAST!
ON THE PORT BOW,
THERE BE SKAVEN!

The creak of timbers, the grinding of the warp reactors, the mournful tolling of the bell, the smell of salt spray... salt spray?

What? Get my fur wet? Why would any sane Skaven do that? >>

Warpfire and Sea Salt

by Zak



Well they probably wouldn't, but that doesn't stop the mad members of Clan Skryre creating all sorts of contraptions to further the spread of the Skaven via the sea.

When I mention Man o'War to all but the older sea dogs I tend to get a blank look as many people have not heard of this great game. So I've written this article to help fill that gap. We also briefly look specifically at the Skaven Fleet within the game, as its my favourite one to play.

What is Man O'War?

To quote from the box and www.boardgamegeek.com

"Man O'War is the game of 'Raging Sea Battles' in the Warhammer World. As an Admiral of an ocean-going war fleet you must command your ships, squadrons of Ships of the Line and heavily armored Men O' War, in the battle for supremacy of the high seas."

The main box contains rules for the Bretonnian, High Elf, Dark Elf, Dwarf, Empire and Orc fleets.

What are the mechanics?

You choose a fleet and its constituent ships from a list, as with most Games Workshop games. Ships are either Men o'War (single large ships), independents (smaller single ships) or Ships of the Line (squadrons of 3 ships). Each ship corresponds with a template, to allow recording of damage, numbers of crew on board and special bonus features.

Each turn initiative is rolled (which can alter the direction of the wind, which in turn can have an effect on the movement capabilities of fleets with sails) and then play commences with a magic phase.

Players then alternate between each phase of Movement and Combat, each choosing a single Man O' War or squadron and then conducting its movement and making any attacks possible before passing the turn sequence back to their opponent, until all ships / squadrons have had a turn. An end phase then occurs for ship scuttling, fires spreading and other such effect resolutions.

Scenarios are provided in the rules or players can run a straight forward 'pitched battle'. Each ship has a set number of battle honours which are awarded to the opponent if sunk and these are totaled to work out the victory points.

Are there any expansion rules?

There were two separate expansions to the main game. The first was Plaguefleet which added the Chaos fleets, the Skaven and Chaos Dwarfs.

The second expansion Sea of Blood mainly introduced new rules for Airpower, Sea Monsters & Beasts and Allies. New ships for the Dwarfs and Imperial fleets and an entire Norse fleet were also added..

Citadel Journals also included rules for Undead Fleets and some different magic systems. There have been several fan created fleets including a Lizardman fleet and a Goblin fleet.



How long does a game take?

Well, the average game tends to be 1000 points per side, which equates to about 6 or 7 Men o'war / Ship Of the Line (SOL) squadrons and maybe a wizard. This usually takes about 2 hours to set up and play.

Why Skaven?

The Skaven fleet appealed to me due to its weirdness, randomness and quite scarily destructive (often to itself) potential. They also tend to outnumber the enemy, which allows a tactical advantage (more squadrons to move after the enemy has moved all his ships) as well as a psychological one.

Skaven also do not have fixed crew for their vessels, unlike every other race where each vessel comes with a fixed compliment of crew. Instead they get a set of counters representing the Slaves, Clan Rats and Stormvermin and may assign them to squadrons as they see fit. This can allow Skaven players to create a few strong boarding vessels at the expense of leaving a weak crew on the other ships.

The Skaven are also not reliant on the winds, as they do not have sails, just huge paddlewheels powered by warp generators or slaves. So your plans tend not to be scuppered by the wind changing direction and causing your fleet to come to a halt.

What's in a Skaven fleet?

There are three ship types – the Doombringer (MOW type), Deathburner squadrons (SOL) and WarpRaider squadrons (SOL).

The Doombringer is a huge platform with a Screaming Bell mounted on it. Each turn the bell is rung another dice is rolled, and the greater the potential for more damage to those within range of the bell. This does increase the chance that the bell will break, and leave you with a really large boarding raft.

Deathburners – the most reliable of the ships, this has a huge censer hanging from the front which releases a poisonous cloud that kills enemy crew. It can also be used as a giant mace to hit enemy vessels with.

War Raiders – potentially fast and dangerous, these warp powered vessels get a random distance of movement. Their offensive weapon is a very nasty short range flamethrower attack, which quite often causes the warraider to explode whilst delivering flaming destruction to the target vessel.

In terms of magic, Skaven can have a Grey Seer as part of their crew. These can munch Warpstone to cast some of the most powerful magic in the game, but beware, it can cause them to be sucked into the warp!

Assassins and Rat Ogres can also be purchased to bulk up the crew of some vessels.

What fleet composition do you use?

I tend to play games without wizards, so my 1000 point fleet is a Doombringer, three squadrons of Deathburners and four squadrons of Warp Raiders. This leaves me with 50 points for some Chaos reward cards, or a Kraken sea monster.

The Bell tends to go in the middle and then plod steadily towards the opposition. As each turn passes the potential damage of the bell attack increases, so it's a good idea to start heading for the greatest concentration of enemy, ringing the bell as hard as you can and praying to the Horned Rat that it doesn't break. It can be devastating when it works well, or it can become an expensive raft (although still very good for boarding actions usually due to a decent size crew being stationed on it).



Warp Raiders are sent speeding towards the enemy (or dawdling in clusters as their engines fail to work) to send them to the depths in a fiery blast (usually accompanied by the Warp Raider itself as it detonates under the intense warp pressures).

Deathburners are then used to pick off enemy crew from the often blazing remnants of the Warp Raiders assault, with a few specially crewed Deathburners and Warp Raider used as boarding vessels to make sneak attacks.

The Kraken has a special crew eating attack, so this is often used to de-crew mid sized vessels and make easier picking for the other boarding parties.

Skaven are quite difficult to win with, as they often do as much (if not more) damage to themselves as to the enemy. They can pull off some spectacular and memorable results though, and that is why I love playing them.

If I use a Grey Seer, they tend to have some devastating spells, which require the eating of much Warpstone to cast. This holds its own perils and can cause the Grey Seer to be pulled into the warp if he is unlucky.

Is that all the varieties?

Most of the basic fleets in Man o' War consist of three ship types for each race. The Empire has five and Dwarves have four. However, there is a very active yahoo group called the Sea of Claws (<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/theseaofclaws/>) which has lots of fan created ship designs.

A Goblin fleet and a Lizardman fleet have been recent additions, alongside individual ship designs for every race. For the Skaven alone there are at least another eight ship types, such as the huge Floating Nest, a Dunglebber catapult ship, a One-Rat Barrel-Sub Launcher and a Colossal Rat barge.

How do I get hold of a copy of the rules?

Well Man o' War was released in 1993 and has been out of print for a while. Joining the Sea of Claws group is a good starting point to see if anyone has a set of rules going spare or knows where to find one.

How do I get hold of the figures?

Ebay is unfortunately the main place to get hold of the figs and some of the fleets are commanding high prices (particularly Chaos Dwarf and Bretonnian).

There is a lizardman and an undead fleet in current production (part resin and part metal models) from <http://greenforesttradingco.com/>

As a last resort, many of the ships exist as 'top down' counters or 3D 'box proxies' made from photographs of painted ships, held in the files sections of the Sea of Claws group, allowing you to print off as many squadrons as you wish and at least see what compositions of squadrons you like before investing in the real figs themselves.

What's the future of the game?

There are rumours of a re-print of the game, but these have been around for some time, so I wouldn't hold your breath. In fact Jervis recently confirmed that it is something he would like to see re-done, but its not even on the radar at the moment. Fan created stuff is the most likely way forward and there is even a Vassal module being worked on at the moment for online play.



UnderEmpire Grand Tournament 2008

Megabattle Report

by Scarfester

Skaven society centers around one constant aim... survival!

Every now and again a Clan does something to get themselves higher up the food chain! Seeing as Skaven are not shy about cannibalism, this can only mean being stronger than your fellows and enemies. When the black hunger takes over, it's the most vicious Skaven that survive!

Some Clans are happy hiding in the shadows, surviving, unwatched by those above them. But some Clans are constantly shuffling sideways in the food chain, ready to launch an attack upon the levels above them.

In Skaven society there are really only 3 tiers to the relative food chain. The Lesser Clans are the lowest down, and prey on each other and the Major Clans if feeling very brave. The tier above are the five major Clans of Skaven society, being Eshin, Pestilens, Moulder, Skryre and Mors.

The top tier are the almost invulnerable Council of Thirteen. They are nigh-on impossible to overwhelm and have in some cases been at the top of the pile for millennia.

Now the Council of Thirteen have turned their burning gaze upon Clan Skrazlok. Something, or someone, was about to be devoured and disappear from the face of the Old World. But who...

Grey Seer Skrazlok harbored ambitions. Huge ambitions, that pulsed and hummed with life, just like the machines he ran his paws over.

The huge warpstone fired generators gave him vast power to wield. They powered the mining carts and drop hammers that helped his Clan mine a huge wealth of warpstone from the rocks north of Cripple Peak. This in turn gave him large sums of material that could be used to buy slaves, weapons and food.

Recently the Clan had carved out a large swath of territory in the areas north of the Cripple Peak. The recent months had been very profitable and also promising. Soon Grey Seer Skrazlok would attempt to take over more land and use his diabolically ingenious machines to defend his fortress from intruders.

His main power though was in the warpstone that the Clan mined, and it gave him very handy leverage in Skaven society. It would allow him the collateral to open up new and more far-reaching schemes in the future.

Gazing out of the windows of his laboratory, he stared into the valley below.

At each end of this particular section of the valley he had placed his pride and joy. The creations he was most fond of. The huge Warp Lightning Cannons. Mega Cannons, capable of taking out an army in one shot, they protected the approach to his laboratory and also his tunnel network. If the laboratory fell, his Clan was doomed and all of his beloved creations would be taken from him.

But where was the latest shipment of warpstone? It was needed to fire up the generators that ran the Mega Cannons. If there was an attack now it would be disastrous, he thought.

Gazing to the North the Seer saw something that made the fur on the back of his neck stand on end and his musk glands tighten at his rump. There was an army approaching. A very large army! As they got closer, the Seer could make out rat ogres. Then the massed ranks of slaves and Clan Rats came into view. He noticed the runes etched into the ragged banners being carried by his would-be attackers. The blood seemed to run cold in his veins... Clan Mors had come after him!

He was not sure of the reason they had come, but he strongly doubted it was for anything friendly.

Quickly the muster was called and the entire Clan Skrazlok gathered in the valley to face the rapidly approaching Clan Mors. Th Warpstone carts were still making their way up the centre of the valley, and they needed to be rescued quickly to power the Mega Cannons.

Without them, the cannons could still fire, but over less of a distance and with less power and blast radius. If he could get the power back to them, then he could wipe out most of Clan Mors instantaneously.

The possibilities after that were mind meltingly wonderful. He could take over the whole southern half of the Worlds Edge Mountains, and maybe even challenge for a seat on the Council of Thirteen!

Quickly the Seer dismissed the over confident daydream and regained his grip on reality. He watched his troops mass in the valley below and then hid in his laboratory next to the firing mechanism for his giant cannons.

Peering out of a murky portal he watched as the fate of his Clan was decided, and prepared to slaughter countless Skaven with the flick of a switch.

Queek Headtaker strode forward at the head of the Clan Mors column. He was to secure the warpstone on advice from Ikit Claw. The Council had even sent an agent of Clan Skryre to deal with this renegade.

Once the warpstone had been secured he could search out the traitorous Seer and add another head to his trophy rack. Surely this would increase his status within the Clan. Maybe he could claim this new fortress for himself and use its resources to gain vaster wealth and standing.

Best be cautious for now, he thought as he watched the renegade Clan Skrazlok mass its troop within the valley to meet them.

His master had ordered the extermination of the renegade Clan, backed by an extremely rare unanimous decision from the Council.

Clearly the rising wealth of the Clan was becoming a threat, and it would not be tolerated!

Everyone on the Council longed to control the wealth available in these blasted hills, but none dared claim it outright, so The Council ordered the laboratory and tunnels destroyed. But Queek knew that his master secretly wanted the fortress. It was a further asset to the constantly evolving and growing Clan Mors.

Battle was about to be joined, one that could very well seal the fate of all the Skaven of the Worlds Edge Mountains, and maybe even rock Skaven society to it's very core!

Last year in Antwerp we had a fun packed day in the middle of the UEGT with a massed battle between two huge Skaven forces.

Despite the fun there were several problems with the way it ran, which lead to the now well known 'time warp' effect experienced over the battlefield. No, not the 80's song that your drunk parents used to dance to at Butlins, but the effect that meant that one side of the battlefield ended up 2 turns ahead of the far side by turn 5.

Bodacious and Scarfester got together on MSN messenger over many nights and schemed a way to keep the fun, but make the battle run a little smoother and more linear fashion.

To this end a scenario was created with a series of ground rules that would hopefully help the megabattle run smoothly and provide a fun packed day of massed Skaven slaughter.

Scenario

The battlefield was created by pressing 3 tables together to make a battlefield of 4 feet by 18 feet.

There were 2 factions, a Clan Mors faction and Renegade Clan faction!

These are determined randomly, by drawing names out of a hat.

However, anybody using a special character (such as Vins using Ikit Claw) were allocated to the Clan Mors side. The reason shall soon become apparent!

Once the 2 teams had been formed a deployment side was selected at random. Each player was randomly given a section of their side to deploy in, once again by drawing numbers out of a hat.

Now that the teams were set up, one of the lucky members of the Clan Mors Team, occupying the central 6x4 board got the bonus of Warlord Queek Headtaker to lead his troops. Absolutely free! This extra few hundred points wouldn't really matter overall, but he needed to be there to lead Clan Mors.

The Renegade Clan faction got 3 desperation tokens to use at any point during the battle, to balance out the points difference. The rules for these can be found in the legendary battles articles in White dwarf.

Bodacious and Scarfester timed the turn sequences throughout the game, to keep it flowing. This is because in the last GT megabattle, we ended up with a turn discrepancy on different board sections.

We had approximately 8hrs to play the game, excluding set up times and packing up times as well as eating. We allowed a maximum of 5 minutes for the 'start of the turn phase' and then, 17.5 minutes per every other phase afterwards. This means that we have approximately 80 minutes per turn!

This gave us plenty of time to all go at the same rate and also allow time for some rules queries etc.

Objectives

As this megabattle was going to take a long time we did not want to complicate matters further by the need to calculate victory points. So we used a token system to make working out the victorious side that much easier!

Luckily for us Chieftain Cazgar had made us 13 warpstone cart tokens. They were used as 'bits of treasure' that the teams need to collect and protect. The team at the end of the game that was in control of the most warpstone carts won the battle. In the event of a draw we intended to play a further full turn (each side gets a full turn), until a definitive victor emerged.

The carts were placed around the board, with 2 carts per section. In one randomly determined section though, there was 3!

A unit (unit strength 5+) could pick up a cart by moving its front rank into contact with it. The cart then effectively acts as a captured enemy banner.

If a unit fled from shooting, magic, or a failed psychology test, the cart was dropped and became available for anyone to pick up. If the unit carrying the cart was beaten in close combat, it lost the cart to the victorious unit, just as if the victorious unit had captured it as a banner. The cart could then be carried around by that unit, until it was lost again, or the battle ended.

You didn't have to stay in your designated board section. You could hatch dastardly plots with other members of your team and branch out into adjacent boards to aid your fellow clan members.

As long as your army ended up with the most warpstone carts at the end of the day, that was all that mattered!

Special Rules

After turn one had finished there was a blast from the 2 giant Warp Lightning Cannons stationed at the corners of the battlefield. This was decided at the start of the phase by a spectator pulling a number from a hat.

They fired from one corner of the battlefield, to the opposite corner in a straight line, just like a WLC shot. This shot was 18.44 feet in length, so require some long tape measures and some steady hands.

As with a WLC shot, everything under the line was hit and suffered damage as normal for the weapon. The strength of the shot was determined by an artillery dice, re-rolling any misfires and rolls of 2. We did want some serious carnage after all.

Once the first shot had been resolved, there was a second shot from the cannon in the other corner, firing across the battlefield, to form a giant cross.

The shots took place after all normal shooting and counted towards panic tests caused for the shooting phase (ie 25% losses).

Once the shooting phase had been called to a halt, the spectator that had pulled the number from the hat could declare that the Warp Lightening Cannons were about to fire. The shots were then taken, before any panic tests were worked out.

As the possibility for casualties was monumental, we kept all of our troops killed by shooting in the previous shooting phase behind the units they were killed in. This made working out the 25% casualties caused at the end of each phase easier.

If a unit panicked from the Mega Warp Lightening Cannon shots, then they dropped any banner or cart they were carrying.

Setup For The Battle

Seeing as there were 12 players in total, we used 3 full tables, with each person having half a table to deploy in!

Sneaky turned up for a few days, but didn't bring an army, so he formed one from what we all had left over, in a truly generous and thoroughly unSkaven-like fashion. He took Deathmaster Snikch in his army, so was placed on the Clan Mors side.

Warpsmith was using Grey Seer Thanquol and Vins had Ikit Claw, so those two would also have to be in the Clan Mors army!

The names of the other 9 participants were put into Akai-Chan's rather snazzy pirate hat and she drew out the 3 other people that would be making up the rest of Clan Mors for this battle. Thraskittar, Stinky and Rage!

This meant that the renegade Clan Skrazlok would be made up from the armies of the following players: Glod, EvilClown, Cazgar, Bodacious, UB and Scarfester.

Next a series of numbers from 1 to 6 were placed into the hat and the players drew them out to find out which board section they would be on and who they would be facing directly opposite.

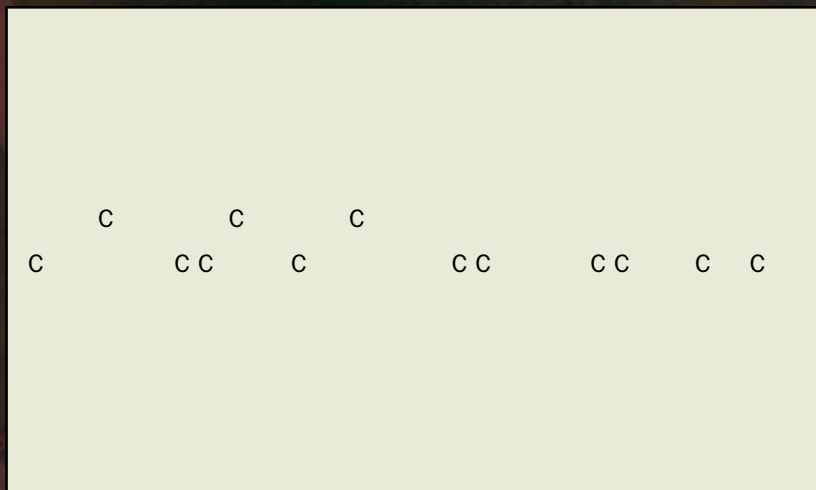
Deployment

The night before the megabattle Bodacious and I had a secret conference. We had a problem to sort out! How do we make the deployment fast and fun?

After at least half an hour of ideas Bodacious pitched a method he'd seen at a store in Holland. It was a speed deployment system and we both agreed that it would be a lot of fun!

CLAN MORS SIDE

Sneaky Vinz Thrask Stinky Rage Warpsmith



Cazgar Glod Clown Burrows Scar Boda

CLAN SKRAZLOK SIDE

c = warpstone cart (in rough placements after deployment and scattering)

Everybody was to have their army setup on movement trays and placed in the centre of the table, out of their deployment zones. They were then given ten minutes to discuss rough tactics for deployment, so adjacent team members could hatch dastardly schemes with those next to them.

After the ten minutes was up we called a start to the proceedings and everyone had to deploy their troops as fast as they could. The first side to deploy all their troops would shout "FINISHED", stopping deployment! The side which finished deployment first got the first turn!

People could also place some units off the table to bring in as reserves, if they wanted. If the other side had troops left to deploy, they were taken off the board and placed in 'reserve'.

These reserves could automatically move onto the table on the players turn 2, as if they had previously chased a unit off the board.

We decided to run it this way, as it meant that people with large armies were not necessarily hampered by the lack of space, or time in which they had to deploy.

Before deployment the warpstone carts were placed in regular intervals across the board sections, with one randomly determined section having 3 carts. The carts were then scattered one at a time D6 inches, to add an element of chaos into the proceedings.

As it happened, Clan Mors finished deploying first, so they got the first turn!

We had to decide who to give Queek to as well. Seeing as Stinky was in the middle of the Clan Mors line and had his huge horde, it seemed only fair and fluffy to give him the great Skaven leader.

Each of the 3 tables for Clan Skrazlok had a desperation token to use to balance out the points spent on Queek, and also to represent the Clan fighting tooth and nail for their lives!

To war!

It would be impossible to give a fully detailed report on everything that happened, so I shall provide the 'highlights' from each turn.

Turn 1

The armies closed the distance between each other and headed for the warpstone carts scattered over the battlefield.

On the left flank, Vins' Skaven managed to collect one of the 3 carts (this was the section with the extra cart) in his board half by moving his slaves forward and taking the treasure.

On the far right flank a unit of Boda's slaves moved into a building and took up residence, as well as securing a cart themselves.

Cart Tally:

Clan Mors = 1

Clan Skrazlok = 1

Turn 2

As the battle lines drew closer things began to get more tense. Units looked to grab carts, but not consign themselves to destruction in the process.

Boda's Grey Seer Kreukel used Skitterleap to move to the central board section for some fun! The amazing regenerating Seer (see last years megabattle) proceeded to Warp Lighting an entire unit of 8 Plague Censor Bearers to death.

However the battle wasn't going so well for Boda's rank and file. Boneripper managed to kill 20 with his small warfire projector. In revenge Boda's enraged Ratling Gun team mercilessly gunned down the Skryre monstrosity.

To compound Bonerippers death, Thanquol managed to miscast. Possibly the only time in the entire tournament he did!

On the far left flank the combined Screaming Bells of Glod and Cazgar managed to roll a 13 as well as an 11. We had decided to keep the bells effects to just entire boards (ie - the 6x4 foot board it is on) to limit the time the effects took to work out.

As a result 14 Jezzails, 1 Ratling Gun and 4 Globadiers from the combined forces of Vins and Sneaky turned tail and ran. Clearly they did not want to face off against the potent magical forces arrayed against them!

The big fireworks were left till last however!

On Clan Skrazlok's right flank Scarfester faced off against Rage for the second megabattle in a row. The 2 warlords were jostling for possession of a bottleneck between a small forest and a rocky outcrop. The winner of this particular fight would make off with at least one cart, possibly two.

After some baited charges from Scar's slaves and a minor victory there it came to the renegade Clan's magic phase. Previously in the tournament proper, Scar's Seer had done little but miscast and kill himself with his own warpstone tokens. But the winds of magic changed directions this day and blew in his favor.



After moving into the trees to cast Vermintide across Rage's battle line, and drawing out the dispel dice with Warped Lighting from his engineers, Scar's Grey Seer cast Plague.

For once the spell actually worked! The resulting aftermath was quite horrific. The Horned Rat was smiling on him that day, or was just in a bad mood and wanted a load of Skaven to die!

The spell effected one of Rage's Clanrat units, killing several. Then it backfired onto one of Scar's own Clanrats units. The Plague bounced around the board, finally ending after claiming an astonishing 116 Skaven lives! 50 of them Scar's own troops!

After the resulting panic tests, several units from each side fled, but more of Rage's battle line quit the battle from the magical onslaught. A good thing he had several units in reserve to keep himself in the game. And crucially, his Grey Seer had managed to survive, lurking at the back of the battlefield in a truly Skaven fashion.

Had things on that flank turned in favor of the renegade Clan?

Turn 3

The battle got hectic as both sides scrabbled madly for the warpstone carts!

After a round of mostly ineffectual shooting, Akai-Chan shouted out 'FIRE THE WARPED LIGHTING CANNONS'. This seemed to worry the regular clientele of Warhammer World, but most of us Skaven players had mad grins affixed to our faces!

Scar got out the special, extra-long tape measure he'd bought for the occasion and we got Akai to do the honors and roll the artillery dice to determine the strength of the shots. Now remember that we are re-rolling misfires and rolls of 2.

First roll for the Mega Cannons of the evening resulted in a 10. Excellent!

Rolling for the second cannon resulted in a 10 also. Blimey!

Two 18 and a half foot shots of Warp Lightening at Strength 10 being fired in a huge X across the board. Only at a UEGT!

Sadly there wasn't really an epic amount of death caused by the shots. However there were a few suitably cinematic moments.

Burrow's Grey Seer was facing Queek's unit, and did not expect a giant beam of Warstone infused death to shoot straight through him from behind.

One wound was caused, but luckily the huge hole left in the Seers torso knitted back together swiftly, as his Twisted Crown regenerated the damage.

Fittingly Warlord Queek Headtaker was almost directly in the centre of the battlefield, in a unit of Clanrats. The cannons fired and both the beams passed through the unit he was in. They crossed directly behind him, almost close enough to take the trophy rack off of his back. An extremely close call for the leader of Clan Mors and one that may have drastically affected the battle if he had been an inch or two backwards!

Clearly shaken up by his near death experience, Queek charged into combat against a unit of slaves and managed to fluff all of his attacks. In return the slaves embarrassingly managed to wound the illustrious warlord, but his Warpstone Armor saved him, the rebounded force killing one unfortunate, yet plucky, slave.

To further rub salt into the wounds, Grey Seer Kreukel cast Warped Lighting onto Queek's unit, who panicked and fled, rallying the next turn. Clearly a bad turn for headstrong leader of Clan Mors.



The plague victims.

Kreukel then used Skitterleap to get to the far left side of the battlefield to see what damage he could cause over there! With the 2 bells and 3 seers on the far left of the battlefield, things were turning heavily against Vins and Sneaky in the magic phase.

On the plus side for Clan Mors, Thrask managed to cast Plague twice with Irresistible Force.

Turn 4

On the right flank of Clan Skrazlok's battle line, things were looking a little bleak for Boda's contingent.

One of his units of Clanrats had just rallied on the table edge and then been charged by a death frenzied Assassin with activated bands of power. Oh dear!

Luckily for him the Assassin only managed to kill one Clanrat, and fled after setting off a Smokebomb. Clearly fleeing in abject embarrassment!

On the other side of the field, Grey Seer Kreukel gathered his hatred and used it to fuel a spell at one of the most powerful Skaven seers in history. Ikit Claw clearly had the Horned One watching over him, as Kreukel failed to cast.

At the very least he will have some sore musk glands in the morning!

In the centre of the field, Grey Seer Thanquol finally fell under the combined fire of 3 Weapons Teams and a Warlock Engineer.

One of Scar's units used a desperation token to automatically pass a break test, to stop one of Rage's units taking back a warpstone cart.

Turn 5

The final turn!

After being forced to flee in a Clanrat unit for several turns, Deathmaster Snikh finally made an appearance on the left flank.

Who knows how the battle may have swung if he had revealed himself earlier and gone on a sorcerer killing spree on that side of the battlefield?

In clear payback for the last turns impudence, Ikit Claw used Warp Lightning on Grey Seer Kreukel, killing him. The amazing regenerating Seer sadly couldn't recreate the luck in his last megabattle, and was left as a charred corpse on the field.

On the right hand side of the battlefield Boda's unit of Giant Rats, accompanied by a Master Moulder, moved into some woods to claim a vacant cart previously dropped by a Gutter Runner unit.



Scar's Grey Seer miscast in the final turn, which allowed Rage's own Grey Seer to cast Plague on Boda's Giant Rats. With some lucky rolling Rage managed to kill just enough of the rats to bring them below unit strength five, so they were forced to drop the cart they had just claimed!

The Final Cart Count

Clan Mors = 3

Clan Skrazlok = 7

CLAN SKRAZLOK WIN!!!

Grey Seer Skrazlok carefully released his grip on the handle which served as the Mega Warp Lightning Cannons firing mechanism. His paw was slightly numb, which made him realise just how tightly he'd been gripping it during the battle.

From his view through the portal, he had watched the battle ebb and flow. It seemed as if there had been a minor victory on the left flank. As he watched he could see at least three carts full of warpstone being wheeled up the small hill towards the laboratory. As they got closer he could see the slaves panting with effort, as they tried to escape the general horrors of the battle in the valley below.

As the first carts passed into the laboratory, Grey Seer Skrazlok saw several more heading up the slope. Very soon he would be able to fire his terrible machines at a much higher power.

The devastation he could cause soon would be horrific!

Within a few minutes the laboratories slaves had been whipped into action and the newly arrived warpstone was shoved swiftly into the lead-lined furnaces that provided the power to the cannons. As the giant chunks of unrefined warpstone began to hum with barely suppressed power, green lightning was randomly discharged from the glowing stones.

Luckily the Seer had the foresight to install a large 'farratay' cage around each of the furnaces, to capture the magical discharges of lightning.

Clearly the gathering of power had been noticed in the valley as well, as there seemed to be a careful yet swiftly executed, tactical retreat from Clan Mors. They obviously did not want to risk the destruction of a large number of their troops, as well as their Warlord and the Council of Thirteen's other representatives that had been sent to crush Clan Skrazlok.

After the Clan Mors army had retreated they had paused on the lip of the valley. The army was clearly still under full control. Queek seemed to be proving that he would be back to fight again. This made Grey Seer Skrazlok very nervous indeed!

He was already plotting an escape route, in case they came back. The rumours that Thanquol, and even Deathmaster Snikch, had been in the valley made his musk glands discharge utterly.

He wished he knew what Queek and the other Warlords in the Clan Mors camp were plotting now!

Queek was furious with rage. He stopped shouting at his troops, only to cave in a slaves skull with his war pick.

He always found that a rallying speech worked best when it was punctuated by the screams of the dying.

Somehow the enemy Clan had managed to make off with a fair few of the warpstone carts. Due to the catastrophic risks associated with the renegade Clans ability to suddenly fire their terrible weapon with more frequency, a tactical retreat was clearly the only sensible option! If anyone let out a completely untrue rumor that they had panicked and fled en masse, there would be terrible vengeance to be paid.

He would not have his reputation sullied by the suggestion that he could not carry out the simple task of wiping out a small Clan foolish enough to have incurred the wrath of the Council.

Queek had relented from beating anything that strayed too near to him, when something darker than darkness itself stepped from the gloom. Deathmaster Snikch seemed to cross the distance between them unnaturally quickly. The Master Assassin's movements seemed effortless, yet almost blurred with speed. The Horned Rat alone knew how fast Snikch would be, when pushed into a battle rage. Even the headstrong warlord of Clan Mors would pause for thought before challenging this particular Skaven.

When the Death Master spoke, his lips barely moved and his voice escaped as a sinister hiss. The

lack of movement and quiet yet unnerving sound made him wonder how it would be to hear that noise in the darkness from behind.

"It seems our Masters are not going to be pleased Warlord. It looks as though we will need to make alternative... plans." hissed the Deathmaster

"Yes-yes. They must pay for this insult! We will claim their fortress for our own, but we will need to find another way to attack them." Queek spat. "We shall take their machines for Clan Mors! And the Council, of course!"

A sharp flash of light and a hiss of steam pulled the pair's attention. Ikit Claw stood a few steps away, the small generator on his back whirring and buzzing. He had heard the pair's conversation.

"The machines clearly need to be studied and replicated by Clan Skryre," spoke Ikit. "My Master will insist on it."

"We shall see where the knife falls!" Snikch hissed, before turning away and soundlessly melting into the shadows in the blink of an eye.

Ikit Claw chuckled, gave one last look at Queek, and strode away.

"By the filth of The Horned One!" cursed Queek.

Things had got political!

That was the only thing he didn't like about battle! He was just grateful that Thanquol seemed to have disappeared.

That rat could have made things even more complicated.

Queek turned, and caved in the skull of a nearby slave.

Thanquol opened his eyes.

He had lain unconscious under a pile of bodies for over a day now. His musk glands still hurt from the full voiding they had suffered when he was fired upon.

After regaining consciousness he had safely kept out of sight under the pile of bodies. He had been injured badly, but attended to himself by applying his own small supply of Skalm to his wounds. The bodies above had also saved him from being looted or eaten in the aftermath.

The Skalm worked quickly, and he released himself from his now cold and stiff hiding place. Clearly the battle had been lost. Clan Skrazlok soldiers still patrolled the area and he did not want to have to explain this failure to the Council.

Quickly and quietly he made his escape from the valley. The weapons possessed by this clan were remarkable and clearly something that should be under his control.

Already he was formulating a new attack plan. This one had him directing the battle from a safer location however!

The Playbook of the Rat Part 2

by Skaven Lord Vinshqueek



Greetings to all Skaven from the UnderEmpire, and various creatures from beyond its borders. Welcome back to the Playbook of the Rat series.

I will begin this article with a slight adjustment to its content. Originally, as stated in the first article of the series, I was going to be writing about the various offensive and defensive plays for the Skaven team, but as I began writing this article, I soon realized I was writing something very similar to the Skaven Playbook series of articles by Paul Gegg from Fanatic Online, number 34 and 35. *(At the time of publishing, the Specialist Games site has been taken down by Games Workshop and thus the articles of Fanatic Online are no longer available through that site. Tom Anders of Blood-Bowl.net is currently hosting them at <http://www.blood-bowl.net/SGArticles/>)*

As I didn't want to come over as a copyrat, I decided to take this article in a different direction and instead of discussing various sorts of plays (for which I will now refer to the mentioned Fanatic Online articles), I will instead be focusing on how to deal with the various sorts of teams out there.

In Blood Bowl, there are four different types of teams you'll hear people talking about. These teams are (in no specific order) the agile teams, the bashy teams, the general teams and the stunty teams. For each category, I will be giving a short description of what your Skaven can expect from those types of teams, their strengths and weaknesses and how to deal with them during your matches.

The agile teams

The first group of the teams are the ones that will run circles around their quarry, toying with them. They can dodge through your lines with ease and have a greater passing game than any other team possible. Known as the agile teams, we are talking about the Elven teams, which are the Dark Elves, the High Elves, the Pro Elves and the Wood Elves.

Strengths

The main strength, and probably the best known asset, of the agile teams is the agility 4 of each player in the teams. They have little trouble dodging (a basic 2+ minus any tackle zones they dodge into) and can pass/hand-off over the entire length of a Blood Bowl pitch.

There is also their lower cost team re-rolls compared to the other teams. Though I count this as an advantage, rather than a strength. This gives agile teams the chance to buy additional team re-rolls sooner during leagues, or tournaments that use the same rules for progression/advancing as leagues.

Weakness

Agility 4, in combination with low re-roll costs, do have a drawback. The key players of these teams tend to be quite expensive, when compared to those of the Skaven. This means that while their group of players can always be found, running around your lines, they will need quite some time to replace those players that have gone by.

A vulnerable point in agile teams is the no-skill, low armour value linemen. Varying between seven and eight (which also the key players have, but whom have the skill to somewhat negate that disadvantage), this means a direct heads-on approach could easily harm an agile team.

Gameplay

The high movement and agility values lets agile teams thrive on a passing/running game. Of course, you can always find someone playing a more aggressive game with them, though such approaches to using those teams tend to work more for one-off games than for (long-term) progression.

One play you can expect an agile team to do is grab the ball, run out of direct reach (towards their own endzone) and send their catchers forward. The idea behind this is basically to lure your players towards the ball carrier and be able to move/dodge the ball carrier into a position where they can directly pass towards the catcher with the least interference possible. (Trust me, you don't want to know at what horrible moments people can roll a six). The catcher has the ball and as several of your players stand where the ball carrier stood moments before, the catchers have little trouble racing towards your endzone.

Of course, the most famous play of the agile teams is the one-turn touchdown (more or less a specialty of the Wood Elves with their movement nine catchers). There have already been written various articles on how this works (such as the article from Rob Elliot in Fanatic Online #52) or how to deal with this (such as the article of Sebastiaan van der Laan on the website of Triple POW! Magazine in August), so I won't dwell too much on what to expect from that play, other than having a sense of frustration if you can't seem to figure out how they do it.

In these cases the key word to dealing with these situations is patience. The coach of an agile team usually wants you to come to them, opening holes in your line of defence that can be exploited. In all cases, it is best to hang back and wait for them to come to you, making the first move. Eventually, they need to score and thus come towards you, at which point you'll be able to intercept the ball carrier and take the initiative.

Don't mind putting your opponent's linemen into a world of hurt either, be it through mass blocking or fouling. This is basically a way to "force" your opponent to not consider stalling if he/she is out of reach for your players and just a few squares from your endzone. In the end, despite them needing few players to score, the bigger your numerical advantage is, the easier it becomes to start pinning players to certain sides of the pitch.

If you get a touchdown scored against you, do not dwell too much on it and set your team up again. A good rule of thumb is that you can always get back on an equal footing, just as long as you keep your patience!

The bashy teams

This is the group of teams that most Skaven rightly fear, for they have the potential to break apart your team once you get too close to them. Of course, we are talking about the bashy teams. Those with an overall armour value that even your stormvermin (or rat ogre) can not beat, or the mass presence of the block skill amongst a team. The teams falling under this category are Chaos, the Chaos Dwarves, the Dwarves, the Khemri, Nurgle's Rotters, the Orcs and the Undead.

Strengths

Now the main (and most obvious) strength of a bashy team is their ability to put quite a few of your players back in the dugout during the first couple of turns of a match. Whether it will be through the overall presence of the Block skill, high armour value (usually somewhere around 9), or multiple high strength players (such as Black Orc Blockers). The bashy teams know how to demolish their opposition, second to none.

Another strength of bashy teams is a large amount of players having access to the strength skills category. Especially in leagues, this can become pretty nasty. Bashy teams usually start off with several players (read: more than in a Skaven team) having the block skill, so if you add things like guard or mighty blow to that, you can easily understand what you will be facing once such teams have a couple of games under their belt.





Weakness

If on end of the scale is the highly manoeuvrable, weakly armoured agile teams, the other end of this would be the low manoeuvre, high armour team.

Whereas the high armour is an obvious strength (and already mentioned), the low movement value is something that plays to the advantage of a Skaven coach. The average movement value of a member of a bashy team lies around movement 5 (with some exceptions, such as with the Orc Blitzer). This means that to close in on something as simple as your Linerat, bashy teams will have to make tremendous use of Go For It movement.

While not necessary being a weakness, the bashy teams usually tend to lack a proper passing game, using hand-offs or quick/short passes to get the ball moving. There are many occasions where agile or general teams will use a similar approach, but as the bashy teams don't excel at this, it is a trait that makes their movement sometimes easier to interpret.

Gameplay

While the Skaven usually tend to do fairly well against agile teams (as long as we don't start running after the ball, when it's in their hands), this is definitely not the case against bashy teams.

Actually, if I rephrase this, it would be something along the lines of "By all means, do not get bogged down by bashy team gameplay!".

The reason for this is that bashy teams, at all times, out-block you. Even if there are several Linerats with the block skill in your Skaven team, the one thing you never should be doing under any circumstance is playing their style of Blood Bowl, for it will quite likely be a dreadful, dreadful match you'll have to go through.

One of the main things to keep in mind when playing against bashy teams is not to get bogged down in their style of play. The less they can block in a turn, the less effective they are. (Ever seen a Dwarf running after a Skaven with the ball, for example?). This means setting up cages for your ball carrier, putting expendable linemen with few to no starplayer points in between a cage and the offense of the bashy team, to let them walk more squares, or force them to use the blitz to get close to you.

It is a matter of making sure that as few players end up in direct contact with bashy players, as possible. Unless, of course, it is part of a tactic to slow their move towards your ball carrier down.

The reason for this is that high strength is usually compensated by lower movement. Even without using a Go For It move, a Linerat will outrun a Dwarf with ease. So the more 'obstacles' one can get between the bashy player and the ball carrier, the better that is.

This can either be by putting them in the tackle zone of one of your own players, or using a curtain of players around your cage, to make sure the bashy players can't reach without expending their blitz action AND having to dodge.

Naturally, they will go out of their way to make sure you pay for this by making one of your own players prone, stunned, KO-ed or injured. In the end, if it helps you get more touchdowns, then I wouldn't see the problem in that. (Journeymen Linerats tend to work quite well for such roles).

Should you be forced to go on the defence, stalling the approach of the bashy team is usually the best method of keeping them from scoring. Their lower movement means they need three turns at least to score, so the longer you can keep them where they are, the less turns they have to get that ball into your endzone. Of course, this should be done with caution, for once a bashy team realizes they have fairly little, to no chance of winning, it is quite likely they will switch their tactic to simply bashing up your team.

Finally, against bashy teams, make sure you're well up to speed on assists. As most will, during a league, develop several guard players and already have a strong offensive/defensive play due to their high armour value and many block-skilled players, without too much trouble they will get assists on the players you target. Make sure at all times you aren't blocking with more assists against you (read: your opponent being able to choose the result), for that only plays to the advantage of your opponent.



The general teams

Coming third in our list of categories, we find the general teams. They don't particularly excel at a certain aspect of the Blood Bowl game, but neither do these teams show any specific weaknesses. They are the all-round players and usually tend to be quite numerous as well. Under this category fall the Amazon, Human, Lizardmen, Necromantic, Norse and Skaven teams.

Strengths

Despite their sometimes different appearance in strength and armour value, a more common trait that could most certainly be seen as a strength, is the large number of positional players (blitzer, thrower, catcher, big guy) available to these teams. This means that general teams can more easily apply the basic passing and running games, compared to the other categories of teams.

Weakness

Although also something of a trait of the teams, they don't have any specific strengths they can rely on, or fall back on. Most commonly, the general teams have a ST3 and AG3 to work with, meaning that they have the tendency (especially if your dice are not with you during a match) to burn up team re-rolls rather quickly.

It should be noted at this point that you can see its very obvious that the term 'general' means there really are few strengths or weaknesses to mention.

Gameplay

As Skaven teams come from the general category themselves, facing teams from that category are fairly like playing against yourself in terms of what to expect.

One thing to keep in mind is that while the general teams indeed do not have any particular strengths or weaknesses, their stats are 'general' as well and that can turn against them at some point. An example of this would be the comparison between a general team attempting a passing game, compared to an agile team.

Agile teams are able to cover a great distance and have the agility to dodge out of tackle zones to make sure their pass goes with relative ease.

The general team will (in most cases) have the advantage of players with the pass and/or catch skill, though having to roll higher than an agile team, means they eventually make a mistake somewhere, in the form of a failed roll. Applying pressure is therefore a useful tactic.

However, do not fall for the error of running after the ball like a headless chicken. The key in applying pressure is to make sure your opponent can't use their skill re-rolls.

If your opponent sends the catchers of the team forward, then guard them closely and make sure they get one or two tackle zones on them as a negative modifier on any agility rolls they need to make for catching the ball. A better thing would be to take them down (stunned is nice, KO is better) and make sure linemen eventually need to be tasked with tasks they're not used to handling.

As mentioned, general teams tend to have a fair load of positional players and the more that are taken down, the easier you can guess the direction your opponent is going in.



The stunty teams

The last group of teams are known as the stunty teams. These can be easily recognized by a large presence of (semi) big guys, such as Ogres or Trolls, on the Blood Bowl pitch combined with players that have trouble fighting a gentle spring breeze most of the time. There are four teams falling under this category, which are the Goblins, Halflings, Ogres and Vampires. (The latter one is listed as a team in this category, as in my experience, Vampires have the tendency to chew through their Thralls with quite some speed).

Strengths

Whereas some would call the large number of big guys one of the strengths of the team, I would call this overestimation.

Stunty teams are largely considered an easy team to face off against. And while I most certainly agree that they tend to have a hard time against Skaven (who can easily outrun the big ones, while pummeling the little ones), they can most certainly have their days. When they do, they can pull off some plays that will cause the humiliation of your team, if not by the result, then quite likely by the coach himself.

One other strength of the team lies in the low cost of its linemen. As each of those players cost lies between \$20k and \$40k, they have the advantage of being able to buy more re-rolls and/or staff at the start of a team, but can also more easily replace the players lost through injuries.

Weakness

“Where to start?” could be one way to look at this.

There are some of the most obvious traits, such as low strength (with the non-big guy players), low armour value and the stunty skill (which despite its use for dodging more easily through the enemy lines, also makes them easier to injure). This means that stunty players are the last creatures that wish to face a head-on combat, but are more likely to ‘mob up’ on opponents.

Aside from the obvious physical weakness, the stunty skills disable teams from using a proper passing game. Add to that their low movement compared to even a linerat and a Skaven coach can quite easily determine where a stunty coach wants to play the ball towards.

Gameplay

The fastest (be it quite risky) way for stunty teams to score is the combination of right stuff and throw team mate, allowing big guys to hurl stunty players towards the endzone. This play comes down to players handing off the ball to a stunty next to a big guy, hope for a successful really stupid, bone head and/or always hungry roll, don't have the player be fumbled as the big guy grasps him and of course, scattering in the right direction towards the endzone with a successful landing.

As said, it involves quite some “ifs”, but if it works, there's nothing much you can do against it.

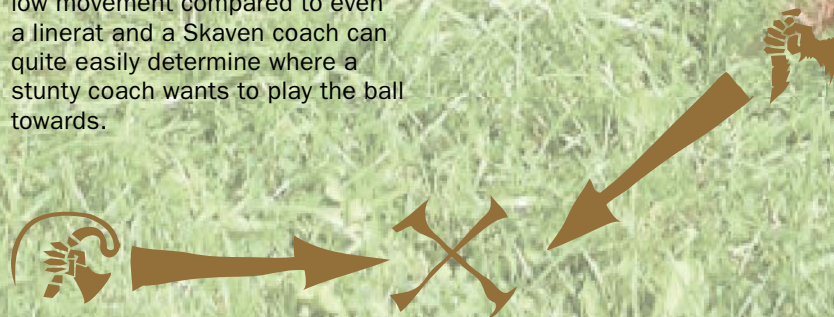
Another thing to expect is ‘sneaky play’. Whether through the feared fling mob (with the sheer number of assists in blocking/fouling), the use of Goblin secret weapons, or the Vampire hypnotic gazes, the stunty teams have several tricks up their sleeve to make life quite miserable for a Skaven coach.

A simple way to deal with this is by evading direct contact with the big guys and for the first four turns, knock as many linemen off the pitch as possible, while keeping the ball static on the pitch. (Read: On your opponent's side of the field). Once you have the numerical advantage, you can more easily start hunting down ball carriers, who usually tend to have trouble getting the ball away.

However, do not underestimate the power of stunty and dodge, giving snotlings, halflings and goblins the advantage of always dodging on a roll of three or better (even into tackle zones) with a skill re-roll in the form of dodge. As easy as you might be able to knock them down, they do know how to dodge through your lines.

So, with the fourth category behind us, that concludes the second and final part of this series. I would like to point out that this article should by no means be seen as “the” answer to all questions regarding the Skaven team on the pitch. In my experience, people tend to use their teams quite differently and thus, everyone has to find their own favoured/most effective style of play on their own.

However, I do hope that an article like this one will help people to do so.



STRIPPING MINIATURES

BY MATTHEW LEE

I've been playing Skaven for a long time. A long, long time. And quite frankly, what passed for a good paint job 12 years ago doesn't quite cut it anymore. The troops could do with a bit of a repaint, but what do you do when your soldiers are covered in a thick layer of poorly applied paint and varnish?

There are several ways you can strip miniatures and no one way is better or more correct than the other. It just depends on what works for you and what you can get a hold of. Some people swear by brake fluid, while some maintain a strict regime of nail polish remover.

Personally, I use a product called Simple Green. It is an all purpose cleaner meant for household use, but it works equally well on miniatures. Whats more, it is fairly easy to get a hold of. I buy mine from a local hardware store, Bunnings.

As with most concentrated cleaners, this is fairly serious stuff. So, for your own safety, read the bottle. It needs to be used in a ventilated area, and can cause irritation if it comes into contact with your eyes. So be careful! Or get a slave to do it.

We will be trying both plastic and metal miniatures, each with different paint applications. These should simulate most typical miniatures in a collection, painted with Games Workshop acrylic paints, or similar.



- 1. Classic Clanrat (Plastic):**
Water based acrylic paints, varnished
- 2. Multi-part Clanrat (Plastic):**
Water based acrylic paints, unvarnished
- 3. Stormvermin (Metal):**
Water based acrylic paints, varnished
- 4. Plague Monk (Metal):**
Water based acrylic paints, unvarnished



Tools

1 Bottle of Simple Green (Concentrated)
Wire Brush

Old Toothbrush
2 Jars with lids
Old Rag



Step 1:
Place all your miniatures to be stripped into one of the jars.



Step 2:
Fill the jar with Simple Green to just above the miniatures, so they are completely immersed.



Step 3:
Allow to sit. Unvarnished metal miniatures can take as little as 5 hours, while varnished metal miniatures take at least 24 hours. Plastic miniatures need a good 5 days soaking, perhaps a little more for varnished ones.

Step 4:
Remove the miniatures from the jar (don't tip out the liquid though!).



Step 5:
Fill a basin or bucket with warm to hot (not too hot, you have to be able to put your hands into it) water, and drop the miniatures in. Using the wire brush, give each one a good scrub. The paint should come off fairly easily. You can switch between the toothbrush and the wire brush. The wire brush does a good job at taking off large areas, while the toothbrush can often get into the smaller spaces and loosen any paint that is wedged in there.

The plastic miniatures have been soaking for quite some time, so be mindful that they can come out soft in some places. Usually it is ok, but it can be noticeable in

thinner areas, such as spikes or weapons. Just be careful.

Each miniature should only need a couple of minutes scrubbing for most of the paint to come off. If you want to get rid of some more, just drop them back into the Simple Green for a little while longer.



Step 6:
You will find that there are bits of paint and grime floating in the Simple Green. The liquid is still good for a few more uses, you just need to get rid of the particles. You can use a strainer or sieve if you have one.

Alternatively, you can place the an empty jar over a drain. Taking the rag, hold it over the top of the jar containing the Simple Green. Pour the Simple Green into the empty jar. The rag should trap the particles and prevent them from transferring. The Simple Green can be reused several times this way.



Finish:
And there we have it, stripped miniatures. Before doing anything else with them, you might want to give them a wash in warm, soapy water. You could go all out and wash them in a degreaser, but that is up to you. They are now ready for a new basecoat, and a brand new paint scheme.



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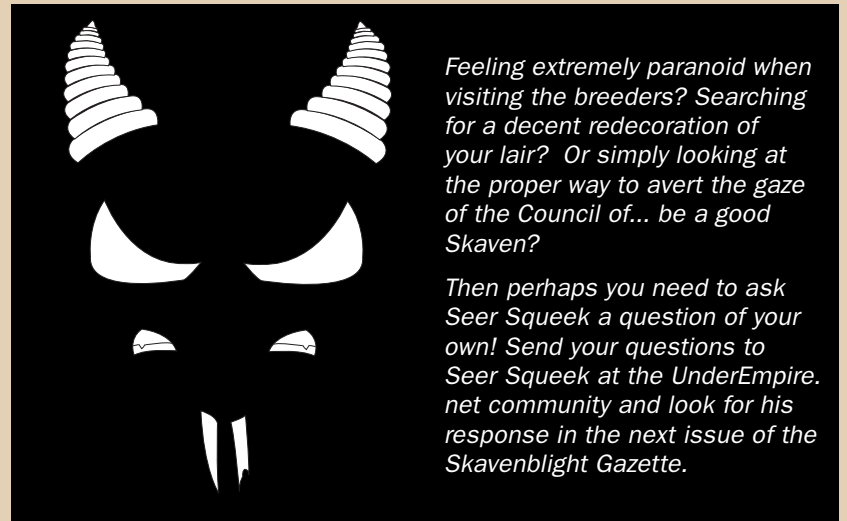
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