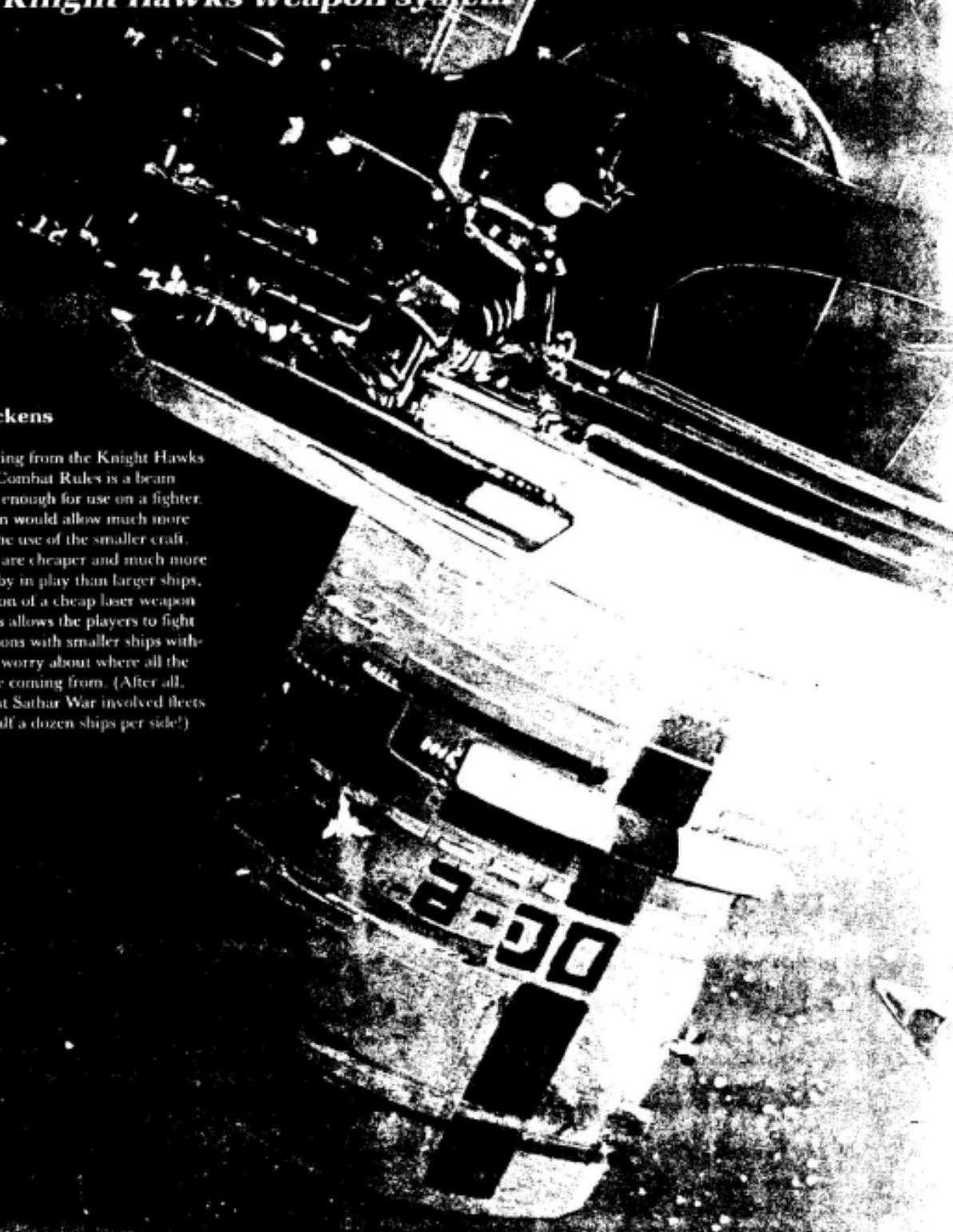


The Laser Pod

● *A new Knight Hawks weapon system*

by Jon Pickens

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A new Knight Hawks weapons system

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Article from *Polyhedron* Newszine #19

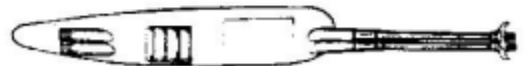
One item lacking from the Knight Hawks Ship-to-Ship Combat Rules is a beam weapon small enough for use on a fighter. Such a weapon would allow much more flexibility in the use of the smaller craft. Since fighters are cheaper and much more easy to come by in play than larger ships, the introduction of a cheap laser weapon for small ships allows the players to fight mini-fleet actions with smaller ships without having to worry about where all the large ships are coming from. (After all, the whole First Sathar War involved fleets of less than half a dozen ships per side!)

The general statistics of the laser pod are:

Description:

Cluster of 2-4 lasers of limited range and power. Usually employed as a fixed forward-firing weapon mounted on a fighter to replace the assault rocket battery.

MHS:	1
Availability:	1 (I, II)
Cost:	8000 credits
Program Level:	1
Function Points:	3
Type:	FF, RD
Reflective Hull:	50%
Masking Screen:	10% *
Range:	5
Damage:	d10



Tactically, laser-armed fighters give up the punch of assault rockets for the long-lasting firepower needed for extended actions. Defensively, laser-armed fighters are best used to screen against enemy fighters carrying assault rockets; hopefully the enemy will expend his Sunday punch against the less valuable defensive fighters, and every assault rocket fighter destroyed could well save a major ship. In attack, laser-armed fighters should be committed against major enemy ships that have been crippled in previous actions, or used to harass and harry enemy fighters. They are less useful against more powerful enemy ships -- attacks can be pressed home successfully, but expect heavy losses when doing so.

Small, cheap fighters that do not need to rearm after every third shot are ideal for close-in system or station defense, almost enough to make the high losses they sustain in combat worthwhile. They make excellent short distance raiders and blockade patrols if properly supported by a mother ship. They would probably be encountered most often as patrol ships in systems too poor to support a permanent local squadron.

If you are a referee in an action involving fighters, try to discourage player characters from flying fighters. Fighter combat is extremely lethal, and combat with laser-armed fighters is doubly so. Remember that in many fighters the entire pilot compartment doubles as an escape pod. Player characters should be given a generous chance to escape if their luck goes bad. (I favor 90%, -1% per hull point under 0 hull points for player character survival. If players are to be penalized it should be because of sloppy play rather than bad luck.)

Finally, some thought should be given to the introduction of the laser pod into the campaign. Such marvels do not appear overnight, nor should something of this nature simply pop into play without some effort on the part of the referee. The game becomes much more interesting if the players are actually involved in the introduction of the laser pod into the STAR FRONTIERS(tm) game universe. Some possible scenarios:

1. INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE. Pan Galactic has just perfected the first working module of the laser pod and has installed it in an experimental ship (large enough to accommodate the party). The ship is stolen by a rival firm (like Streeel Corporation), and the characters are hired to get it back.

2. TEST RUN. The player characters are chosen to test the new pod. The belt pirates find out and arrange a hijacking. This could end in a traditional marooning if the characters blow it.

3. ALIEN ARTIFACT. The characters explore an alien hulk and find the technology to construct the laser pod (this works well if you have a high tech expert in the group). The characters develop the first working model themselves.

4. ALIEN CONTACT. The characters will contact an alien race that has the ability to construct the first pod. This is best staged under time pressure of an imminent enemy attack. An upcoming Knight Hawks module will feature a suitable race.

5. WAR SPOILS. The Sathar have perfected the pod first. After several encounters with the new Sathar fighters, the player characters are given the mission to capture one of these new machines -- if successful, the UPF can also develop the pod laser.

Remember that how you add new material to your campaign can be as much fun as what you put into it.