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Issues #126 - #180

Issue #132

COD II HINTS FOR BETTER PLAY

For COD II we have tried to make characters much more important in the game. Not only are there more types available but often they are also more effective than their COD I counterparts. One of the ways we do this is by allowing much higher development of character stats. Of course the down side of this is that we have made it much easier for characters to get wounded or killed. With characters costing 200, 300, 500 or more GS each just to train obviously you want to do as much as you can to keep them from being killed. One of the ways to do this is by building up their Constitution as this determines the amount of damage (wounds) they can sustain before being killed — this is especially important for the smaller races such as Goblins and Kobolds. Also, a high Constitution means that characters will heal faster even when they do suffer wounds. Along that line having a Druid around is helpful because Druids can help others recover from wounds quickly with their Heal Wounds spell.

While there are all sorts of ways for characters to be injured probably the quickest and deadliest way to lose a lot of characters is in mass combat (much more so than COD I). Even if you win the battle with relatively light losses characters can be killed or wounded. So how can you minimize the risk? One way is to develop your characters' Agility. The higher the Agility the less likely a character is to be wounded. And not all Agility is created equal — a Warlord is much more effective at using his Agility to avoid wounds than a Seer, even if they both have an Agility of three. Another way to reduce the risk is a broad mix of character types. Having a few martial types around (Warlords, Rangers, etc.) greatly reduces the risk of other character types being injured. In fact this is an excellent use for Squires. Having two or three Squires around may not greatly increase your army's effectiveness but they certainly will reduce the chance of losing that Necromancer that cost you 500 GS to train! Note: The army commander is always the least likely character to suffer injuries. That doesn't mean that everyone else will automatically die first, just that the leader will be the best protected and thus has a better chance of survival.

Issue #133

COD II HINTS FOR BETTER PLAY

Don't forget to establish your standard scouting force. If you don't select one then one will be selected each and every time you scout. Normally this will be 10 Cavalry if you have 50 or more, 10 Infantry if you have 50 or more, otherwise whatever you have the most of. A fair selection process, but 10 scouts is not usually the optimum number so it's best to select your own.

Issue #134

HINTS FOR BETTER PLAY (COD I & II)

There are a myriad of things that players can do on their turns: Movement, Troop Training, Character Training, City Transactions, plus hundreds of possible Special Actions. Normally the GM can do a pretty good job of figuring out the sequence of events (that is, the order in which things should occur). For example, selling items before actions that spend GS such as Training and purchases. However, in others the GM must make a best guess. What if an Army wants to train troops and a new character but doesn't have enough GS for both? Which goes first and which one gets cancelled? Likewise, what if an army is making transfers and/or doing transactions and launching an attack. Do the transfers/transactions occur before or after the battle? The point being, if the sequence of events is important to the evaluation of the turn, let the GM know what it is, don't make them guess. For special actions, these are normally processed in the order written. However, don't bury in the text of the last action that "this action occurs before anything else in the turn". If it's not plainly obvious at a quick glance, it doesn't help! One simple and effective way to indicate the sequence of events is to write by the header of each section of the turn "Do 1st", "Do 2nd" (and circle it). For example, put "Do 1st" next to Movement, "Do 2nd" next to transfers, "Do 3rd" next to Transactions, etc.

Remember, if the sequence of events is important, tell the GM what it is!

Issue #136

HINTS FOR BETTER PLAY (COD I & II)

With armies (numbers of warriors) getting larger and more aggressive some thought should be made to defense. Whatever your own personal goals and objectives, Lorasia is a player interactive campaign and while most will spend their time as traders and explorers some will not and it pays to be prepared.

One way to protect your army is to keep it small and hard to spot. If they can't see you then they can't attack you. Concealment can be enhanced through special bonuses (such as camouflage clothing) or special actions ("we'll make our camp in an out of the way, hard to spot location..."). The terrain of the sector you are in is also important — an army is much harder to spot in Forested Mountains than it is on the open plains (Grassland, Steppe, etc.). And, as previously mentioned, smaller is better. Two 200 man armies with few herds are harder to spot than one 400 man army with many herds and wagons so consider splitting your forces. [ED: This also helps to ensure that if one army gets hit the Empire will survive.]

Deterrence is also a good way to avoid attacks. The typical scouting party only indicates the number of warriors in an army, not their type or quality. Since the typical marauding army is looking for an easy target to minimize its own casualties it will usually strike smaller armies first and may avoid larger ones altogether. Thus an army with 200 or 300 troops is unlikely to be attacked, even if the troops are nothing more than Irregular Infantry.

If you are going to be attacked it pays to be prepared. Obviously the more troops the better. And, of course, good quality troops with high Morale are even better still. However, be aware that just because a troop costs more does not mean it is necessarily the best choice for your circumstance. For example, Extra Heavy Lancers are a great troop type if you are a Human fighting on Grasslands but could be little more than an expensive error if you are a Kobold (whose small size and tail result in negative modifiers for cavalry) fighting in the Jungle (the terrain adversely affects cavalry, heavy troops, and those that rely on various types of close formations).

Speaking of being prepared, your Battle Book provides many options (most of which must be discovered through play) improving your chance of success. For example, having a Battlemage or two on hand with orders to cast spells (such as Flaming Missile or Fireball) if your army is attacked it's a great way to improve your combat performance. Likewise adopting non-standard combat options such as Missile tactics can help assure that you are fighting battles on your terms (assuming, in this case, that you have a lot of missile troops) rather than your opponents' terms. To reduce casualties Retreat or Flee tactics are very handy but they do have a price — automatic Morale drops ("Oh No! Our leader says we should Flee. Everyone run away!") and a greater chance of losing more posses-

sions ("Forget the wagons, I'm outta here!") than you might in the typical stand up fight.

In any event, don't be a victim. Take an active role in your own defense. Your survival may depend on it! Note: The majority of armies really don't have much to worry about. Most fighting occurs between warring factions rather than marauders against innocents. But then why take any chances?

[Ed: While the preceeding was primarily written for COD II players most of it applies to COD I as well. The major exceptions are the references to the Battle Book which is only available for COD II, though most of its functions can be mimicked using Standing Orders in COD I.]

Issue #137

COD II HINTS

Did you know COD II features a couple of options NOT available in COD I to help manage your foraging efforts and reduce the risk of starvation?

The first of these allows you to assign one type of herd animal to be slaughtered if necessary to avoid starvation during the Monthly Adjustments. All you need to do is devote one action block to order that "We will slaughter Cattle when necessary to avoid starvation..." or something to that effect. This is especially important for Vampires who cannot stockpile food for consumption.

Secondly, when foraging during the Monthly Adjustments, your people will devote 50% of their time to gathering Food and 50% of their time to gathering Fodder. This does not mean that they will gather equal numbers of each, however. Local conditions have a major impact on what is gathered. For example, it is much easier to gather Food in a Dense Forest than it is to gather Fodder. While the 50/50 split is prefered in most cases you can change the ratio for your Army to be whatever is most applicable for your needs. If you find you're not getting enough Food to feed your people try using one action block ordering that they spend 60% of their time gathering Food.

WHAT'S NEW — COD I & II

We have been getting a lot of new players entering the game recently. For existing players, this is a great opportunity to make new friends and allies. The best way to do this of course is by sending out diplomatic messages and/or sending in Player Notices for the newsletter. For all those new players entering Panagea and Lorasia, here are some hints to help you get off to a better start:

1) Read the rule book to get an overview of the game and then read it again when you start filling out your first turns. There is a lot of useful information in there, some of it plainly obvious and some more subtle. Some bits of information are immediately useful while others don't really kick in until you start running around and doing things. And remember, the rule books do not contain everything there is to know. A lot of new information (such as ARSs — Advanced Rules Supplements) is discovered through play whether through contact with other players, interaction with NPCs or self study. Also remember, the game can be played on many different levels whether you are role-playing interactions with NPCs, adventuring on quests or building up for war. Whatever role you choose to play it is almost always advantageous to spend some time working on building up your characters, developing skills and bonuses and making contact with NPCs — you never know what the future might hold.

2) Don't be shy. Contact other players via diplomatic messages. If the person you contact is also a new player you can mutually speed your development (and enhance your enjoyment of the game) by sharing your knowledge and adventures. If the person is a lot more experienced, they will often provide lots of help merely to gain a friend and ally. It is not unusual for new players to avoid contact out of a misplaced fear of being taking advantage of. In reality this almost never happens. [Ed: I am not aware of a single case where it did.]

3) The News & Information section of the newsletter covers most of the major battles that occurred during the month. It not only discusses who attacked whom, but usually tells in what region the battles occurred and at what cities. In most cases battles involve known mutual belligerents (COD I example: LOOT vs. Terminators) so new players have little to fear. However, if fighting is occurring in your area it might be prudent to either move to another region and/or prepare for battle by training troops, changing tactics (Retreat and Flee, though not without their disadvantages, are a great way to reduce casualties if you are attacked) and preparing to cast defensive spells. There are also ways to help try and avoid even being spotted in the first place. Many of the recent army losses in COD II were forces which, for whatever reasons, were running around with significantly fewer warriors than they started out with. [Ed: They either split their army or retrained their warriors into something else.] A decent sized army (say 200 warriors in COD II) is often more than enough deterrent to avoid being attacked.

4) Move to the nearest city and always send out scouts. This is the quickest and easiest way to find out who or what is around you and visiting a city gives you market info which can give you ideas about what your possessions are worth and ways to make GS. Your starting possessions are a very limited list of what is available and simply checking out the markets can greatly increase your awareness. Scouts not only provide information on terrain and who or what is in a sector but often bring back captured wild herd animals and occasionally Food or Fodder as well. An easy way to increase your wealth!

5) You start off with a fair amount of Gold Sovereigns — be careful how you spend it! It is intended to help you get started by allowing you to train a new character and/or pick up a new troop type on your very first turn. You can supplement your starting GS by heading to the nearest city and selling off your surplus Trinkets, Food, Fodder and Wagons. You might want to hang on to your starting herds (and perhaps add to them as well) as herd growth is an easy way to add to your wealth.

That's it for now. If you have any questions, feel free to drop the GM a note with your next turn. Try to limit yourself to three or four questions at a time. Any more than that and it really starts to cut into the GM's turn processing time, and we do like to process turns. Also, it is easier for us if you leave room on your note for the GM to write down his/her replies. Please don't put your questions on the same page as a Player Notice or other business correspondence as this makes it more likely that something will get misfiled.

Issue #139

HINTS FOR BETTER PLAY (COD I & II)

With all the new players entering both Panagea and Lorasia we thought it might be a good time to remind everyone that when sending in a setup you can request to be started in a specific area (though not a specific sector!) with your first setup and is a great way to make sure you get set up near your friends. Our ability to place your position in the area you requested depends a lot on how compatible your setup choices are with that region. For example, in COD II don't pick the coastal terrain option and then ask to be setup near an inland city.

We also thought it might be a good time to offer some suggestions on what to do for your first couple of turns to help new players get started.

The basic game mechanics are fairly simple and players should try them out by moving their army toward the nearest city, sending out scouts to explore adjacent sectors, training a new character and training some new troops (such as 10 or 20 Craftsmen). Once you get to a city you might want to sell off some surplus goods such as Food, Fodder, Trinkets or Wagons to raise Gold Sovereigns for other things.

For the new player, trying to figure out what to do with the Special Remarks and Special Actions can sometimes be a problem. Having nearly unlimited options unfortunately can make it difficult to decide where to start. The following is a list of some of the "standard" actions that are most commonly used. These are not necessarily perfect actions that should be copied verbatim but rather examples of what to try:

1) Have a feast! Use 1 Food for every 100 people you have (example: 434 people would need 5 Food) and make up a reason to celebrate or just party it up for the fun of it. A successful feast will usually result in a Morale boost. Higher Morale is always a good thing (though Impetuous Morale can cause problems), so have a feast whenever you have a free action block. Note: More than one feast per turn is usually not effective and it may take several feasts before you see a change in your Morale category. For example: In COD II it takes about three feasts for a starting position to rise from Average to Good morale, assuming no other Morale adjustments such as drops from a Forced March, starvation or a lost battle have occured.

2) Have your warriors work on physical training (workouts) to improve their level of physical fitness and thus their combat effectiveness. Being successful in this type of action results in a combat bonus which will appear on your results printout. Also try working on weapons training or organizing your troops into units (squads, platoons, companies, etc.).

3) Speaking of workouts, don't let your characters get flabby sitting around watching others do all the work. Have them (one character per action block) lift weights (rocks, bags of food, whatever) to raise their strength or jog and exercise to raise their Constitution. An action or two (on seperate turns) working out will often raise your character's stat.

4) When you get to a city have a character or two visit the town and spend 10 or so GS buying drinks and making contacts to learn who the prominent personalities are in the area. Who is the City Leader? Does anyone teach Woodworking Skills? Is there a Grey Market Merchant who deals in items not listed on the standard city market? Does anyone teach spells? To maximize your chance of success it is definitely best to specify what type of person you are looking for.

5) The turn after you train your Craftsmen, have them start working on developing their skills (see rule book for details). Level 1 for most skills (especially Woodworking) is fairly easy to get and you need skills before you can build a lot of the cool stuff (ships, artillery, cities!) so get started early.

Finally, don't be afraid to try things! Usually the worst that can happen is the action will fail and the GM's response will usually provide a lot of helpful advice for doing better with future actions. The GM is particularly helpful on the first couple of turns to make it easier for new players to learn the system. So get out there and start exploring!

Issue #141

HINTS FOR BETTER PLAY (COD I & II)

A common problem for new players is trying to figure out how to write a good Special Action. Partially this stems from the fact that Special Actions, being a free form style, have so many possibilities that it is difficult to know where to start — but this also happens to be its greatest strength. Then there are the conflicting goals of trying to provide as much detail as possible to make sure the action succeeds while still trying to fit everything into the space provided for one action block. [Ed: Of course you can use two or more blocks as continuances for one large action, but most would rather use the extra Action Blocks for additional actions.] While we don't want to make writing a Special Action appear to be more complicated or formal than it is, we do have a suggested three step process for writing a special action that may help to improve your chance of success.

Step 1: Determine what the objective is. This seems rather simple but sometimes players apparently lose their way while writing the action or appear to be groping along for information on nothing in particular, which can make the action very hard for the GM to process. Are you trying to raise morale? Gain a skill? Recruit Non-warriors? Remember each Special Action must be directed toward achieving a single specific goal. Before you can convey this goal to the GM you need to make sure it is clear in your mind as well.

Step 2: Determine how to achieve the goal. Before you start writing, figure out what you are going to do. Are your Craftsmen going to make helmets to give your troops a combat bonus? Sounds good, but to achieve this what do you need? Obviously Craftsmen, who normally work in multiples of 10 (10, 20, 30, etc.). Will 10 be enough? Do the Craftsmen have the necessary skills? They will need reasonable levels of Metalworking to fashion helmets. Of course to make metal helmets (wood or stone are not really work) you will need some Metal for materials. Ok, so you have the craftsmen, skills and materials. What are the helmets going to look like and will they take any special effort to create? In this step try to outline everything possible that might be necessary to achieve your goal.

Step 3: Clarify and write your action. Make sure that you cover all the important bases. The GM needs to know what your objective is. While you can write "Objective: Raise Morale" it is better to start off defining your objective in the first sentence such as "In an effort to raise morale Lord Jagged decides to hold a feast..." Next make sure your action includes references to everything needed to complete the objective. Don't say "Spend some GS to find a wizard." But rather "C000 Jargo will enter the city and spend up to 20 GS to find a Sage who can teach him new spells..." Finally, make sure you provide adequate details to show that your people know enough of what they are doing to achieve the goal. For example, "My people will have a mock battle." is simply too vague. How is this conducted? Does everybody attack Fred the Crossbowman? Are steps taken to ensure nobody gets hurt? Do you have one massive free-for-all brawl? Or perhaps "My troops are split into two equal groups and, using padded weapons and veteran warriors as referees, conduct a realistic mock battle in an effort to improve combat effectiveness."

We hope this has provided some insights on how to write an effective Special Action. Most good Special Actions can be accomplished with a short paragraph consisting of a couple of sentences though obviously this can vary a lot depending on what you are trying to do. The most important thing is to get out there and try! If your action doesn't work but does have any chance of success at all the GM will usually provide hints on what to work on next time. Even on successful, though borderline, actions the GM will often provide suggestions for writing a better action in the future. And remember, never leave an Action Block unfilled. There is always something to be accomplished and there is nothing wrong with having a feast or doing weapons training every turn.

Note: The preceeding article contains a number of examples of both good and bad actions. Please be aware, they are, by necessity, very brief and the good actions should not be taken verbatim as they are by no means necessarily complete. They should, however, help point you in the right direction and give you a solid basis for writing your own successful Special Actions. Good Luck!

Issue #142

HINTS FOR BETTER PLAY (COD I & II)

As one would expect, most events that affect a position occur during the position's turn. This is especially true during combat, unless your position is the one being attacked. However, there are circumstances that can allow an Army to launch an attack between its turns (during its opponent's turn). These are a special type of Standing Order that can only be issued by sector (ie. for your ending sector, and must be reissued if you change location). These Standing Orders are: AMBUSH, INTERCEPT and COUNTERATTACK. Each army can have only one of the three in effect at a time (ie. if you issue Ambush orders while you have Intercept orders in effect the Ambush will be used instead). The details of each are discussed below:

AMBUSH: An Ambush occurs when an opposing Army enters a sector and the aggressor Army moves to attack them. Sectors cover a very large area and it is not always possible to spot everyone entering the sector, especially in areas where visibility is limited (such as Forests, Jungles, etc.) or when the target Army is small or has high concealment bonuses. To increase your chances of spotting the target it is a good idea to have a Ranger or two on hand as well as good scouting bonuses. Once the attack is sprung and the battle is fought the targeted army's movement ends since all major battles must occur at the start or end of movement. Whatever the result of the battle, this can really mess up your opponent's plans and is a great way to reduce their mobility on a strategic scale. Of course if you are expecting an Ambush you can have two or more armies moving together as part of a joint turn and have one designated army "shield" the others and intercept any ambushes. An example of a simple Ambush order might be "We will Ambush any Chaotic armies that enter our ending sector." Once an Ambush has been sprung you must reissue the Standing Order on a subsequent turn to launch another (new for COD I). Note: You cannot Ambush armies that are already in the sector, only those moving into or through the sector.

INTERCEPT: Intercept is an order intended to protect allied forces (armies or cities) from attack. When you designate an ally to protect you usually do so by indicating a specific position ("A123 Flanden") or Alliance. This is a great advantage to being part of an Alliance — you don't have to keep track of all the members and who might be in the area. An intercept occurs when your scouts spot an enemy force preparing to attack your ally and your army attacks the aggressor instead. Since armies can only launch one attack per turn, your battle, whatever the outcome, prevents the aggressor Army from hitting your ally. An example action might be "We will intercept attacks on any members of the Brotherhood of Brawn alliance." Unlike Ambush attacks, Intercept Orders will stay in effect as long as you remain in the sector. However, it is not possible to Intercept every attack. As an example, if your ally is being targeted by three armies operating together as a joint turn you will only intercept the first attack. To counter an Intercept, a group of armies doing a joint turn can either hit the Intercepting army first (assuming you know who it is) and prevent him from launching any additional attacks or you can designate one army to "screen" the others and attack anyone that tries to Intercept your main attacks. Note: While it is possible to have several armies with Intercept orders in the same sector it is not possible to "screen" one interceptor with another. Also, only one army can attempt an Intercept at a time. If the intercepting army is hit by a screening force then the main attack goes through even if there are additional intercepting forces available.

COUNTERATTACK: While an Intercept attempts to prevent an attack on an allied army by hitting the aggressor first, a Counterattack waits for your ally to get hit first and then launches an attack against the now hopefully weakened aggressor. This has the potential to be quite devastating as the aggressor Army ends up fighting two battles instead of the anticipated one. While it is possible to have several Armies in a sector with Counterattack orders, each aggressor can only be hit by a single Counterattack. As with Ambush and Intercept, it is possible for a multi-army aggressor force operating as a joint turn to designate one or more armies to screen the others from counterattacks.

Devious players may envision using these Standing Orders to swarm over an aggressor army with multiple attacks but this is largely not possible. If an army is Ambushed, Intercepted or Counterattacked then it becomes the <u>victim</u> in the latest round of fighting and thus cannot be both Intercepted and Counterattacked nor can it be hit by multiple Ambushes, Intercepts and Counterattacks.

A final note to the rule jockeys out there. While we try to stand by these rules as much as possible this is a role playing game and Special Actions do have a major impact on game events. A skillful Special Action might allow an army to get around an Ambush that might otherwise have hit them. Likewise an Army of 50 warriors, whatever their Morale, might simply refuse to Intercept a 500 warrior attack on your ally with 300 warriors.

Issue #148

QUICK TIPS

To reduce your losses in combat change your Land Defense and/or Sea Defense Battle Book tactic (or just your standard tactic in COD I) to Retreat or Flee. Retreat reduces combat by one phase (of five) but automatically causes a drop in morale above and beyond what you might suffer from being defeated or suffering heavy casualties. Flee reduces combat by two phases but results in a more severe morale drop and, if defeated, allows your opponents to capture a much higher percentage of your possessions than they would have had you not been fleeing. In addition, a Fleeing army cannot make any captures of their own even if victorious!

Issue #149

GAMEMASTERNOTICE

Recently a player wrote to us with his concerns that there was far too much combat in Lorasia (COD II) and it just wasn't safe for role-players to pursue their interests. Now we can understand how someone might feel this way from reading the newsletter which is filled with alliance proclamations and reports of battles but it isn't really the case. Looking at the most recent month for which we have complete data (October 1998) we find that only 3% of the turns processed resulted in a battle and most of those were between known belligerents. Nearly 80% of the battles occurred at one of two cities (Ogton and Garshank). So what does all that mean? First, combat is actually rare and not as common as some may think. Second, it is fairly easy to avoid combat by staying out of alliance politics and by avoiding areas where fighting is known to be taking place. Let's face it Lorasia is a BIG place and there are lots of places to hang out other than where all the fighting is. Here are some other tips to avoid combat or reduce your losses if it occurs:

1) Make your army hard to spot — if they can't see you they can't attack you. You can do this by making your army very small (split off a 50 man army with your important characters and minimal herds for adventuring), building up your concealment bonuses, and staying off the open plains (it is much harder to spot someone in the Forest or Jungle than it is on the Steppe or Grasslands).

2) Make your army an unattractive target. An Army with few warriors and many herds makes the perfect target for marauders. To avoid attention keep few herds and maintain a high percentage of warriors. After all, who are the marauders more likely to go after, an Army with 500 herds and 50 warriors or one with 500 warriors and 50 herds? Even if the troops are lowly Irregular Infantry, few take the time to check out their target in that much detail.

3) Set your Battle Book defense tactic to Retreat or Flee. This will greatly reduce casualties in the event you are attacked.

4) Stay away from cities as much as possible. Because this is where armies tend to congregate this is also where most combat occurs. Of course most cities are peaceful places for traders and interactions with NPCs. How can you tell the difference? Read the newsletter and pay attention to where combat is happening!

Issue #150

HELP CENTER

The following is in response to recent player queries. If you have an issue you would like to see covered in a future column, send it in!

COD II: My character was wounded but doesn't seem to ever heal. Do I have to "Cure Wounds" or use a Healing Potion?

The rate at which characters heal automatically depends on their Constitution and Race. A character's chance to recover wounds is approximately equal to their Constitution times 10%. In other words a character with a 5 CON has a 50% chance of recovering one lost "Hit Point" (Hit Points / CON = Health). A character with a 15 CON automatically heals one Hit Point and has a 50% chance of recovering a second. Races with the Regeneration ability automatically recover one Hit Point plus whatever they get for their CON. The use of Cure Wounds and/or a Healing Potion are of course a great way to accelerate the process.

Issue #151

HELP CENTER

COD I & II: How come when I fought a battle I didn't get an Experience Bonus but others do?

A combat Experience Bonus is awarded automatically by the computer when certain conditions are met. While it is inappropriate to go into all of the criteria (and they are slightly different between the two worlds) we can provide some details. One important criteria is the number of losses suffered. If all (or most) of your warriors are slain then your army was smashed and there were too few survivors to gain much from the experience. Likewise if your army suffered virtually no losses then the battle was simply too easy for your warriors to have gained anything useful from the battle. Tactics can also have an impact as obviously when an army is trying to Flee, the length of the battle is greatly reduced and an Experience Bonus is less likely to be gained. The best way way to ensure that an Experience Bonus is gained is to fight a standup battle against a worthy opponent.

COD II: If I have enough Sailors to meet that Battle Crew rather than the Minimum Crew requirements with I be able to move faster?

No. Normal movement is primarily by sail and so the Minimum Crew is all that is needed for maximum speed. Adding extra Sailors does not help. Combat is a whole different story and requires much larger crews in order to get maximum benefit from your ships, thus the larger crew requirements.

Issue #152

HINTS FOR BETTER PLAY (COD I & II)

The capture of a Settlement is perhaps one of the most difficult military undertakings possible. Without an understanding of the difficulties involved and careful preparations any such attack could end in disaster and certainly will result in unnecessary losses.

Firstly it is important to understand that a city ASSAULT is not just a glorified land battle. For one thing, any settlement will have fortifications to aid in its defense. Fortifications not only reduce defender casualties by helping protect them from harm but also increase the defender's offensive performance and thus increase the "killing power" of each individual defender. An easy way to overcome the defensive benefits of fortifications is by fielding Sappers. Each attacking Sapper reduces the effectiveness of fortifications by one "point". The Sappers also actively work to destroy the fortifications, but reducing their effectiveness is much more important. For example, 100 Sappers would reduce the effective fortification strength of a defending Settlement by 100 points, which, for a city with a modest 300 points worth of fortifications would reduce it by a third! Of course the impact of attacking Sappers can be reduced by employing defending Sappers which follows the same one-for-one ratio. In our previous example, if the defender had 200 Sappers these would totally negate the effect of the 100 attacking Sappers

(who would still fight, destroy fortifications, etc.), leaving the defender with their full 300 points worth of fortifications. [Ed: Unfortunately you can't spy out the number of fortifications "points". You can only get an estimate of how strong the fortifications look. For anyone other than the City leader, the "points" only show up on a Battle Result.]

Destroying fortifications is always a good tactic and is usually best accomplished by repeated artillery BOMBARDMENTs. While artillery (normally catapults) will be used when conducting a direct assault, it is often best to bombard the city for several turns prior to the direct assault in an effort to wear down the defenders and reduce their fortifications. To be truly effective, it is assumed that you have more and/or better artillery than the defenders. In game terms, a Bombardment consists of an extended duel between all artillery and missile troops though various other troop types are on hand to offer support (and can suffer casualties). When conducting a Bombardment it is often a good idea to field large numbers of Mantlets to help shield your troops from defending missile fire and to distract the attention of enemy catapults away from your more valuable artillery.

A more direct method of destroying fortifications is charging in with Sappers and the use of Batter Rams. The problem with this approach is that you are likely to suffer heavy casualties in the process. This works well if you are anticipating making multiple assaults (letting the first ones wear down the defenses) or if it is going to be a close fight and you are looking for an edge to push you over the "top", so to speak.

When it comes to the assault itself, at the very least you will need a large number of Ladders to get your troops up and over the walls in order to engage in the decisive Melee combat. Better still is the use of Siege Towers which helps reduce the effect of enemy fortifications by giving at least a portion of your force a combat platform comparable to that of the defending walls.

When picking troops for your attack force it must be remembered that armor provides little defense against enemy artillery and that while most troop types improve their effectiveness through use of various tactical formations, all troops lose their formation bonus in city fighting. In other words, a densely packed Pike formation can be deadly in the open field, in a siege they are just a lot of individuals with a long, unwieldy spear (ie. in COD II, a Heavy Pikeman fighting in a siege loses more than half of his "killing power" because he is forced to fight as an individual rather than a unit, a problem not shared by the likes of a Lt. Axemen who gets no formation bonus to begin with). This is another reason why Sappers are excellent for this role. So why not just field armies of Sappers who, in addition to their special siege skills (which are automatic and require no special actions to use) have armor, missile and melee abilities? Because part of their cost includes all that special siege training and equipment making them less cost effective fighters in field battles than less specialized troops (ex: In COD II, 100 Medium Axemen would easily defeat 100 Medium Sappers even though both would cost the same to train).

Once you have defeated the garrison (killed ALL defenders) it is important to transfer in a garrison of your own to take control using a Special Action. This is done much like forming a new army (ie. you must transfer in a minimum of 50 troops and one character while ensuring that the transferring army retains one character and 50 troops for themselves). The garrison will seize control of the city leader's palace, allowing them to capture all of the former city leader's possessions. Once in control (on the first city leader turn) you can attempt to loot the rest of the city and its markets but you will find this is often more trouble than it is worth. Not only will this destroy the markets (ie. no more trade) but can result in heavy casualties and wholesale destruction of the city as its populace is sure to rise up in revolt. It is often better to simply take control and tax the heck out of them than try to fight them all. [Ed: Even taxing can be overdone leading to a tax revolt and perhaps an armed rebellion as well.]

Finally, conventional wisdom (we're talking real world here) is that you need at least a 3-to-1 advantage to take a fortified position. While it is not always easy to do this with a single army you can often do it with two or more armies instead [Ed: If you have blockaded/sieged the city be sure to issue orders allowing your allies through the lines to reach the city!]. Perhaps having one dedicated bombarding force with most of the artillery/missile troops and a separate storming party with all the Sappers and assault equipment (ladders, towers, rams) would work well. Whatever the case, be prepared for a tough fight and heavy casualties. Of course the better prepared you are the fewer casualties you are likely to suffer....

Issue #153

GAMEMASTER NOTICE

Apparently in COD we do a bit more role-playing with NPCs than many players are used to so we would like to clarify a few things to make role-playing easier for everyone.

Firstly, for each NPC we have a character profile which helps define their attitudes and feelings toward various issues. Perhaps the character hates Orcs or is fearful of Elves. The NPC may be secretive or very blunt, he (or she) may be very reserved or overly friendly. He may be stunningly intelligent or very dim-witted. As the NPC interacts with the world his profile expands or changes. A friendly merchant that gets ripped off will likely be less trusting in the future. A character who gets betrayed may seek vengeance. Note: The character profile is for GM reference only — don't ask to see it, the only way players get this info is through interactions with the NPC.

Second, the NPC's views toward your character have NOTHING to do with the GM's view towards the controlling player! Just because the NPC hates your character and wants/tries to destroy your army doesn't mean the GM hates you — it's just role playing! Likewise, if you want the NPC to treat you kindly, write a good action, don't plead with the GM for special treatment (we really hate that. It's most inappropriate to ask us to be anything other than impartial). Also keep in mind that an NPC's views toward a PC does not change just because of a change in the controlling player.

Third, powerful characters (city leaders and the like) are clearly survivors and only get to be powerful by being smart, so don't assume they are stupid. Likewise, don't assume that their being cautious means they distrust you in particular — they're just exercising their survival skills. For example, don't be surprised if a local city leader doesn't show up at your camp for a special feast — he may fear it could be a trap. Granted, the GM can read your turn and see that it is not a trap, but if the NPC is supposed to be cautious then the GM wouldn't be role-playing it properly if the response was based on your orders rather than on the NPC's personality profile. Similarly, even if the GM knows you are setting up a trap, that doesn't mean that the NPC has figured it out so you may have a good chance for success.

Sometimes, the hardest NPCs to roleplay are the deities. On a regular basis we have players making prayers for guidance on issues that the deity might have information on but unfortunately the GM does not. Is such and such an army going to betray you? How would the GM know? Are the Lawful Grim Raiders passing info on to Chaotics? Not in the game, but the GM has no way of knowing what they are doing outside the game.

It is also important to remember that GM not only role-plays the NPCs you encounter but in many cases your own people as well. If you have very low morale they may refuse to follow some of your orders such as conducting a Forced March, performing craft projects or launching attacks. Your own people are especially sensitive to orders that involve transfering all or most of your possessions to a position (Army or Settlement) other than one belonging to the same Empire. Without a convincing explanation (a good Special Action), issuing such orders will often lead to a large morale drop in addition to the possibility of their refusing to make all or part of the transfers.

Finally, role-playing is really a fun part of the system whether you are role-playing with NPCs or other players. Just remember that role-playing means that you are assuming a role other than your own personality, so don't take role-playing interactions personally! A blood thirsty rampaging marauder is probably a nice guy in real life. In fact, most PBMers (and GMs) have a number of common interests — that's why we all enjoy this great hobby! Of course we realize that role-playing is not for everyone and try to tailor our responses to a specific player's needs. If you aren't really into to it you can just deal with most NPCs in a fairly straightforward manner, just tell them what you want or ask for what you need. But with more effort you will definitely get more out of the game. The important thing is to have fun!

Issue #154

HELP CENTER

COD I & II: I recently sold some wagons but the cattle weren't added back to my herds. Where'd they go?

Unlike Cavlary Troops types, which include the rider and mounts (ex: a Light Chariot includes the driver and two horses), with wagons, artillery and (COD II only) siege equipment, the herd animals used to pull these items are part of your available herds and not part of the unit itself. In other words, if you have 100 cattle and 10 wagons, you have 100 cattle total. However, if you also have 20 Light Cavalry then you have 120 herd animals, 100 cattle and 20 Horses being used as mounts.

COD I & II: Can my navy (an army with ships) move to a land sector, transfer gold to my ally and continue sailing all in one turn?

No, you cannot combine land and sea movement in the same turn. Thus, as soon as you enter a land sector from a sea sector your movement for the turn is over.

COD I & II: Can my navy (army with ships) transport another army?

Yes, you can transport only one army at a time and the armies must do a joint turn in order to move. When embarking, the army being transported must do an action stating that they are boarding the ships and the army doing the transporting must do an action allowing them to board the ships. Be careful about overloading/overcrowding! If this occurs the Morale of both armies suffers and losses may occur as well. Once you make landfall the army being transported automatically disembarks. In battle at sea, the transported army cannot fight (unless attacked by the transporting army!) so make sure the fleet is well defended. If the transporting army is destroyed, so is the transported army.
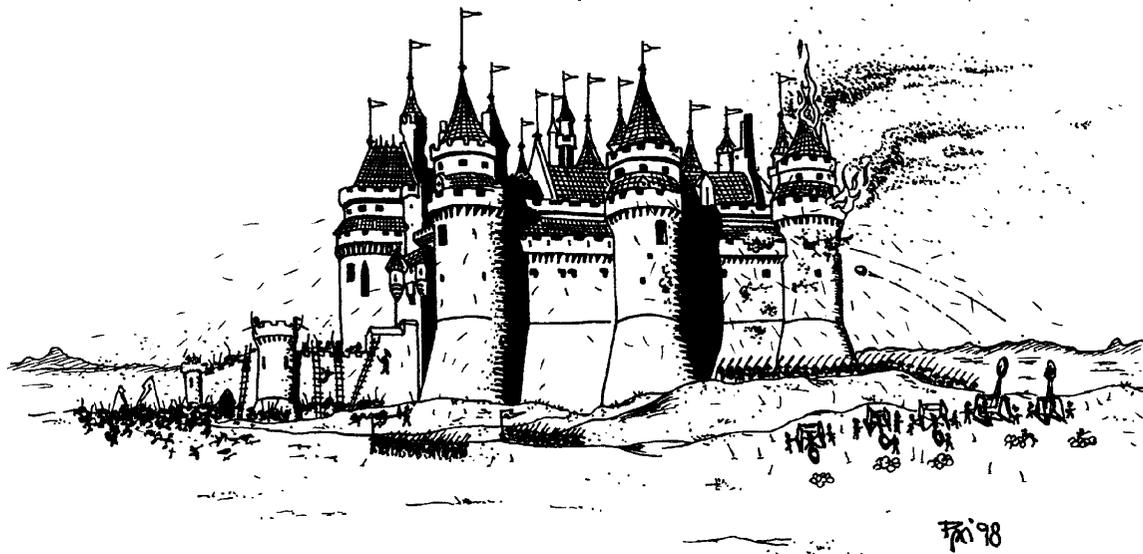
COD II RULE CHANGES

1) Effective for all turns with a processing date AFTER May 15th, the cost to gain a new troop type is raised from 50x the basic cost to train 1 warrior to 100x the basic cost. In other words, for example, the GS cost to gain the ability to train Light Axemen would rise from 200 GS (50x4) to 400 GS. Note: gaining the ability does not actually get you any troops as these are paid for separately. To gain the ability to train Sailors would cost 300 GS (100x3) and then you could train 25 Sailors for an additional 75 GS (25x3). Gaining the ability is a one time cost.

Follow-up: Recently AGE has taken a lot of flack over this rule change. Complaints have ranged from we are trying hurt veteran players, to trying to hurt new players, to trying to make players send in more turns. First, we are not trying to hurt anybody. Second, we really don't see how this change will force players to send in more turns. It is our belief that there is too much GS in the game system causing an inflation problem. This is primarily manifested in the fact that most active armies are running around with two or three HEAVY troops types and with little or no Light or Medium troops. Heavy troops are supposed to be expensive and hard to come by, not common and easy to get. Thus by raising the cost of acquiring new troop types we hoped to reduce the amount of GS in the system and to make Heavy troops less common. If our effort to improve the game was misinterpeted we apologize. It was however, well intentioned. We regret not taking the time to explain the reasons for the change previously.

2) Effectively immediately we've changed the description/costs of the Bless Self ritual. This isn't so much a change but an effort to make the original intent more clear. Basically Bless Self ritual is the same as Bless Others ritual but obviously you are praying to raise your own stats rather than someone else's. Unfortunately, if it were exactly the same, a character could never raise his/her own Wisdom which would be very limiting. To get around this the character must fast (which lowers his/her health by 50%) but by doing so they effectively lower the Piety Point cost of the prayer by one. Thus a Cleric (or similar character type) with a Wisdom of five would expend five Piety Points and sacrifice half his health to raise his Wisdom to six. Alternatively another Cleric could expend six Piety Points doing a Bless Other ritual on the target Cleric to do the same thing. Note: Fasting (losing half your health) does a great job of impressing your deity and encourages him to grant your prayer. Healing the fasting Cleric on the very same turn so that he doesn't actually lose anything does NOT impress your deity making him less inclined to grant your prayer.

THE PLAGUE STRIKES!

On the subject of Plagues, it is worth noting that various killer illnesses do exist in Panagea and Lorasia so don't be surprised if they pop up from time to time. The plagues (and cures) system is much more sophisticated in COD II than COD I but do share some common traits. Outbreaks of plague are much more likely to occur in large armies than small ones, are more likely to hit sedentary armies than those that move around, and are more common in warm/damp climates that cold or arid ones. Once the plague hits it is definitely worth some effort to cure the illness or at least minimize its impact but it is possible to just let it run its course. Usually it will increase in severity for several months until it reaches a peak and then gradually decline until it disappears. It is unlikely that any outbreak of the plague will destroy a position (Army or Settlement) but it can lead to some heavy losses to your herds or population.

DID YOU KNOW.... (COD II)

Did you know that a natural Magic Ability significantly increases the damage caused by Battle Spells in combat?

Did you know that a natural Magic Resistance greatly reduces the amount of damage caused by enemy Battle Spells in combat?

Did you know that Gnolls are are the second most popular race and probably the most popular amongst the martial types and yet have neither Magic Ability nor Magic Resistance?

WHAT'S NEW — COD II

Recently we made a major overhaul of the Monthly Adjustment Programs, significantly improving the inner workings of the code — particularly for cities. Unfortunately most of the changes are internal rather than external, thus while the changes will yield better results, they won't necessarily be dramatically obvious. The most noticeable changes will be the number and quality of text results which normally only occur when something bad happens (starvation and plague losses, desertions, etc.). In addition we did add two new spells (new spells + Monthly Adjustments = BIG Hint for those familiar with COD I).

In addition we automated the cleanup of dead characters. To clarify, when a character dies he can still be resurrected as long as he/she has some CON remaining. With each passing month his/her CON will gradually drop toward zero as the body decomposes. Once it reaches zero you will get one final Monthly Status Report showing the character present then the body will be removed from your records as it can no longer we restored. Thus not only is it important to try and resurrect a valued character, it is important to do so quickly before most of the CON is lost.

DID YOU KNOW.... (COD I & II)

Did you know an Army can join ANY alliance with or without the alliance leader's permission?

Did you know that alliance leaders can order an alliance membership report for only $3.00 which lists every member Army/Settlement of the alliance (even if banners are hidden) as well as their general location (Area name)?

Did you know an alliance leader can kick out any unwanted members from their alliance?

Did you know that if you are kicked out of an alliance you take a BIG morale drop and your people are unlikely ever agree to rejoin?

Issue #163

COD I RULE CHANGES

The following changes take effect beginning with all turns processed AFTER the February 1st Monthly Status Reports:

1) Taking a cue from the superior COD II gaming system we have now expanded the choice of battle options from one single Tactic for both attack and defense to an Attack Tactic and a Defense Tactic. As mentioned many times before your choices for tactics are Artillery, Missile, Melee (which is Standard if none was ever selected), Retreat and Flee. Initially both Attack and Defense Tactics will be set the same as your old original Tactic, but you can now change each at will using an Action Block for each.

2) Again, based on the success of the COD II system, Armies and Cities can now designate a single Herd type to automatically slaughter on the Monthly Adjustments to avoid starvation. If none is designated, then no Herds will be slaughtered. For example if you declare that Cattle will be slaughtered then whenever, during the Adjustments, your people are at risk of starving, they will kill just enough Cattle to avoid death and a Morale loss.

Both of these changes are not only welcome additions to the game system by giving players more options and control over their positions but they should also go a long way toward reducing the cost of play by reducing the need for certain types of actions and the so called "maintenance" turns — welcome relief for the typically large COD I Empires.

Issue #166

WHAT'S NEW — COD I & II

A nifty new character class has been added to both games. What is it? Unfortunately it must be learned through play. This latest addition means that there are 18 character types in COD II and 10 in COD I. How many do you know of?

Issue #169

WEB HELP

If you have checked out our website (www.ageforfun.com) you will have noticed that we are very fond of PDF files. However, it has come to our attention that some of you aren't familiar with the PDF format. So here is a quick explanation.

PDF stands for Portable Document Format. It is basically a way of creating files (like copies of our newsletters) that look identical no matter what system you are using (Windows, Mac, Linux, whatever). You can view the files onscreen or print them. The current versions also compress files nicely making for quick downloads. To open PDF files all you need is a viewer. Where do you get a viewer? Check our LINKS page and we will take you right there! Just download Adobe Acrobat Reader for your system and you are all set.

Issue #170

WHAT'S NEW — COD II

As was first reported on our website (www.ageforfun.com) Duane has been at it again. Always trying to improve things, Duane spent most of August "tweaking" the COD II programs to improve results, increase efficiency, reduce errors and expand the game. These were not cosmetic changes that will dramatically change the turn results print outs but rather the "nuts and bolts" kind of changes that improve the game over the long haul. In particular he spent much of his time rewriting sections of the battle program and adding new spells. The most dramatic changes to the battle program include enhanced effects for combat useful skills such as Metal Working (better weapons) and Healing Arts (fewer losses) and bonuses as well as new battle spells, many of which are defensive (ie. reduce friendly losses) as opposed to offensive (increasing enemy

losses) as had been the dominant type previously. Of course to see the effects in action, you'll have to fight a battle (or have someone else do it and share the combat results with you). As for the new spells, these will have to be discovered through play — though at least one may make it into the next rule book revision.

As always, we are open to new suggestions for further improvements. At least one of the new spells was a player suggestion — we do listen and take player feedback seriously. Anyway, we hope you will enjoy the game enhancements and your continuing adventures on Lorasia! [Ed: Now Duane, get to work on COD I and CTF2187 improvements so the other players don't feel neglected! Oh yeah, and that top secret internet project too, and ... and ... and ....]
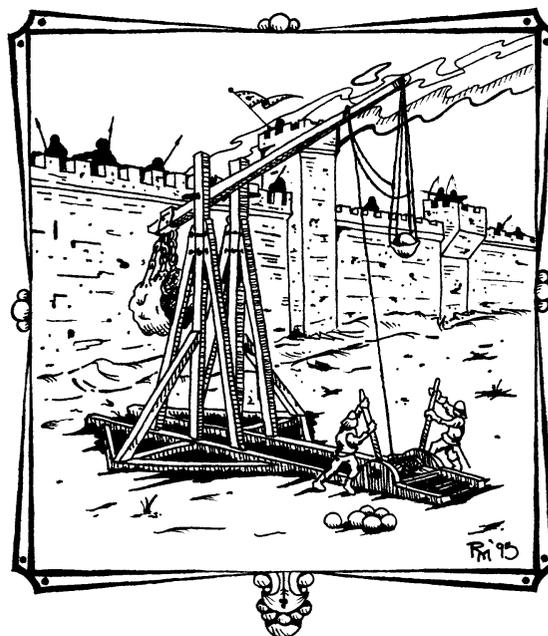
Issue #171

HINTS FOR BETTER PLAY (COD I & II)

When occupying a settlement, either because you built the place or defeated the garrison, the rules are the same as if you are forming a new army. In other words you MUST transfer over at least 50 people and one character AND have at least 50 people and one character remaining in the transferring Army. If you want to totally disband the Army into the city it is a two turn process: one turn to setup the initial garrison and a second to transfer in the remaining Army population.

While this two turn process applies to occupying a settlement and having one Army form another, it DOES NOT apply when a Settlement is forming an Army (usually to run away or to change ownership). A settlement can, if it wishes, create a new Army and transfer in its entire garrison all in one turn.

When a new Army is formed by an Army, the new Army must wait ten days before doing its first turn (if you send in a turn at the same time it will be held until it can be processed). When occupying a Settlement, or when a Settlement forms a new Army a turn for the new unit can be done immediately. Note: No orders for the newly formed units, under any circumstances, can be done on the forming unit's turn. [Ed: This may seem silly and unnecessarily complex but these rules were created to address all sorts of problems that have arisen over the years in COD I. Avoiding problems makes the games run better for everyone.]

In COD I a settlement MUST form a new Army in order to attack other Armies in the sector. In COD II a settlement can launch a "sortie" which allows them to charge out, attack an enemy force and then return to the Settlement afterwards thus avoiding the need to form a new Army for the attack.
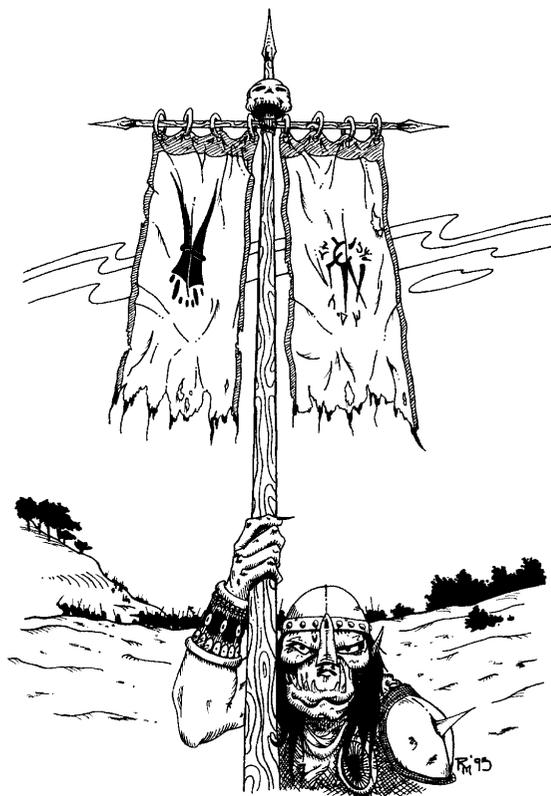
Issue #172

WHAT'S NEW — COD I

In response to player feedback we have an exciting new feature for COD I players — a Fax Turn Sheet. Based on its COD II counterpart the COD I Fax Turn Sheet is basically a Standard Turn with no Special Actions. Why would anyone want to use such a thing? SPEED! No waiting for the Post Office to deliver your turn, no need to pay extra for Priority or Express Mail, the Fax Turn Sheet allows you to get your turn in FAST! Without Special Actions obviously the Fax Turn does not allow you to launch attacks or setup an Ambush/Intercept/Counterattack but what it does allow is a quick response to unexpected emergencies such as training troops or moving after being attacked. You can also do transfers, transactions, scouting and create a new character. This new addition was originally announced on our website (www.ageforfun.com) and copies can be downloaded from there or you can request that a copy be sent to you via standard mail.

WHAT'S NEW — COD II

To reduce confusion about what Advanced Rules Supplements (ARS) are known by a given Empire, this information will appearing on turn results starting November 1st, 2000. Be sure to verify that all the information is correct and if you note any errors please let us know.

Also beginning November 1st, Duane has implemented a new routine for determining which characters will cast what spells in battle. Previously the spells to be cast were sorted in order of Spell Points required to cast (most expensive first) and then would sort through the characters to find the first one able to cast the spell before moving on to the next spell. The old routine drew some criticism as some players felt it resulted in high Intelligence characters needlessly casting low level spells rather than saving up their Spell Points for something more important (and costly) such as Firestorm. The new routine is much more complex than the old (too much to explain here) but will hopefully address those concerns by taking into account not only the character's available Spell Points but also his/her Intelligence as well.

Issue #175

WHAT'S NEW — COD I & II

We have some exciting new features for both games that were first announced on our website (www.ageforfun.com):

COD I & II: We have added a great new character class to both games. This new class is most commonly found in Elven or Dark Elven settlements and while handy in tactical situations (quests, adventures) for dealing with difficult adversaries it is of particular value in mass combat for cutting down numerous foes. We can't tell you more as the details must be learned through play (knowledge is power!). This brings us to 11 Character Classes in COD I and 19 in COD II. Can you name them all?

COD I: Thanks to a persistent suggestion from Raymond Doo we have expanded the Empire Possessions Totals section of the Monthly Status Reports to include Gold Sovereigns and Non-warriors as well as two additional categories. Since the Armies/Cities in a large Panagean Empire can be quite numerous this information can be handy for keeping track of assets and resources not to mention saving players the trouble of counting them by hand.

COD II: While making some minor changes to the Battle Book options in response to suggestions from our UK affiliate we went a little overboard and actually added a host of new options to help manage your troops' behavior both during and after the fighting. Some of these new options can be used to help counter some of the sneakier tactics originally developed in COD I. So what are they? We can't tell you (knowledge is power!) as they must be learned through play.

All told these changes help to add to the already considerable depth of both games. Most came from suggestions provided by others rather than solely developed internally. So, as we have always encouraged, send in your feedback and suggestions! You may be the instigator of the next great game enhancement.

Issue #176

COD II RULE CHANGES

As you may already know each Empire can have a maximum of fourteen different troops types. Three of these are fixed (ie. everybody has them, these are Non-warriors, Foragers and Craftsmen) and the rest are determined by the controlling players. Previously, once a troop type was selected, it could not be removed. An Empire was essentially locked into that decision for ever. Thanks to suggestions from Dan Waugh (and others) that is about to change....

Beginning March 1st, it is now possible to "disband" an unwanted troop type and remove it from your Empire freeing up space for something more useful. The three "core" troop types (Non-warriors, Foragers and Craftsmen) cannot be removed but any of the eleven others your Empire may have are fair game. To remove a troop type from your list you must do an action ("Warlord Gork orders that the infrastructure for Medium Axemen be dismantled and permanently removed from the Empire...." or some such). You will NOT get a refund for GS spent to originally set up the infrastructure and the action will fail if you have even one member of that troop type anywhere in the Empire (ie. retrain all the Medium Axemen as something else BEFORE trying to get rid of the troop type).

Due to an unfortunate processing error, players were for a while allowed to build Ballista (with the appropriate skills) using 20 Craftsmen and 2 Lumber. THIS WAS AN ERROR. The correct totals are 40 Craftsmen and 4 Lumber. No corrective steps are being taken. If you were able to build these half price Ballista then congratulations — you lucked out. There weren't very many but we wanted to make sure everyone was clear on the correct amounts and that this isn't a rule change, just a correction of an error.

Issue #177

WHAT'S NEW — COD I

Activity on Panagea is on the rise! Not only are we getting a lot more turns but we are also seeing a number of new signups and info requests. Not bad for a 15 year old game. But then if you want to fight a fantasy campaign, COD I is the place to do it. Pick up an NPC position and you can quickly field a force of THOUSANDS and join in on the fun of an ongoing world war! The principal participants are some of the sharpest minds in PBM — they really know strategy! Not to mention knowing how to maximize the effectiveness of their forces (along with magical and divine elements).

To take advantage of the recent upsurge in game momentum, AGE has been working to improve things for everyone. Debbie has upgraded the turn sheets while Duane has finally finished the long awaited COD I Rule Book version 4.0. This is the first serious update in ten years. We adopted a new "easier to read" format, made a host of corrections for things that have changed over the years, added a new character class, provided a host of information on tactics and Standing Combat Orders, a bunch of new artwork and all the new rule changes previously covered in the Cosmic Balance. While you can certainly hang on to your old tattered version 3.0 (or earlier which are bound to be collector's items) and use the Best Of The Cosmic Balance for reference, we heartily recommend everyone get themselves a copy of the latest version. You won't be disappointed!

Issue #178

WHAT'S NEW — COD II

Duane's been at it again! Inspired by the recent upsurge in COD activity and by feedback from our UK affiliate, Duane has been busy expanding and improving the game system. He's spent a lot of time working on the Special Items system adding several new classes of things that are bound to be popular and are extremely useful. He has added a new (though rare) herd type that has interesting possibilities and which is more useful for larger races than the faster growing smaller ones (though one for them is in the works as well), and of course made changes and improvements to the combat system. Though less exciting, he has also made a number of improvements to the processing software to reduce errors (rare as they already are) and make the GMs' job easier thus giving them more time to produce better quality turn results — especially for roleplayers. Unfortunately, many of these changes will not be readily apparent (thus this announcement), at least at first glance, but should make for more exciting play as the new elements are discovered and put to use by players. The changes go into effect beginning with all turns with a processing date after May 1st. Enjoy!

SURVEY RESULTS

Last month we conducted a survey. It had been suggested that we increase the number of Empires allowed per player from two to three (the same as in COD I). We actually received a fairly sizable response rate and most included a verbose explanation of the player's views (which we appreciate) rather than a simple nay or yea response. The results of the voting are as follows:

In Favor of Increasing the Empire limit to Three: 70%
Opposed: 20%
Answer Unclear: 10%

Thus the wish of the majority of players is clear. Beginning June 1st we will be raising the COD II Empire limit (per player) to three, only one of which can be an Advanced Race. If you want to pick up that third (or second) Empire you can either submit a setup form for a conventional setup or request an NPC (formerly player controlled but currently run by the GMs). If you request an NPC you can either ask for a specific known position or give us general guidelines as to what you are looking for (in terms of race, religion, alliance, location, etc. NOT size, wealth, or possessions unless whether or not they have ships is an issue) and we will see what we can find. Note: We DO NOT have a list of available positions that we can send you.

Issue #179

WHAT'S NEW — COD II

As some of you may have noticed prices have begun to change on the city markets. Duane spent years collecting city trade statistics and weeks analyzing and programming routines to automatically adjust prices based on local conditions and market trends. While there is a random element involved most price changes occur in response to trade activity (if everyone sells, prices go down, if everyone buys prices go up, etc.). There are many factors that can affect the prices, virtually all of which are under player control. City leaders (and others) can even work directly to influence prices. [Ed: That's _influence_ not control. NPC Merchants run the markets.] However, to avoid undue disruptions to the game, price changes will only occur infrequently. Our current plan is to run the program every other month in conjunction with the Monthly Status Reports.

Issue #180

DID YOU KNOW.... (COD II)

COD II: Did you know that Ballista are not the only type of artillery available? A Ballista is little more than a jumbo crossbow and, though effective as an anti-personnel weapon, is in fact the smallest, lightest and most easily produced catapult available. There are many types of artillery. Most are much larger and many are quite specialized for specific types of battles. So if artillery is your focus, consider other options before investing too heavily in a vast train of Ballista.