

STATREP

THE BLACK PRINCE

A Statistical Report of Game Characteristics

by Claude Bloodgood

Medieval warfare seems so obsolete by modern standards, and yet it is remarkably similar to modern combat in many ways. The tactics and strategy are not really so different, and while the weapons are dated, the concepts those weapons brought with them are very much in evidence today. *Black Prince* was an interesting game to compile stats on, and the opinions it evoked were widely variant.

The game, *Black Prince*, attracted more experienced players than newcomers, but also did well with history buffs new to gaming. The general reaction to *Black Prince* was favorable before playing it, and this was reinforced with game experience.

Statistical Analysis

Participating Players: 36

46.9% of active players selected the game from an inventory of more than 80 available titles during the six months ending 9/30/80.

Repeat Players: 23

63.9% of the 36 participants played the game again after completing one set (each player playing each side once). This is above average.

Total Games Played: 158

An average of nearly 9 times for each participating player.

Average Playing Time: 2.68 hours

Total playing time was 427½ hours for 158 games. Players new to *Black Prince* should expect their first game to take about 5-7 hours, unless they are thoroughly familiar with the rules.

Shortest Recorded Game: 0:40 hours

Conceded after disastrous charge on Lancaster's position in third turn by experienced player with red face.

Shortest Complete Game: 2:00 hours

Played between experienced gamers repeating on *Black Prince*.

Longest Recorded Game: 11:50 hours

Played between two experienced gamers with conflicting opinions on the rules.

Best Side Results: English 84-74

The high ground proved a clear advantage in play, and the English side is best for this reason.

Game Imbalance: 6.33%

Formula is wins minus losses, divided by the number of games played. *Black Prince* is very well balanced.

Game Balance Analysis

The game imbalance statistic provided above is not weighted to reflect relative player skills, but the pairings for these stats had few real mis-matches, and the balance is a fair in-

dication of what any two equal opponents might expect for results. The English edge is minimal, and without good tactics, can be lost easily.

Subjective Analysis by the Players

Play Balance: 7.94

Average of 36 responses; 9 is perfectly balanced, 1 is totally unbalanced.

Playability: 5.86

Average of 36 responses; 9 is supremely playable, 1 is unplayable.

Length of Game: 7.44

Average of 36 responses; 9 is exactly the right length, 1 is much too short or long.

Game Challenge: 8.08

Average of 36 responses; 9 is extremely challenging, 1 is no challenge.

Rules Disputes: 5.60

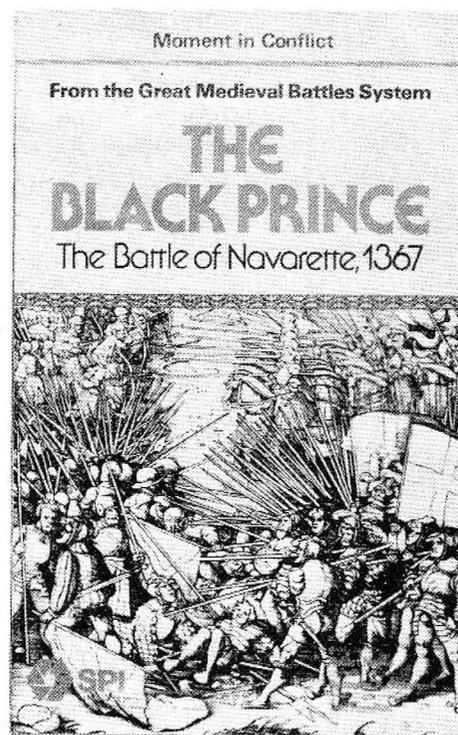
Average of 36 responses; 9 is none of consequence, 1 is constant disputes.

according to players polled; e.g., 16.7% had no complaints on the game of any type, while 11.1% felt the rules were too complicated. This and several other key polls produced some interesting results. Slightly over half the players (51.2%) had reservations about using *Morale Effects* to replace the more common *Combat Results Table*, but found it worked. One major problem area was disruptions created by routed units on a congested map, and this led to frequent rules disputes.

The victory conditions weigh the loss of Pedro the Cruel heavily, and the English can lose if he goes down; but without him, there is no reason for the English to be fighting. This is one of the game's problem areas also, as it tends to place too great an emphasis on a single character.

The game is an excellent simulation of history, but clearly has to struggle for playability in congested map situations. While this is a player complaint, it should be noted that this is also a very good recreation of the historical era, and the problems of warfare then. Perhaps the most significant complaint, the *Morale Effects* use, is also the best feature of the game. This is a study in frustration, but for those who enjoy trying to test ideas from historical battles, the game is a good one. The English Longbowmen are the key to winning for both sides; the Castillian player will suffer heavy losses unless these are destroyed quickly. Crossbowmen are also very effective in play. The English must attempt to avoid close combat for as long as possible, and utilize long range weapons.

Black Prince is strongly recommended for the stout-hearted! ■ ■



Comments on the Game System

Black Prince shares a game system with *King Arthur*, *Robert at Bannockburn*, and *Tamburlaine the Great*. The *Great Medieval Battles System* is both simple and complex

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