

IN CHARACTER

Attitudes, Advice and Options in War of the Ring

by David A. Smith

The saying is that all actors love to play villains — they're so much more interesting than good guys. Does this mean that wargamers like to play the side of the (underdog) bad persons when it comes to pushing cardboard? David Smith is making a case that the Dark Power player needs a little more music in his act to make it a balanced contest (and once in a while smash the syrupy do-gooder Fellowship with their super-cute little Hobbits). Almost inevitably, he offers optional rules to accomplish this laudable objective. —RAS

War of the Ring is a strategic simulation of the struggle for the One Ruling Ring of power; so much everybody knows. The game includes three games: the War itself, and two smaller scenarios covering the siege of Minas Tirith, and the battle for the Ring at the end of the Second Age, which led to the fall of Sauron, the taking of the Ring by Isildur, and the death of Gil-galad. The two smaller simulations are not necessary to the play of the large one, and consequently will not be considered in this article. Three basic topics will be covered: (1) strategy for the Players in the Character Game; (2) changes in strategy which occur when playing the Campaign Game; (3) some suggested rules changes to even things up.

General Strategy in the Character Game

The Fellowship Player. The Fellowship Player can win only by destroying the Ring. To do this, he must carry it into Mordor and dispose of it in the Crack of Doom. The Dark Power Player knows this (the first of many differences between the game and the books that have an impact on the action), and consequently will be directing the bulk of his energy against this possibility. Moreover, the Dark Power Player *knows* at the beginning of the game that the Ring is borne by Frodo, and that there are only four hobbits. Hence the Dark Power Player will be concentrating on locating the hobbits as his primary objective. The Fellowship Player's primary objective is to get as many of his characters into Mordor as possible. (This is also a difference from the book, where the objective of the Fellowship was to be as active as possible *outside* Mordor in order to prevent Sauron from divining the Fellowship's real plan.) The more people the Fellowship Player has on hand, the greater the chance that one of them will be able to deliver the mail (as it were). The Fellowship Player's second objective is to delay as long as possible revealing where his hobbits are, and which one is Frodo.

For these reasons, the "standard" course of action is to split the hobbits into two pairs. More for historical accuracy than anything else, Sam is usually chosen to accompany Frodo. (However, there is no real reason for doing this, and if you are playing against a first-time Sauron, a subtle bluff would be to put Sam with Meriadoc or Peregrin. Then, if Sam is captured and dragged back to Mordor to be revealed, his companion will usually be *assumed* to be Frodo.)



Frodo (3)5	Sam (3)5	Merry (2)5	Pippin (2)5
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Splitting the hobbits into a stack of one and a stack of three is not stupid *per se* (although it is not recommended); the oddity of it will bother the Dark Power Player. After all, you wouldn't ordinarily send the Ringbearer alone; yet sending him with *two* hobbit companions seems wasteful. Still, it forces the Dark Power Player to expend energy (and Shadow Points) on both stacks. Above all, diversity is the Fellowship Player's greatest asset: it forces the Dark Power Player to expend energy, Nazgul and Shadow Points on several fronts and spreads Sauron thin.

Keeping all four hobbits in one stack is simply foolish: the stack will be searched incessantly and all the Nazgul will gather about it. Eventually the hobbits will be spotted and (odds are) three of the four will be captured. Of course, if the Ringbearer is captured, he can immediately escape by using the Ring. However, there are two drawbacks to doing so. First, the Ringbearer becomes visible to Nazgul, who may then challenge him to individual combat. Second, the Ringbearer will begin to use up his Ring fatigue, and the Fellowship Player cannot really afford to have him become a Ringwraith.

Once the Ringbearer is captured, it is probably wise not to use the Ring to escape until actually inside Mordor, preferably at the hex closest to the Crack of Doom. The only time it is imperative to use the Ring to escape is if there is a danger of individual combat. As far as I know, the rules do not prevent a Nazgul from arriving at a stack of Orcs carrying captured hobbits and challenging the hobbits to individual combat. How-

ever, this is a tacky (and historically inaccurate) way to play, and it is suggested that players not use this possibility. (Besides, the hobbits will be quickly slaughtered.)

In the event that any spotted Characters are revealed, it is a good idea to run them into a stack of unspotted characters in a different region. This restores the confusion that previously existed.

Once the hobbits have been split into two stack of two, the remaining members of the Fellowship must be allocated between them. In the Character Game there is no point in sending them anywhere else. For if a third stack is created, the other two stacks (containing hobbits) will be relatively unprotected in the event of individual combat.



Boromir
2-5

Boromir is classically *supposed* to go in the stack containing Merry and Pippin, to keep him away from the Ring. He is, however, less of a danger than he might seem. The "Boromir Attempts to Seize the Ring" card will come into the hands of the Dark Power Player about one-third of the time. Regardless of where Boromir is, the Dark Power Player will immediately learn whether or not his stack contains the Ringbearer. The actual danger that Boromir will gain control of the Ring is small; even if he kills Frodo, another member of the fellowship will get him. (Contrary to the general rule given above, it probably does *not* make sense for Frodo to don the Ring if attacked by Boromir, especially if he is wearing the mithril coat.) So keeping Boromir with the Ringbearer is thus a bluff: if the stack is spotted, Boromir will be revealed, and the Dark Power Player will incline to the view that the Ringbearer is not with him.

In fact (and the true Tolkien freak may wince at this) Frodo is a poor Ringbearer. If he is bumped off, Gandalf makes a much better Ringbearer; the only advantage Frodo has is that he is more able to remove the Ring at will than is Gandalf. (If you are playing the Optional Rules discussed below, Gandalf is less likely to become Ringbearer.)

Generally speaking, the best fighters, Aragorn and Gandalf, should be allocated to different stacks. Boromir should probably go with Aragorn. Legolas and Gimli may be kept together, again for sentimental reasons

as much as anything; besides, the two of them put together are not worth as much as either Gandalf or Aragorn. (Sorry, elf and dwarf fans, those are the breaks.)

Once the Company has been properly divided into two stacks, the only relevant question is: whither goest? One stack should always go through Moria. If the Fellowship Player has a Misty Passes Open card he should use it and send the other stack through there; if not, both stacks should traverse Moria and split shortly thereafter (the principle of maximum diversity). It might seem dangerous to go through two Servants of Sauron where only one is required; however, Boromir is an ideal opponent for the Servants of Sauron, and anyone else who gets wounded can be patched up at Rivendell or Lorien.



Aragorn
4-5



Gandalf
the Grey
4-5



Gimli
(2)5



Legolas
(2)5

It is best to have the two different stacks in different regions at all times if possible, to cut down the chance of being searched. There is an argument that the opposite is true; for if all Nine Walkers are in one region in different stacks, the Dark Power Player will have to split his search force if he wishes to cover both stacks. However, blockading with Nazgul is easier. (This is especially true in and around Lorien; the Fellowship Player will have to proceed slowly if the Dark Power Player covers the clear terrain.)

Unless Saruman strays from Isengard, the Fellowship Player should avoid it. And once into the Brown Lands or Ithilien, one stack should make a feint toward the gates of Morannon, even if the Fellowship Player lacks that card; it will keep the Dark Power Player just a little bit unsure as to how the Ringbearer will enter Mordor (and which stack he is in).

Lastly, the Fellowship Player can most likely obtain a Cowardly Draw in the Character Game if he wants it, simply by splitting into nine one-character stacks and running them in random directions through Middle-Earth. This is, however, a shameful way to play, and should be prohibited. (See the Optional Rules for a rule which makes this strategy unfeasible.)

Dark Power Player. The Dark Power Player's strategy is straightforward. He has only one hope of winning: find the Ring and bring it home. (Forget about Citadel Reduction; the only time it makes sense is when the Fellowship Player is playing the Cowardly Draw strategy.) To this end, searches are all-

important. The Dark Power Player should keep both Saruman and the Mouth of Sauron constantly on the move, as they do not require Shadow Points. He should also try to bracket at least one stack of Fellowship characters in such a way that the fellowship Player must either stand still or pass through a Dark Power group. (Remember, those searches are freebies, whereas the Search cards eat up Shadow Points.) It is *much* better to use Orc bands for searching than Nazgul, since they may capture. However, in the absence of a convenient Orc-band, Nazgul will do.

The achilles heel of the Dark Power Player is the accursed Shadow Points table. Sauron is strangled in his ability to do anything: there are hobbits to torture, Nazgul to direct, Orcs which must be whipped into battle frenzy (oh, the paperwork is unbelievable!). The Optional Rules suggest an alternative to this poverty of command (you just can't get good trained bureaucrats willing to work in Mordor these days). Sauron should always spend *all* his Shadow Points. One always useful thing to do is to move otherwise idle Nazgul to the Crack of Doom to prepare the reception committee for the Ringbearer. (Again, the Optional Rules have an answer for this.)

The Dark Power Player should play any event cards he is legally entitled to. He should also capitalize on any opportunity for Individual Combat, and go out of his way to create such opportunities. Remember, once a Character has been spotted in a region, he is subject to individual combat for as long as he remains in that region. Take advantage of any opportunity to knock off any member of the Fellowship, regardless of how many Nazgul it takes. Keep in mind the Sorcery Table; it cannot backfire, whereas ordinary combat can result in wounds for the attacker. Don't get too excited if you capture a hobbit or two — if he doesn't escape via the Ring, he probably isn't the Ringbearer. (Do spend the Shadow Points necessary to drag him back to Mordor.) Be careful of leaving Mount Doom ungarrisoned when you bring back a hobbit. He might turn out to be the Ringbearer and announce, right in the middle of your move, that he has put on the Ring and escaped. And then you're in deep trouble.



Mouth of
Sauron
2-7

In general, the Dark Power Player should concentrate on being as nasty as possible, and should reconcile himself to losing. Sad but true; the deck is stacked against the bad guys.

Campaign Game

The Campaign Game is much more enjoyable than the Character Game, for the objectives are more varied. It also runs much longer; whereas the Character Game can easily be played in an hour, at least six hours

are required for a properly-played Campaign Game. Since this is a game where the *playing* is much more important than the winning, the Players should try to flesh out their moves with speeches, threats, ballads, or anecdotes. (It's much more fun, for example, for the Dark Power Player to describe in lavish detail what will be done with captured hobbits. Likewise, the play of any Event Card should be accompanied by suitable imprecations, incantations and oohing and aahing. Individual Combat should be preceded by an appropriate amount of breast-beating and snarling.)

Fellowship Player. The Fellowship Player's objectives in the Campaign Game are basically the same as in the Character Game. He should handle most of the Nine Walkers in a similar manner (except as mentioned below) and he should still try to confuse the Dark Power Player and diversify.

The Fellowship Player should handle his armies in a defensive strategy (although the opportunity for occasional attacking sorties should not be overlooked). He has no real chance of taking Mordor by storm. Although the Dark Power Player can conceivably win a military victory, this will happen incredibly seldom. Even a miniscule garrison at Minas Tirith should hold out for a few moves, especially if either Faramir or Imrahil get into the city, and if Dol Amroth is fortified, it by itself will withstand anything Sauron can put against it. Don't even worry if Minas Tirith goes under as long as you can maintain a force in the area. Plus, the restriction on Shadow Points will usually make it impossible for the Dark Power Player to sustain an attack for the necessary turns.

Any band of Orcs which contains captured Fellowship Players should be attacked at all opportunities; Sauron will almost always spend the Shadow Points required for it to defend at full strength.

In the Campaign Game, it is important to mobilize Rohan, and even more important to mobilize Gondor. If Gondor mobilizes before Mordor does (and remember an attack on Gondor mobilizes it, but such is not the case for Mordor), Minas Tirith should stand. If not, it will probably fall. Accordingly, give Gandalf Shadowfax at the earliest possible instant and send him on a beeline to Minas Tirith absolutely as fast as possible. Of course, once you start moving a single character at eight spaces per turn, the Dark Power Player will know that it is Gandalf on Shadowfax; this information has surprisingly little value. (Spotting Gandalf does not mobilize Mordor, and he can avoid searches easily.)

In the Player's Notes accompanying the game, it is suggested that in the Character Game Gandalf should be killed as quickly as possible. While there is some justification for this, it is a tacky strategy which should be banned. In the Campaign Game, it is a poor idea. Gandalf will normally rise again on the third turn, and it will take him four or so more turns to arrive at the scene of the action. He will thus be out of play for roughly a

third of the game; the change from a B to an A sorcerer does not justify this.

Dark Power Player. If the situation in the Character Game is bleak for the Dark Power Player, it's positively impossible in the Campaign Game. To win a Military Victory, the Dark Power Player must capture just about everything of value on the board, including Hobbiton! In fact, probably the best strategy for the Dark Power Player is to keep all his armies inside Mordor; this will yield many high-probability searches when the Ringbearer eventually sneaks in. However, this strategy is as tacky as the Cowardly Draw, and should be banned.

Armies should always be maintained at Udun and Minas Morgul, both to allow for a free search when the Ringbearer arrives and to prevent Faramir or some other hothead from sneaking through into Mordor and being a nuisance. If you're feeling bloodthirsty, besiege Minas Tirith. Do not do so, however, unless either Mordor or Gondor has previously mobilized. If Mordor mobilizes first, there is a reasonable chance that the initial blow will be so strong as to weaken the garrison beyond repair; plus, the reinforcements will have to fight their way in. They will do so, but at a significant cost. If Gondor mobilizes, Minas Tirith should be besieged, but the objective is more a diversionary and obstructionist tactic than a serious attempt at conquest.



Saruman
1-5

Saruman Player. In the event that you are playing the Three-Player Game (and I heartily recommend it: the two-Player game turns into a rock-'em-sock-'em-robot battle), Saruman adds a new dimension (in fact, several new dimensions, if you play Optional Rules.) The Fellowship Player should still go through Moria or the Misty Passes, regardless of Saruman's saccharin promises; they're not worth the invisible ink they're written in.

The Saruman Player should be a person of evil mind who doesn't mind losing if he can mess up someone else's party: the sort of person who would get satisfaction out of enslaving the Shire. Saruman has little chance to win, but he should (a) attack Helm's Deep as soon as he mobilizes and keep slamming, unless Saruman has a chance to Summon Gandalf — this bonanza should always be exercised; (b) head for Mordor personally and attempt to ambush the Ringbearer. The rules do not make it clear whether or not Saruman must engage in Individual Combat with a Servant of Sauron. Since Sauron does not control the Servants, it must be agreed upon beforehand. I suggest that, upon entering an Evil Eye hex, Saruman should roll a die. If he rolls a 3 or less, he need not engage in combat.

Although Saruman has little chance of winning, he makes life much easier for the

Dark Power Player. Rohan can be besieged by Saruman without costing Combat points. There are more Event Cards in Play, and Saruman is a more likely ally for Sauron than he is for the Fellowship Player. The Saruman Player does best to act opportunistically, striving to make deals to the benefit of both Players as much as possible. He should cultivate trust by keeping his promises, for the prime beneficiary of deals is Saruman.

Optional Rules

If you have got his far, you understand that I think the game is stacked in favor of the good guys. This is a lamentable circumstance, which may gladden the hearts of the Tolkien freaks but disappoints the wargames fanatics. (It is a little hard for a Tolkien freak to play the Dark Power Player, and underneath all his bluster he is usually rooting for the Fellowship.) I suggest the Optional Rules below, which may be adopted individually in most cases. Without them, the game palls after a few playings and becomes increasingly a matter of simply going through the motions.

Shadow Points. Instead of using the Shadow Points table given in the rules, I suggest using two different shadow points: Character Shadow Points and Combat Shadow Points. Roll twice instead of once; subtract two from the first result for Character Points (e.g., if you were going to get 11 Shadow Points, you get 9 Character Points). Subtract one from the second roll for Combat Points (e.g., 12 becomes 11). Thus the Dark Power Player will have between 6-11 Character Points and between 7-12 Combat Points to work with. Combat and Character Points are *not* interchangeable, nor may they be accumulated.

In addition, eliminate the Shadow Point requirement for *unsuccessful* Searches, but retain it for moving Orcs and Nazgul. (Search Points subtract equally from Combat and Character Points; e.g., a successful search with three Nazgul costs three Character Points and three Combat Points.) Also, moving a force of 101 or more strength points should cost four Combat Points.

This restructuring of the Shadow Points will give the Dark Power Player much more capability, and a real shot at winning the game. It may seem in the early turns that there are too many Combat Points. Once Mordor mobilizes, however, those Combat Points will be preciousssss...

Victory Conditions. Sauron need take only Minas Tirith and *either* Helm's Deep or Dol Amroth to achieve a Military Victory. This will make the Fellowship Player sweat more when the hordes from the East come rolling in. (It also makes possible interesting deals: for instance, Saruman and the Fellowship Player may agree that Saruman will attack Rohan in order to mobilize it — so that it may ride to the defense of Gondor — if the Fellowship Player will abandon Eodoras.)

If the Ring is not destroyed by the end of the game, credit the Dark Power Player (in the Three-Player Game, the Saruman Player) with the Victory. This livens up the Three-

Player Game considerably. It gives Saruman a unique set of objectives, as he has a good chance to win if he can foil both opponents. It may not be historically accurate (the real winner of a stalemate is probably Sauron) but it's great fun.

Stacking Restrictions. Most games under the current rules come down to melees at the Crack of Doom. In one game, for example, all Nine Walkers took on seven Nazgul (the Nazgul won, surprisingly). This is absurd, and negates any skillful play up to the point of the final battle. Accordingly, I propose that *within Mordor* no more than two Characters of any one Player may be in a single hex at a given time (Gollum does not count against anybody's stacking restrictions).

Destroying the Ring. To win, a Fellowship Player must be alone in the Crack of Doom at the end of a Ring Phase with the Ring off his finger. Thus the rules clearly contemplate that the only way he can get there is if he has had the Ring on in the previous Fellowship Phase. Replace the rule with this: if at any time the Fellowship Player is in the Crack of Doom hex without any opposing Character present (Gollum does *not* count as a Character unless he Attempts to Seize the Ring) and he does not have the Ring on his finger, the Fellowship Player immediately wins.

Passing the Ring. Under the present rules, if the Ringbearer dies, the Ring may pass to any Fellowship member in the same hex. This is inaccurate; the Council of Elrond clearly decided that hobbits were the choice for the Ring, and both Aragorn and Gandalf spurned the Ringbearership. Replace the existing rule with this: if the Ringbearer is killed, the Ring must pass to a hobbit if any is present, *then* only to another member of the Fellowship, and so on.

Event Cards. Each Player may have *four* Event Cards, at all times, not three. Event Cards may be played at any time, even in the middle of movement or combat. If a Player is short of Event Cards, he may *not* replace them at one draw, but must continue to draw at only one card per turn (of course, he doesn't have to discard until he exceeds four cards).

Attempts to Seize the Ring. An Attempt to Seize the Ring overrides all other action (except putting the Ring on or playing a playable Event Card), even another combat. The survivor of the Attempt must immediately take on the original combatant in Individual Combat. This rule is specifically intended to allow, say, Gollum, to watch from the sidelines until Frodo is on the verge of death and then administer the *coup de gras* himself.

Eowyn. Add two to Eowyn's die roll in any Individual Combat with Nazgul; subtract one from the die roll of any Nazgul in Individual Combat with Eowyn. In addition, no Nazgul may use sorcery against Eowyn. (This is to conform with the book, wherein it was prophesied that the Nazgul Lord could not be killed by son of mortal man. Perhaps the prophecy should have been "offspring of mortal men...")

build about 26 10-8s and 16 8-8s for the French campaign. The 8-8s should be used to absorb early Ex losses so that the cadres can be rebuilt into 10-8s. Enough MRs should be built so that one can be used each turn from 1/6/40 to 2/10/40. The two 3-8s on the map can be turned into MRs by shipping them via emergency sea transport (see Case 7.23). If the German player thinks he will want to move into North Africa (I don't recommend this), he will have to build one or more supply units to become available later in the summer. I suggest that 20 IRs be saved out of the original 50 for use during the French campaign. Nine of the original 47 1-5s on the map will be used for 2-5s, and 30 can be built up with IRs, leaving eight to be built into 6-5s through the production cycle, if and when there is spare capacity. If the players decide that SS units may be built, I suggest that the German player build eight or nine 13-8s, reducing the number of 10-8s and 8-8s built about equally to obtain the needed production points.

Since many ground units will be needed in France, I do not recommend building more than the historical level of U-boats at this time in the war. The German and Allied players may even agree to have both an historical level of U-boat production and an historical Allied reinforcement rate, thus eliminating the U-boat die rolls. An historical U-boat production schedule could be arrived at by compromising the numbers of U-boats in production during the various scenarios with the numbers mathematically necessary to absorb attrition losses and maintain historical reinforcement rates according to the U-boat tables. An historical U-boat production/Allied reinforcement schedule will simplify the game somewhat, but some, I am sure, enjoy the element of chance added by the U-boat die rolls. In this article I have presumed approximately historical levels of U-boat production and Allied reinforcement throughout.

After the French campaign, the German player should concentrate on building infantry divisions. At least four Rail Repair and four Mobile Supply units will be necessary for the Russian campaign. Up to six RR and seven MS would be useful. One amphibious unit should be built for use near Leningrad or Talinin. To be available on the first turn of the invasion, production of this Amph must be started by 8/40 at the latest. As mentioned earlier, one of these RR units will be transported by sea to Talinin, or possibly Leningrad, as soon as this is possible (see Case 6.64 for limitations on sea transport of RR units). Nine 2-5s and ATPs should again be available for use in Russia. Twelve of each would be useful, but most of the production should go into 6-5s. Enough APs should be built to maintain air superiority on all fronts. 13-8s, if not on the board already, should be built to provide additional overrun punch.

All captured Russian rail lines should be rebuilt as soon as possible. The Russians should not be allowed to recapture any unrepaired rail lines, since they are able to repair these lines at a much faster rate.

After the Russian invasion begins, the German should begin building IRs and MRs for the offensive in the East, and armor for the defense in the West. A yearly cycle may be established with 1-5s being produced in the late summer and fall to be converted into 6-5s and armor in the winter. Fortifications may be built at almost any time.

In the strategic air war, fighting the Allied bombers is a job for German fighters, not a job for flak points. One flak point costs as much as a 6-5 and I think the 6-5 is more valuable. Unfortunately, even with a flak point on every target and the maximum of fighters, the German will need a lot of good luck to stop a careful Allied bomber offensive. Only if the Allies try to attack too many targets will the fighters be able to shoot down enough bombers to stop or slow the offensive.

After 8/44, it is obviously pointless to build U-boats, for they would arrive too late to fight in the war. Production late in the game should concentrate on IRs and MRs, so that units can be kept in the front lines on the defensive for as much of the time as possible. Production of fortifications should begin early, perhaps late in 1942, so that strategic points and lines will be well defended before the Allies and Soviets reach them. If there is any danger of economic collapse, the German should cut U-boat and AP construction, since these units cannot be used after a collapse.

Summary

By following this aggressive plan, the German player stands an excellent chance of winning the game by defeating Russia, as long as he is able to defeat the Allies in France in 1940. The two-pronged German invasion of Russia, through Turkey and the west, will leave Russia in a much weaker position than she was historically. If it becomes clear that the Russians will not be forced to surrender, however, the Germans should call off their offensive in order not to waste units in Russia, and move units to the West to defend against the eventual Western Allied countermoves. Only if France does not surrender before the summer of 1941 should the Germans revert to a limited objectives strategy.

In the west the Germans will have to defend Italy to fulfill all their victory criteria. Strong units in and near Messina should be able to do the job. As a last resort the Germans can retreat to a final line through France, the Balkans, and Poland to prevent Allied or Soviet victory and German defeat.

In conclusion, let me note that I hope this Aggressive German plan will result in a more open, free wheeling and exciting game than either the historical or the limited objectives approach. It restores to the German player the possibility of decisive victory, without forcing him to accept an undue risk of defeat. The German player should, perhaps, weigh himself and his opponents carefully before using this plan, but if he does not find himself wanting he should try his luck with it and perhaps he will surprise himself and everyone else and win the game.

In Character

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Shadowfax. No character may ride Shadowfax until the horse has been in the same hex with Gandalf (who is presumed to tame him). In addition, Shadowfax may not go through any tunnel hexsides, nor into Mordor, nor across impassable hexes via Elven Rope. (Common sense.)

Faramir. Faramir and his cavalry may withdraw from Ithilien back to Gondor (and even into Minas Tirith) at any time, even prior to the mobilization of Gondor.

Thranduil. Thranduil may move even if the Elves have not mobilized, and he may bring his Magic Card with him.

Magic Cards. If Eodoras is captured by Saruman before any Fellowship Player gets there, consider the Eodoras Magic Cards destroyed. Ditto for Minas Tirith and the Sauron Player. If Saruman (only) captures *and kills* a Fellowship Player possessing Magic Cards, he may keep them.

Retreats and Limited Movement. If forced to retreat, a force must retreat in the general direction from whence it came (e.g., Eye Orcs to Mordor, Hand Orcs to Isengard, Gondorians toward their starting hex). In addition, Orcs may move up to half their movement allowance (rounded *down*) in the direction of origin (Mordor or Isengard) without expending Shadow Points. (Leave them alone, and they'll come home, dragging their captives behind them...)

Capturing with Nazgul. The Nazgul may not capture under the existing Rules, but may search and can usually scare and intimidate the searchees. In the event that a search with Nazgul yields a "c" result, the Fellowship Player's movement allowance for that stack is halved in the next movement phase (rounded *up*). This simulates the debilitating effect of Nazgul screeching through the sky. Plus, without that, it's often a waste to search with Nazgul.

Searching Mordor. Any search may include Mordor, regardless of what is printed on the search card. As the rules stand, if the Ringbearer gets in unspotted without putting the Ring on, the only way you can Search for him is if he passed through a stack of Orcs or Nazgul.

Gandalf the White and Saruman. Gandalf the White may cause Saruman to become a D-rated Sorcerer merely by being in the same hex and rolling a five or less. This, while unlikely, is immensely satisfying.

Implementing these Optional Rules will make the game a lot more fun for the game freaks, and will give the Dark Power Player and Saruman some chance. I believe that these rules will make the game "fair" to the people playing it; it will also make the Fellowship Player's victories the sweeter for being harder-earned. And skill will triumph more often.

If you have other rules changes, please feel free to write a letter to me at 2022 Mass. Ave. #5, Cambridge, MA, 02140. Replies will be forthcoming.