

Battlefleet Mars

REVIEWED by E K MERRYWEATHER

This is the latest SPI sci-fi offering and quite interesting too. There are no hexes - distance (and movement) are worked out by using a scale printed in millions of kilometres and game turns. So if you wish to move a force between two places, you lay the scale on the map and read off the number of game-turns and place your task force in the appropriate distance-box of the destination planet. The task force then advances one box per game-turn until it arrives.

Combat is done in one of two ways. The first (and simplest) is the Tactical Abstract Combat System. Each ship is given a value on the fleet chart. The values are added up and the attacker's total is given as a percentage of the defenders. Then you roll and losses are expressed in percentages. A table is provided for converting percentages into loss points. This goes on until one side has eliminated the other.

The other system uses a tactical display, akin to

'StarForce' (Phoenix 8). However, height is represented by an additional display so each ship is represented by two counters, one on the 'plane' display (the X-Y display), the other on the height (X-Z) display.

There are three sorts of ships, Miners, Catapults and Transports, commercial ships normally, which have been fitted with lasers and missiles or fighters.

You win the game by pushing the other side's Morale down so far that he cannot fight on. This is done by winning battles, as well as sabotage and political interaction. Once per turn, each player rolls on the morale table. This gives a variety of results, including depressing the other side's Morale table, sabotage attempts (rolled for on a separate table), assassination attempts, truces and WORD support for Ares Corporation (Ares Corporation is the firm which owns and is supposed to control the revolting ships and planets). WORD (World Organisation for Resource Development) is a sort of Earth

government. Morale is also affected by control of Asteroids, the opposition's home planet and other strategic planets (like Jupiter). The map covers the Solar System from Jupiter inwards.

As far as scenarios go, there is the main Campaign Scenario and several tactical scenarios (for fighting on the tactical display). For further info on sides etc. see the advertisement in S&T 60.

The game is great fun. Those of you who like 'Foxbat and Phantom' or the up-coming 'Air War 78' should enjoy the tactical game immensely. Not for those of you who like conventional games with front lines and the like but for anyone who reads a lot of Sci-fi or anyone who likes something different (which accounts for about 90% of wargamers in my experience), this game is great fun and well worth getting.