

# *Against Four Worlds*

## *The Game that Never Was?*

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*Feedback Question in S&T 69,  
July / August 1978*

**82. *Against Four Worlds: The First Interstellar War, 2351 AD.*** A Science Fiction Quadrigame.

Mankind is peacefully expanding into nearby star systems when suddenly attacked by the heretofore unknown confederation of extraterrestrials bent on nothing less than the ghettoizing of the human race. Each of the four games in the Quad would depict humankind's struggle against one of the alien fleets (which has its own special strengths and weaknesses). System used would be a more sophisticated and realistic version of the **BattleFleet Mars** three-dimensional movement system. Number of ships would be kept low to insure playability. A Campaign Game situation routine to link the four folio games in a longer, more involved scenario. Designed to sell for \$14

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*(From S&T 75, Jul/Aug 1979)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

**BattleFleet: Mars** fans rejoice! This project is scheduled to include a revamped and cleaned up BFM system, and an abstracted strategic game. The premise behind the game is that



Earth has developed Interstellar travel, and, in doing so, has met with four alien cultures already in loose alliance with each other. After a preliminary negotiation period, the four other worlds decide that Earth is a menace to their hegemony in this sector of space, and decide to eliminate the human race (a classic science fiction theme). However, the Terran leaders suspected that such hostile action might be taken, and attempt a preemptive strike.

The game resolves the key battles between Terran fleets and those of each of the four alien worlds, separately and together. The design further postulates that Interstellar (i.e., faster than light travel) can only be accomplished efficiently from certain locations or nexuses in space. Therefore, the game requires each player to marshal his forces about these locations in enough strength to repel invaders. If all goes well, *Against Four Worlds* will be an

excellent thinking player's game.

*Eric Goldberg*

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*(From Moves 46 – A/S 1979)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

What type of star is most likely to support non-Terran life? Which stars within fifty light-years of Earth can support alien life? These questions have intrigued scientists for many years, and, after spending the last few days on the subject, I must confess that I find it absolutely fascinating.

Professor John Boardman, who assisted us on the **StarForce** research, postulates that Delta Pavonis, Beta Hydri, Zeta Tucanae, and Beta Comae are the nearest stars which might support Earthlike life. These four stars arc from 19 to 28 light-years from Sol, which is the outer limit of the **Against Four Worlds** strategic map. These

stars are all G-class stars (as is Sol), so it is likely some of the aliens in the game will originate from planets of these stars. But what of the buglike nasties (excuse me, non-humanoid aliens)?

Any reader of Poul Anderson will be familiar with the concept of life in unexpected places and unexpected forms. Most science fiction today speculates silicon-based life, and sometimes ammonia or chlorine base. In fact, neither of these in their most common molecular forms are as efficient as oxygen in providing energy, but fluorine (in form of hydrogen fluoride) is. Unfortunately, the atoms in a hydrogen fluoride are so tightly chemically bonded that it requires tremendous radiation to reinstate this energy; the suns capable of emitting the necessary radiation are unlikely to have planets. Never fear, the search for life will be carried out by our undaunted research team.

*Eric Goldberg*

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*(From S&T 76 – S/O 1979)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

In 2151, humankind achieved practical faster-than-light travel. Within decades, the seed of human civilization had been sown in several systems, and a sizable merchant transport fleet of starships constructed.

Then, in 2184, the starship *Europa*, while on a long-range mapping expedition, made contact with a Pathellini star cruiser. A race of amphibians; the Pathellini belonged to the "Band of Traders," an association of four starfaring

racers. The other members included the Afannts, a race of humanoids organized into 200-to-500-member hives; the N'tels, the most technologically advanced race of the four, and the fanatical and relatively primitive Hiri. Within a matter of months, the humans learned that the Band had been formed as an attempt to resolve a lengthy and undecisive series of wars among the four races, each of which sought to establish a hegemonious position. The four races still did not trust one another and only grudgingly cooperated in order to avoid resuming the ruinous fighting.

While the delegates of the Band were friendly (albeit patronizingly so) to the fledgling starfarers from Sol, they became increasingly alarmed as they gained familiarity with the history of humanity and its rapid progress in interstellar exploration and colonization. Less than a year after the initial contact was made by the *Europa*, the advanced computer cryptographic capability of Earth alerted humankind to the developing consensus amongst the Band that humanity should be "reduced" immediately, before the forces of Earth became too powerful and widespread to contain.

Facing the grim threat of racial extinction, the humans secretly converted their fleet of commercial and exploration starships into an attack force and planned a pre-emptive strike against the four home worlds of the Band...

Work continues apace on the tactical game of **Against Four Worlds**. We have realized in

game terms the general distinctions we decided upon between the various races. Distinguishing between the relative performance of their starships in terms of maneuverability, weaponry, durability, and detection and evasion of detection ability. Tactical game scenarios are being tested now, and what remains to be done is settle on a strategic movement system for Eric Goldberg's map and integrate it with the tactical system so that players can construct their own scenarios. We may also devise an abstract tactical combat resolution system, which would enable players to play a game to completion very quickly.

*R.A. Simonsen & B.E. Hessel*

*(From S&T 76 – S/O 1979)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

SPI has not done hard science fiction games lately, and this game will be an attempt to rectify this state of affairs. To that end, this game will not include: slimy, betentacled bug-eyed monsters, a dashing but dumb hero, scantily-clad gorgeous women with a tendency to faint (though there might be some women fully-clad), a wizened mad scientist and his daughter, and it will not be made into a movie. The game will be supported by a rationale based on extrapolation of current technology (with the obvious exception of faster-than-light travel, and a story depicting a segment of the action.

The strategic game has finally come into place, and testing will

begin imminently. Hyperspatial travel will occur instantaneously, but only along well-defined routes linked by stable jump points (which are moving at the speed of the galaxy). Sol will be a nexus of the three routes, and the humans will be able to use all three routes, but each of the alien races will be able to use only two. The strategic version should be a game of maneuver, which will complement the tactical game nicely.

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*Eric Goldberg*

*(From Moves 47 – O/N 1979)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

"We have met the enemy, and he is us." The wisdom of Pogo (Walt Kelly's late lamented cartoon creation) has solved the design problems of the strategic game. The movement mechanics I fiddled around with at the beginning of the project were all standard movement point/movement allowance derived rules. These proved satisfactory, but did not add much to the game or give it a science fiction flavor.

So I thought some more and devised a new system. Each turn is an hour, and is divided into six ten-minute pulses. There are three hyperspatial webs along which ships may travel, but each web may only be used during certain pulses. The pulses in which a web may be used (in a predictable fashion) may change during each separate turn, making it essential to plan ahead. An intelligence system allows a player to gain information about the composition of the other player's task forces; however, this information is not always correct.

This system, combined with a movement requirement that the player's last turn's movement be shown on the strategic display, should make a very different and interesting game.

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*Eric Goldberg*

*(From S&T 77 – N/D 1979)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

SF interstellar war

Goldberg & Hessel & Simonsen.  
Develop.

*This is the only posting of the game in S&T 77. The notes on this says, "Develop: the game is being tested either here at SPI or by outside blind testers under the watchful eye of a member of the R&D Staff."*

At this point, the game all but disappears from the *Moves Games in Progress* column for more than half a year. (*Issues* 48-51). The following snippets are seen in S&T's Progress Report column:

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*(From S&T 78 – J/F 1980)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

SF interstellar war

Hessel & Simonsen/Buccini.  
Develop.

A Blindtest Report will appear in S&T 79. [Nope – see below.]

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*(From S&T 79 – M/A 1980)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

SF interstellar war

Hessel & Simonsen/Hessel  
Develop.

A Blindtest Report will appear in *Moves* 50 [Nope – see below.]

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*(From S&T 80 – M/J 1980)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

SF interstellar war

Hessel & Simonsen/Hessel & Goldberg

Develop.

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*(From S&T 81 – J/A 1980)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

SF interstellar war

Hessel & Simonsen/Ritchie

Develop.

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*Finally, the game returns to life in Moves, with the following report:*

*(From Moves 52 A/S 1980)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

**A4W**, as it is known in the argot of SPI, has just been ripped apart so that we can lay all of the pieces out and see what makes the existing design tick (and how we can make it tick at a faster rate). A change in scale for the tactical system (from 1,000 kilometers per cube and 5 minutes per turn to 5,000 kilometers per cube and 15 minutes per turn) has resulted in a substantial increase in realism at that level without any real change in mechanics (though ranges are much shorter and there is less maneuvering around the edges of the display until one floats aimlessly off map).

A new strategic movement system allows for jumps between star systems with the chances of success being relative to the distance between the jump points in light years and the absolute magnitude of the star into which the jump is

made. Happily, we were able to generate the several thousand calculations necessary to this system of movement using a microcomputer.

The calculations are now laid out on a JumpTable so that players can simply index their starting point with their point of arrival and find out what their chance of making it will be (with a die roll necessary to establish whether the ship actually makes it) . The game should undergo several more weeks of this type of tinkering before it finally wends its weary way out of R&D, but the result should be a vast increase in both playability and accuracy.

Anyway, that's what I tell Brad when he asks me when I'm going to finish the game.

*David Ritchie*

*(From S&T 82 – S/O 1980)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

SF interstellar war

Hessel & Simonsen/Ritchie

Develop.

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*(From S&T 83 – N/D 1980)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

SF interstellar war

Hessel & Simonsen/Ritchie

Develop.

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*(From S&T 84 – J/F 1981)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

SF interstellar war

Simonsen & Hessel /Ritchie

Develop.

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*(From S&T 86 – M/J 1981)*

### **Against Four Worlds**

SF interstellar war

Simonsen & Hessel /Ritchie

Develop.

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And that is the last word on what would have become of the 15<sup>th</sup> and LAST of the Quadrigames. **Against Four Worlds** - the 'game that never was.' – Until I saw this picture.

*Below: Jim Dunnigan holding forth at a trade show, likely the summer of 1980. Above his head, to the left of the **John Carter** game and above the re-branded War of the Ring white box version, is a mockup cover of the game that never was – "**Against Four Worlds**"*

*(Picture courtesy of **Rodger MacGowan**)*

