

# Star Fleet Warlord News

Issue #15

The Official Newsletter of the Greater Magellanic Cloud

Late 1998

## SFW HALL OF FAME UPDATE

Game	Winner	Corporation	Victory
H26	Team victory	Coalition	Military
H27	Team victory	Alliance	Military
H28	Team victory	Coalition	Economic
DH4	Randy Hill	Final Solution	10 sect, 134 sites
55	Jeff Smith	US Marines	8 sectors
56	Keith Johnson	Mech Monsters	87 sites
57	John Haugh	Blood & Money Inc.	82 sites
58	J.T. Gawboy	Orion Privateer Corp	8 sectors
59	Gene Malin	South Park Airways	7 sectors

H26 was relatively close economically, but the loss of the Hydrans and Western Gorns crippled the Alliance late in the game. In H27, Mark "Historical Man" Hall (who has played more Historical Corporations than anyone else, bar none) tried the entire Alliance side himself and won. H28 was a runaway economic win for the Coalition (played by a team from Sweden) who won on sites without ever destroying an enemy Corp.

DH4, a normal Die-Hard game, was very close up until the end. Gene Malin's Confederate Republic had 10 sector bonuses and 108 sites (victory points 448 to Randy Hill's 527, most of the difference coming on sites). Third place was held by Dean Gregg's Strange Attractors with 7 sectors and 91 sites (382 victory points), with fourth place over 100 points away.

## DIE HARD GAME UPDATE

In addition to the Die Hard rules published in SFW News #12, you should also be aware of the following (which aren't critical items, but are worth knowing about):

**Graveyard of Ships:** There IS a Graveyard in Die Hard games, unless otherwise noted.

**Cheap Ship Sale:** The cheap ship sale, which normally appears in Y184, does not appear in DH-games, so don't expect it or plan for it. (If you don't know about the sale, you'll find out 2 turns in advance in any game you're in, so you can worry about it then.)

**Primary Races:** Some Die Hard games have these turned off, but this is NOT a normal option. Primary race settings will be required in "normal" DH-games.

**Wild/Non-Wild Sectors:** The ratio of wild to non-wild sectors will be unknown and will change from DH-game to DH-game. I'll determine this at startup-time and won't tell anyone what the pattern is (if any); you'll have to figure this out for yourself.

**XFIT:** This order can ONLY be done at a base. You cannot use repair ships, hive ships, or anything else for this purpose.

**Corp Numbers:** These are scrambled in DH-games. This means you won't be able to tell where a person is in the game just by looking at their Corp number.

**Player Placement:** While I go out of my way to arrange players in "fair" spacings in normal games (usually keeping new players well away from former game winners, for example) I won't be doing this in DH-games. With the map arrangement, there are only two ways you can be placed (2 sectors away from someone or 4 sectors away) and there are only so many patterns possible. Complaining about how close you are to (or how far away from) your most hated enemy you are is a waste of time. If, before the game starts, you want to make a special request, I will TRY to honor it, but make no guarantees. Certain people (you know who you are) who have abused this privilege in the past should take this offer with a grain of salt.

## POSTAL PRICE CHANGE COMING SOON

At the start of next year, the US Post Office is raising their rates. Please remember to attach the correct amount of postage to your mail, as the Post Office usually returns it to you, which will waste a lot of time and will probably make your turn late.

Although prices are rising, they aren't significant enough to warrant a turn cost increase (and we have no intention of increasing it in 1999, if you're wondering). However, the costs of priority mail and express mail services will be going up due to the massive increases in their price schedule. Priority mail will now cost \$4 if we are sending you just one turn, or \$3 if sending more than one turn at a time. (If you have two or more turns running in a week, just ask and we'll hold them and stick them all in the same priority mail envelope.) Express mail will now cost \$12 for up to 8 ounces (about 40 sheets of paper) and \$18 thereafter. Global priority mail will also increase to \$8.

## TOUGHER RULEBOOK AVAILABLE

Is your rulebook falling apart after months of abuse? This is probably due to the ultra-cheap glue our previous print shop used to perform the binding. Well, we've got a remedy for you. Recently we had more rulebooks printed and used a stronger binding process, which will keep them together longer. (Nothing else in the book has changed.) If you would like a copy of the new, tougher rulebook, just ask. It'll cost just \$8, which includes the priority mail shipping fee.

## ADMINISTRATIVE GAME UPDATE

The following changes are effective immediately:

**Phone Number:** If you want to change your phone number, there is no need to use the PH order. Simply write a note on your turn asking us to change it in our database. You still need to use PH if you want to toggle the ON or OFF setting, however.

**Name Default:** If you want all your ships to be named the same thing during the game, you can do so. Simply ask us to set a Name Default (you don't have to issue an order for this). The name can be a word or two like "Killer," or can be followed by a number, such as "Killer-#." If you use the latter, the "#" will be in sequence with your other ships, so the first three vessels you buy will be "Killer-1," "Killer-2" and "Killer-3." Note: If you want a ship to use a name other than the default, just specify a name when you buy it. It will override the default setting. Also, the Name Default ignores any Name Header setting, so you'll need to include the header in the default name. Remember to leave enough spaces for any numbers, if you use that option.

**Ship Naming:** Effective immediately, all ship names are limited to plain English or foreign words which are immediately recognizable. If you can spell it without having to look it up (and can reasonably expect others to do the same) it's probably OK. For example, "Moscow" or "Stalingrad" are OK, even though they are Russian, because they are recognizable. "Dnepropetrovsk" is not acceptable, even if it is the name of a Russian city, because it's too difficult to read, spell, and (for that matter) pronounce. This is due to some recent abuses by players which make entering turns a painful nightmare for the GM. In other words, use simple names, not complex ones. If you have doubts, don't use the name!

**E-mail address:** If you want us to enter your email address in your Personal Information area, we can do this for you when you submit your build (but not later in the game). Simply note your email address below your normal address on the build form and we'll type it in for you. This will spare you the need to use a PI order later in the game, unless you change your email address, in which case you'll need to update it with PI.

## MORE ON SECTOR SPECIALS

Last issue we introduced you to a new game feature, the Sector Special. These are found on at most one major site in any wild sector, usually the pirate base. By owning this site, you are conferred a special ability or bonus that you normally don't have (and, in all likelihood, no one else has, either).

### New Rules

There are a couple of other rules you should be aware of with regards to Sector Specials:

**Cost:** Some Specials come with a resource cost. In all cases, any required resources are drawn from your account during the Income Phase. They are non-negotiable; the only way to avoid the cost is to drop or devastate the site. If you devastate it, the Sector Special is deactivated.

**Random Events:** If a Special duplicates the effect of a random event, and you later get that same event, the two are not cumulative. Thus, for example, if you were entitled to 10% off any ship purchases, then got the event that does the same thing, you'd still get just a 10% discount (not 20%).

### New Specials

Previously, we listed 8 of the Specials (Fortification Hardener, Fighter and PF Merchant Connections, Dragon Hatchery, Academy Capital, Advanced Scanner, Auto-Cloaker, and Industrial Center). Here are some of the others, all of which were suggested by players:

**Ship Broker:** This allows you to buy any one ship regardless of its year of availability. This must be the first ship you buy, and doesn't eliminate any other penalties such as primary race restrictions and the like.

**Counterespionage Unit:** This gives you an automatic Espionage Countermeasures every turn, without the need to issue the EC order. The cost is one-tenth of your stock value.

**Combat Supercomputer:** This makes your Combat Tactics settings unnecessary, as all your ships are assumed to be using the best tactics for their race (even in mixed fleets).

**Battle Training Enhancer:** While you own this Special, all your ships are assumed to have a crew level 1 point higher (max 9) for purposes of attacking only. This doesn't help your defense and won't give you access to any other special crew abilities.

**Orion Pirate Association:** This useful Special gives you the ability to buy Orion ships (even if Orions aren't one of your primary races, if applicable) at a 10% discount. In addition, they automatically receive free cloaking devices!

**MRS Development Center:** This gives free MRSs to any ships you buy which are capable of carrying one. In addition, the 15% bonus they usually provide for defense now also applies toward offense.

**Site Deactivator:** This gives you access to one Deactivate Hex (DH) order every turn for 50 EPs (paid when you issue the order, if you choose to do so). DH deactivates the terrain's movement-entry effects only for the duration of the game.

**Ship Upgrader:** This improves your UPGR orders, doubling the increase in ship combat factors. It does not improve the number of optional items or other benefits of UPGR, however.

**Site Restorer:** During Income Phase of any turn, all your devastated sites are automatically restored (for free), though they won't produce income on that turn. While handy, this Special has limited utility if you aren't facing opponents who choose to devastate your sites.

**Council Trading Official:** This Special allows you to issue the TE order every turn (for the usual 10% trading fee, of course).

**Advanced Notifier:** This causes all your survey ships (including ships in survey mission) to act as notification ships (N-variants) as well.

**Bombardment Targeter:** This nifty Special eliminates all range penalties associated with long-range drone bombardment! However, BOMB orders can still be issued only in the same sector as your target.

**Corporate Spy:** This gives you all 12 "Best Corps" lists every turn at no cost (after those lists normally appear) and also gives a list of all primary races in use by players (if applicable) every turn.

**Cloak Black Market:** This Special allows you to put cloaking devices on any ship you buy, regardless of race, just by adding the CLOAK parameter to the PS order as explained in the rulebook. The usual cost is still charged for this (it isn't free).

**C&C Facility:** This site provides one bonus order to your Corporation

every turn (giving you 11 orders) at no cost. If you then buy more orders (with BO) you get 21. If you use BO PERM, you gain a second bonus order for a total of 22. Note: You cannot buy more than 20 ships in any turn, no matter how many orders you have.

**Ship Ager:** This Special causes all your ships to age 2 years every turn instead of 1. This allows you to use upgrades sooner and increases the rate at which 15-turn improvements occur. If you own a Replicator monster, it can divide all the faster!

**Advanced Refitter:** This gives you access to the XFIT order as explained in the Die-Hard Game rules in SFW News #12.

**Refit Center:** This allows your ships to use REFT without the need for a base (and XFIT too, if you're in a DH-game or have the previously listed Sector Special).

**Fighter Academy:** This gives all your fighters a +1 combat bonus when attacking (but not when defending). This is cumulative with the effects of legendary officers.

**PF Academy:** As the previous listing, with respect to PFs.

**Fleet Training Center:** This gives you access to improved training methods, allowing your ships to train up to level 7 (for 60% of the ship's base cost, paid in PE). If you have a Prime Team on a ship, you can train all the way up to level 8!

**Spy Ring:** This Special allows you to use one Espionage order for free each turn (the first ES order you issue). This order will penetrate any countermeasures, but you must then pay a cost of one-half the usual fee.

**Integration Center:** This allows your generic ships to change missions at will, without the need for a base or integration ship.

**Heavy Scout Channels:** These cause all of your scouts to act as heavy scouts for all purposes.

**Cloak Penetrator:** This causes all your scouts to act as though they were crew level 9 when issuing the SCAN CLOAK order.

**Raider Patron:** He adds a bonus of 10% to all raiding you perform provided the site you raid is owned by a Corporation other than yours (uncontrolled sites don't count).

**Facilitator:** This allows your generic ships to switch to the F mission regardless of their crew level.

**Advertising Agent:** Provides at least three bonus ship ads every turn, all of which will be for ships which have already become available.

### Ideas Needed!

If you have any ideas for other Sector Specials, submit them to AOG with your turn or by E-mail. Please avoid any that are too powerful (try not to be more powerful than the top 10 of those listed here and in the previous issue of the newsletter). The following ideas will automatically be rejected:

- Anything that increases your income by any appreciable amount; e.g., something which causes your sites to produce more money.
- Specials which affect other Corporations, such as one which nukes an opponent's site or destroys his ships.
- Things that affect your defense in any way not already provided for in the game; e.g., a Special which increases your fortifications' defense value from 1 per 4 points to 1 per 3 points. This can't be done because of programming difficulties. In general, Specials should give active benefits (i.e., attack factor bonuses) as opposed to passive ones (defense bonuses).

### New Game Type

Finally, there is a new game type available, the Sector Special Game. In this game, all Corporations have Specials on their Home Offices at the start of play! Everyone will have a different Special, so each player has a different set of tactics and strategies available. We'll run the first game of this type as game #64.

## INVADING NEIGHBORS FOR FUN AND PROFIT

by John Haugh

Gather intelligence, build an appropriate task force, and invade while limiting your opponent's reaction time. These three elements are essential to a good invasion, in my opinion. I will try to explain my ideas, starting with the obvious.

To invade, you need to know where your opponent's Home Office is located. A sector scan would be nice but is not always necessary. Espionage, an intelligence network with other players, battle reports, and Starbase orders are also ways of finding out where an opponent's HO is. For example, you might use espionage to locate a Home Office and then have a fast ship map a safe path to that hex (or, alternately, use SH orders to find a route, assuming you and your allies have enough of them available). Try to scan his HO as late as possible, however, because a scan might tip off your opponent that an invasion is headed his way.

A brief note about timing. Sooner is almost always better, if you know you will have to hit a neighbor. At the very least, send in a raider or three. If you know you will be fighting a certain player, get a scout into his home sector ASAP. Then, send in some raiders to take away his sector bonus and distract some ships from gathering sites or prospecting. One nice strategy is to try and distract an opponent with raiders just before sending a Zylon Death Fleet after his HO.

The invasion fleet needs to be sized appropriately. Try to plan ahead as a good invasion fleet normally takes multiple turns to assemble. Appropriate force level depends on (1) time in the game, (2) opponent's probable HO defenses and ability to increase these defenses in the immediate future and (3) your own goals. If you are invading a very powerful neighbor, you might feel the invasion is so critical to your future or your team that you cannot miss and must send in a crushing fleet. This will almost certainly slow your expansion elsewhere by siphoning off resources. As an alternative, you might be willing to make the force smaller if it (1) has a reasonable chance of success or (2) is intended to take the player's sector bonus and then keep more of his forces tied down in defense at his HO. Remember to send in escorts to ensure your cruisers survive multiple rounds even if the HO defenses are tough (refer to the rulebook's combat example if you do not remember how damage is divided). As a final note, try to have a facilities ship join the fleet early so ships can train or get officers if the early birds have to wait a few pulses to join up with other ships.

Finally, execute the invasion as quickly as possible. Speed kills! Every turn you delay gives your opponent time to beef up his defenses/income base or go on a counter-offensive. Delaying an invasion can be disastrous—more than one player has been killed just before his fleet can take out his opponent's HO. A warp gate can make a huge difference here, perhaps buying destroyers just before the invasion to supplement some refitted cruisers. A facilities ship is also wonderful if you can arrange it (normally you will only have access to one of them). You might be able to pay for ship hulls on turn X and then buy optional items on turn X+1 (remember to set reversed orders ON), just before the invasion hits the target.

You get more than style points if the invaders spend only one turn break in your opponent's home sector, so that the turn he sees your force is the same turn you are striking his HO. Giving an opponent zero reaction time is ideal. Think about gathering a force on the border—this is usually the best way to limit reaction time. However, your opponent might be able to see the task force while it is still outside his home sector. Your opponent might have a base or scout or battle report that shows your 30 ships on his border and ruins your surprise. You might gather two or three smaller groups in the staging area to disguise your intentions, but this involves some obvious risks.

Invasions are one of the most exciting elements of SFW. I hope this helps you execute more successful invasions—except against the author, of course!

## HOW DO THEY DO IT?

How do those multiple game winners constantly win games? You know the names...you see them on every issue's Hall of Fame update. Even if they don't win, you can bet they're always in the top finishers in any game they participate in. So what's their secret? Well, it isn't pretty, but these things rarely are. Here are the main ways frequent winners win games:

**Go Like Gangbusters:** Fly like mad from the starting gate. Winners do all of these things in the first three turns: (1) capture every site in their home sector, (2) prospect every possible hex they can get their hands on, and (3) get at least one terrain scan, preferably two or three. If at all possible, they also (4) kill the monster. Most winners agree that item #2 is paramount. Even if they can't get the sector bonus or the scans, they ALWAYS get maximum prospecting.

**Prospect Like Mad:** Every winner depends on prospecting for as much as 50% or more of his income during the game, throughout the entire game. Turns where one-third to one-half of one's ships are using the PRSP order are not unusual, especially early on. On turn 2 you want to get 300 or 400 points from prospecting; turn 3 should equal or exceed it, and try to get even more every turn after that. Most winners consider prospecting more important than site-grabbing, which they can always do later, after they've built many, many more ships and fleets.

**Build Ships:** All winners build as many ships as possible every turn. They do this by building the smallest, cheapest vessels available early and then optimizing strength for available income thereafter. Most winners buy at least 5 ships on turn 1 (typically by saving money from the build and requesting an additional loan), and 8 or more every turn thereafter. Winners are known to buy orders as early as turn 5, and BO PERM by turn 8 or 9. All but a few of these are used to buy more ships. Winners never fortify unless they need a base, and don't repay a loan until close to the deadline.

**Form Alliances:** All winners learn who is on their four corners as quickly as possible, sometimes before the game even starts. This is done by calling everyone they know and finding out who's in the game, then carefully using ME and ES orders to discover who their other neighbors are and calling them. Winners then make airtight alliances with 2 or 3 of these neighbors and agree on who gets to control certain sectors. They then capture these sectors posthaste. What about the fourth neighbor? Well...

**Kill a Neighbor:** Winners know they can't win if they have to be surrounded, so they eliminate at least one neighbor right away. To do this they send their WG towards that corner and build up a death fleet at it, using prospecting income after they buy their other prospectors. If possible, they use intimidation, threats and sometimes bribery (really!) to force the targeted player to drop out, thus making their job easier. After they toast this easy kill, they then usually pick another neighbor (typically the weakest ally, or the one in the most trouble) and take them out similarly. Then they win by grabbing all their holdings from these sectors and the surrounding ones.

**Speak With Forked Tongue:** Winners are the best diplomats because their words are backed up by strength. They remain in constant contact with the allies they want to keep, supporting them with information and aid while constantly reminding them of the winner's own power (a quick look at the Best Corps list usually suffices). Thus, even though they have the most to fear from a backstab—since they never spend money for defense—winners are rarely ever backstabbed themselves.

**Never Stop:** Winners never stop moving except to prospect. If they take a site, they keep going, allowing follow-up prospecting ships to recapture it if needed (while on the way to their next prospecting destination). If they kill a player, they don't bother defending the HO after they see the opponent make their final move. Their ships almost always move as many hexes as possible (raiding if they have an extra movement available) and rarely move with other ships except when part of the one or two death fleets they operate.

**Conclusion:** Winners are fast, aggressive, wealthy silver-tongued devils who can't be trusted to do anything but win. To defeat them, you must become one. Good luck!

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## **TIPS & TRICKS**

This section lists a few hints about game play that might aid you in your quest to conquer your own Quadrant.

### **Fake Scan Orders (by Jeff Smith)**

If you want to make a nearby opponent think his home sector has been scanned (which may cause him to build up defenses on his HO while your real thrust is headed elsewhere), move any convenient ship into his sector and issue an SX order on that sector on the same turn. The SX order will show up as "Your sector was scanned 1 time between turns" when he next moves. Other tactics suggest themselves: SX him every turn for 3 or more turns, and he'll never know when or if that scout has really shown up.

### **Playing Sequencing Games (by Dan O'Connor)**

The sequence system allows two allies to get accurate scanning reports on an opponent. To be effective, one of the allies must have a very early sequence (usually arranged by never being late during the entire game, which can be difficult if you don't use Email). The other simply runs his turn as late as possible, probably by emailing or faxing in a turn a few days after the regular due date. Said player then issues scan orders (either with ships or SX orders) in critical sectors. When the turn arrives (by mail or, to be safe, by fax), he tells his ally where he saw enemy ships in those sectors. Because it's likely most or all of the other players have already moved by this point, but won't move again before the early-sequence ally, the ships will probably still be in those positions, allowing them to be easily killed.

Note that this won't work if your opponents run their own turns late, and can backfire in such cases. Obviously, two groups using this tactic against each other are playing a dangerous shell game that may or may not work on any given turn. However, it's easy enough to see if your turns ran before the Corps you are looking for. Simply see if their stock values went up between the time the early-sequence player moved and the late-sequence one did. If they didn't change, the target enemy's turn still hasn't been run (or runs earlier in the sequence than both of you).

### **Hiding in the Weeds (by John Haugh)**

This is an overall game strategy anyone can use. The strategy is to minimize or delay information opponents get about your Corporation in order to win the game before they can see you as a threat and focus on stopping you.

In a normal game, an announcement is made whenever anyone equals or exceeds 50 sites or 4 sector bonuses. This announcement appears on the turn after this is achieved, and on the turn after any turn in which someone has achieved these goals. In order to not be seen as a threat, you want to

avoid reaching either of these two values until you're ready to make your run for victory.

To do this, you can use several methods. One is to move into a sector, kill the player/NPC/monsters that are infesting it, and then take all but one major site. This keeps the sector bonus count from being increased. Of course, you want to keep a fleet next to the last site and within the sector in case something goes wrong. (If you really need the sector bonus for the income, go ahead and take it. It'll be better to take the money than worry about keeping a secret, especially if you're in a major war.)

You can use similar methods to keep from crossing the 50 site boundary. Do this by positioning ships near uncontested sites in pacified sectors and raiding those sites every turn (to make sure you get the income). (Devastating them won't work as even a devastated site counts towards victory conditions.) When you're ready to make your run, all your placeholder ships then take off and grab every site you can see.

This strategy won't work in every case, particularly not when you're fighting tooth-and-nail for a victory, or when the sectors in question are contested. In these cases, go ahead and take what you need and let your win come in its own good time.

## **CATCH US ON THE WEB!**

Agents of Gaming's World Wide Web page location has changed to [www.agentsofgaming.com](http://www.agentsofgaming.com), a site which presents AOG's full line of products in addition to SFW. Our old GNN address was lost when GNN was absorbed by AOL, and we chose to purchase our own site and URL rather than submit to AOL's rules and space limitations.

Follow the links to SFW to find out about upcoming games (we try to keep the page updated at least bi-monthly), to send Email directly to AOG, and even to fill out an Initial Build Form online! You can also find various helpful files available for download, including the latest House Rules, the credit card authorization form, and every back issue of the Star Fleet Warlord News!

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