

BLACK ΩMEGA SQUADRON

B5CCG UK NEWSLETTER

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Rangers are volunteers who demonstrate the B5CCG and organise tournament and other game related events. Contact them by e-mail or phone

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Edited by Neil Gow

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TRIP OFF TO TRIPLES '99!

The first major UK B5 event since the record breaking tournaments of GenCon will be happening at the Triples Wargaming Convention in Sheffield on March 20-21st. On offer is the title of UK Team Champions 1999 - with each Ranger bringing a team of five players to battle it out in a constructed deck tournament . The twist is that your scores don't just count towards your place, they count towards your teams total. Teams have already been confirmed from Sheffield, Newcastle, Leeds and Cardiff.

Prior to the Team Challenge on Sunday, there is a Social Tournament on Saturday, with prizes for roleplaying, deck design and fancy dress! There will be other B5 games going on throughout the convention, and demos highlighting the non-aligned and home faction rules for those players that still haven't got their heads around them.

Triples is one of the countries longest running wargaming conventions. Along with the normal selection of stalls and traders there will be a full programme of wargames for those of you into that sort of madness. For more information on the convention, possible accommodation and to register for the tournaments, contact Ranger Phil Nicholls on 0114 2681656 or B5@syspace.co.uk Ω

Comment - by Ranger Phil

The Great War. Latest expansion, heralded by pretty much everyone as the "best b5 expansion yet". I tend to agree, there are some really nice cards in there. However, Great War does present a couple of areas of concern.

Primarily, a sizeable number of the cards require the Shadow War to be in effect. This means that unless I plan on starting it myself, I cannot guarantee that I'll be able to play any such card myself. Coupled with this is the fact that most of these cards would be considered the "cool" cards in the set - it seems to be a shame that you have to wait ages to play them (and even then you may not be able to). The other knock on from the Shadow War starting is that the game now lasts far too long. (A recent game took 3 hours and then everybody ran out of cards). Is this going to be a problem for tournaments. (I wonder how long the Pan European final would have taken with GW cards included?)

I think my last moan is going to be along the lines of "how many bits of paper do I need to track all these tensions / influences / unrests". Won't pursue that one too much, except to say that you need a nice big table to play on.

In closing, I think GW has done a lot for the game. I think it has improved it no end. The problem is that B5 already takes a long time to play, and now ... well, it takes longer. See you at Triples.Ω

(Remember – nothing Phil says is the opinion of Black Omega. and sometime not of Phil...)

Help with 'Charting the course'

So as to make it easier for UK players to take advantage of the Great War's 'Charting the course' promo offer anyone who attends a BOSq Ranger's Demo/Tourni in February or March can bring along their UPC bar codes from all six starter decks (4 different Premier and 2 different Great War) and the six Great War booster wrappers, the Ranger will send these to Precedence and distribute the promo's free of charge (to local players) on their return (any non local player will need to supply an SASE for the UK, see Ranger for details). This means you will not need the US SASE. For those of you sending for the cards please note that Precedence have stated that IRC's ARE acceptable.

ISN NEWS UPDATE

Ω GREAT WAR, the latest expansion for the game has *finally* arrived in the shops - but not without problems! The new starters were released nearly a month after the booster boxes, and the new rules were printed without the rather essential (and now legendary) page 53 - the rules for the non-aligned race! Copies of page 53 can be got from your local Ranger, and will be made available as a sticker from your retailer.

Ω Hot on the heels of Great War, playtesting had begun on PSI-CORPS - a smaller expansion, tentatively scheduled for March. PSI-CORPS will include signed cards by Walter Koenig, and will explain the strange psi-mark that appeared on the home faction William Morgan Clark..

Ω And as if this wasn't enough we still have MASTERPIECE COLLECTION coming. This premium (read 'bloody expensive') product is scheduled for January, but there seems to have been some confusion over the contents of the package. More information when we have it.

Ω **Black Omega Squadron** would like to welcome all it's new Irish readers, and Ranger David Bushe, Ireland's first Ranger. Also Richard Willis in Cardiff and Chris Slinn in Milton Keynes!

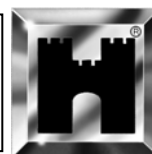
Ω And finally between Christmas and New Year, a posse of Precedence Publishing staff made it across the Atlantic. John Hart (Customer Support) visited Wargames Emporium in Sheffield - and almost visited The Trading Post in Reading. He then met up with Paul Brown (VP Marketing) at the Insurrection convention in London, where Rangers demoed to the Trek-adoring masses, and met (and were insulted by...) Jason Carter (*Marcus Cole* in the series.) Ω



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GREAT CARDS, GREAT WAR

by Neil Gow (with ideas from Bruce Mason)

350 new cards - what more could you want? OK, how about a new card type, alternate factions and a new race? Still not enough? Replacements for three main characters and massive Shadow and Vorlon fleets, Planet-killers, Shadow Clouds and three new Zathras's (Zathri?) sounds better.

But what are the best of the best? What cards are going to make an impact on those tournament decks? What combos are likely to make you curse, and whats the bilge?

CHARACTERS

Minister Durano - The Centauri lost a lot of their clout in Shadows, but Durano gives it back to them - and then some! Nine influence for nine intrigue and a minor drawback.

Justin - The wrinkled old man might be hard to get out but when he is you've no excuse to ever run out of Shadow marks and you need never fear Consumed by Shadows again. What more can a Shadow player want ... OK, let's throw in 8 Intrigue?

Lhim/Dram - IMHO the Pak'ma'ra are the strongest of the Non-aligned races. Not only is this character an efficient source of Intrigue, but the event recycling ability is very useful. Watch for combos with Soul Hunter.

Ulkes Kosh - As part of a two card combo with Stasis, this crushes Vorlon decks (maybe a little too much?). Above and beyond that, the card art is awesome!

CONFLICTS

Show the Colours - This is just too good in a quick military deck. Expect to see it boost the speed of those already speedy Narn fleet decks.

Aggressive Action - Flexibility, reusability and an opportunity to combine Diplomacy and Intrigue. Works well in Ranger decks, and with those Chosen of God Pak'ma'ra....

Shadow Symbiant - Sick of Tu'pari? Having a Zathras problem? This shadow-based conflict will let inflict that pain on your other players, as long as you have shadow marks. Hello, Justin! Your time is now!

ENHANCEMENTS

Stasis - Nothing more can be said apart from the fact that this card will singlehandedly demolish the current trend to Vorlon supremacy.

Shadow Tech Upgrade - A wicked card that will see some HUGE fleets motoring around the galaxy. And no, before you ask, you can't combine it with< nice link?>

The Valarius - Easily the best of the Flagship Enhancements, this finally gives the Centauri fleets a chance against the Narn - assuming they get the time. Hang about, don't the Centauri have a location that reduces the cost of enhancements? Cunning!

Egyptian God of Frustration - Honourable mention for the card that everyone knows is a great idea, but still can't quite work out what to play it on. My guess - Stasis!

We Are Not Impressed – Hmmm... a big slap in the face for those nasty cheese decks. Grinds Forced Evolution et al to a shuddering halt. Nice.

EVENTS

Buy New Resources - The *second* best deck manipulation card in the set, this is a no-brainer for at least two per deck.

Dust - Directed supporting character removal with no strings (apart from waiting for the Not Meant to Be. Expensive, but good late in the game to remove cards like Santiago and Minister Malachi.

Power Play - The key to some *very* nasty Shadow starts. If nothing else, this card will ensure the introduction of some unrest punishing cards into most decks. Expect it's star to fall soon.

Different Perspectives - whichever way you look at it, this card is just too awesome. Get good stuff, keep the good stuff you have in your hand already and put the dross back into your deck - and as it asks you to shuffle it's immune to NMTB! It's only drawback is that it's non-aligned. More power to the Pak!

Mu Tai Exhibition - Like the Narn needed a faster start? Instead of KoDath, now you're looking at DuNar or one of the other Diplomacy monsters. And just because G'Kar's feeling feisty!

CONTINGENCIES

Further Gains - No doubt more strategies will emerge regarding contingencies, but this is the most obvious. Psi-Corp intelligence, Bester and Further Gains. As long as no one is playing psi, you get an extra influence. Expect to see this card.

Bluff - The motor that fuels a contingency strategy. In the above combo, get a bluff under the first couple and draw those Levels. It will infuriate your opponents.

AFTERMATHS

At a Standstill - My favourite card of the set - subtle, yet crippling resource denial.

AGENDAS

War Footing – Better than Total War, screams to be used with Show the Colours and makes the Minbari even scarier than they used to be. Two Warleader's fleets is not funny!

Master of All - Maybe not one of the best cards, but definitely one of those that you'll see **someone** trying to build a deck around. We have our best men on it. Our best men.....

Chosen of God - Obscene! Choose Pak'ma'ra and watch those 8 intrigue and 12 diplomacy monsters eat their prey. AND it acts like a homeworld. Sheesh. If the Non-Aligneds were this good in the series, why didn't they do more? (Oh yeah – the Drazi ambassador is HUGE with this....)

GROUPS

Civil Servants - gets those small characters back when you really need them. With all the various boosters that they can use, it turns your Ranger Initiates into hardy assassins and the various Non-aligned Aides, Agents and Captains abilities become even more interesting.

The Right Contacts - Combine this group with Looking Ahead and you will always draw at least two cards a turn. Throw in Managed Growth and you have a very healthy card manipulation engine indeed.

BEST CARD OF THE SET

Conscription - What were they thinking about? 1 power and 1 unrest is *nothing* to the ability to have a first turn Santiago, Rathenn or Combined Fleet. And it is immune to NMTB! In a streamlined, big cost deck, this card is awesome. Also, with Clark in the human home faction, allows for a first turn Sarah...another reason why anti-Unrest will grow in popularity! Could be errated faster than your average White Star!

WORST CARD OF THE SET

Sheridan Reborn - Replace Sinclair, Strike at the Heart, start the Shadow War, Play Lorien and finally, if you haven't been pulped yet, get out The Scarecrow. Simpler to leave John Sheridan in play and hit him with a few aftermaths - and you don't have to go through the nail-biting tension of the win or resign Strike at the Heart conflict!?

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The Fifth Element

A Quick look at the Non-Aligned Cards

It won't be a surprise at your next round of tournaments that there will be a spate of Non-Aligned decks. It's not just because of the new toys either - the non-aligned position is strong, really strong! Deck builders world-wide have been reeling under the combo possibilities of some of the cards. In true Black Omega style we'll expose the cards this time, and try to conjure ways to beat them in the next issue!

FLUCRUM OF POWER is possibly one of the best starting agendas in the game - especially when combined with the two inner circle character advantage. You can look at a 6 influence neutral or non-aligned character on turn one (your favourite flavour of Zathras?) or wait one turn for Mary Ann Cramer - or another non-aligned ambassador to promote and work towards more influence, or a 5 cost fleet... the possibilities are endless!

RAPID GROWTH is going to be a card that make's it's way into a lot of opening hands - like Short Term Goals did for those with Destiny marks. No excuse not to get to 6 influence by turn two now!

CONSULTANTS may well have passed some people by, but this group works so well with the funky non-aligned aide/captain that it will be essential. Saying that, the AIDE and the CAPTAIN, both stand out as well worth a second look - recycling fleets and a huge diplomacy boost are not to be sneezed at!

CHOSEN OF GOD, DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES and **THE RIGHT CONTACTS** have been mentioned elsewhere, so I won't rattle on about them too much.

And this is just the start! Wait for more non-aligned madness to come soon.....Ω

Warm Shots! Great War Theme Deck..

We Walk in Dark Places a Ranger Deck

Characters (13) - Jeffrey Sinclair, Susan Ivanova, Michael Garibaldi, John Sheridan, Commander Ivanova, Marcus Cole, Entil'zha, Lyta Empowered, Sarah, Rogue Soul Hunter, 3x Ranger Initiate

Agendas (3) - Muster Support, 2x Eyes and Ears

Locations (2) - Earth, Proxima III

Fleets (5) - First Battle Fleet, Second Battle Fleet, Expeditionary Fleet, Homeworld Fleet, Fleet of the Line

Conflicts (8) - 3x Prey on the Weak, 3x Aggressive Action, 2x Forced Impairment

Enhancements (7) - 2x Minbari Fighting Pike, 2x Advanced Training, Hacker, Ranger Training, Egyptian God of Frustration

Aftermaths (3) - Successful Manipulation, Focus Your Efforts, At a Standstill

Contingencies (4) - 2x Bluff, 2x Further Gains

Groups (2) - 2x Civil Servants

Events (16) - 3x You Are Not Ready, 2x Not Meant to Be, 2x Contact with Vorlons, 2x Buy New Resources, 3x Level the Playing Field, Short Term Goals, Carpe Diem, Eliminate Threats, Conscription.

OK, this is not going to win any tournaments - like so many theme decks, when it works it kicks arse, but when it doesn't it's very poor indeed. You can play with the starting hand, but the one I suggest is Sinclair, Sarah, Conscription and Muster Support. You'll get Sarah in the first turn and "something" that will help - even if it is one of the defensive fleets.

The real engine of this deck is the interaction between the various Ranger cards. When you feel happy. play Eyes and Ears and your Rangers begin to grow. If you can begin to use Ranger Training things can get very interesting indeed. One note - don't play any enhancements on your Ranger Initiates as they are essentially cannon fodder that can be recycled by Civil Servants. Using this combo, you'll eventually out-intrigue your opponents.

Another good bet is getting your characters into the Inner Circle asap - again, as long as you've got Civil Servants, don't bother promoting any Ranger Initiates when you can put Ivanova or Garibaldi there. Proxima III helps this an awful lot!

Aggressive Action is a wonderful conflict and allows for some real diplomacy. You have to target a player, and the trick is to make that player think the choice is arbitrary .. it may, or it may not be? Similarly, you'll have enough intrigue to see off the Centauri (and Marcus can usually take care of Durano) so enjoy the Bluff/ Gains game.

Also remember that John Sheridan can initiate your Forced Impairments and Eyes and Ears conflicts - you can even have two Aggressive Actions going at once! If you've stewarded your Ranger Army you should be able to fight an intrigue war on two fronts.

Of course, you could make this an even more Ranger deck by throwing in the various White Star cards instead of some of the fleets and using Hand of Valen instead of Muster Support - then again, best give yourself a chance....Ω

Anything you would like to see in Black Omega Squadron? Contact Neil at neil.gow@ncl.ac.uk

War without End...

The Series may have finished but the story goes on! By Phil Nicholls

How many people have you seen playing with Delenn Transformed? How many times has Sinclair bravely marched to Z'ha'dum to attempt to Strike at the Heart of the Shadows?

If you are a fan of the show, you'll know that it was split into "seasons", which developed the story. The replacement rules allow Ambassadors to be replaced to reflect this storyline, but all games start at the beginning of season one with the original ambassadors. This article presents a few ideas on starting the game at a different point in the story. I haven't tested these for play balance, so I recommend that you only use them in friendly games or social tournaments. (and cards like "Playing Both Sides" will break the Season 4 scenario before it has started so best ban it...).

Season One - As from basic rulebook.

Season Two - Minbari Ambassador: *Delenn Transformed* B5 4 Vorlons 6 Shadows 6
Human Ambassador: *John Sheridan*

Season Three - Minbari Ambassador: *Delenn Transformed* B5 4 Vorlons 6 Shadows 6
Human Ambassador: *John Sheridan* (+2 vorlon marks)
Centauri Ambassador: *Lord Mollari* (+3 shadow marks)
Narn/Centuari tensions start at 5!
Human unrest starts at 3

Season Four - Minbari Ambassador: *Delenn Transformed* B5 10 Vorlons 20 Shadow 20
Human Ambassador: *John Sheridan*
Centauri Ambassador: *Lord Mollari* (+3 shadow marks)
Narn Ambassador: *G'Kar Enlightened*
Human, Minbari and Centauri unrest start at 3

From Season three onwards, Mr Morden and Commander Ivanova may be sponsored as normal without having to replace. You may also want to experiment with altering the tensions and 'states' that each of the races begins with. For example, at the start of season three, the Centauri and the Narn are at **War** – whilst the humans and the centauri are in a state of **non-aggression**.

Next Issue - Starting a semi-regular feature for new players of the game, we'll be exposing the mysteries of sideboarding in 'The Grey Council' and we'll be looking at more ways to exploit and destroy those pesky non-aligned types. Plus news, tournaments, decks and a whole load of Triples based fun. See you there - Neil Ω

Tournament Information

30th January - Phil Nicholls - Constructed deck
Starts 10.30am, Wargames Emporium, Sheffield

30th January - Bruce Mason - Constructed deck
Starts 10.15am, Penarth Leisure Centre, Crusade 99

31st January - Andrew Sims - Constructed Deck
Starts 11.00am, Travelling Man, Corn Exchange, Leeds

6th February - Lisa Abbott - Social Tournament
Starts 10.30am, Area 51, The Emporium, Manchester.

6th February - Bruce Mason - Constructed deck
Starts 10.15am, Taff's Well Town Hall, near Cardiff

7th February - Martyn Ransom - Constructed Deck
Starts 11.00am, Fanboy Comic, Milton Keynes

20th February - Richard Willis - Sealed Deck
Starts 10.00am, Creation Models, Haverford West

21st February - Neil Gow - Basic Constructed
Starts 12.00am, McNulty's Internet Café, Newcastle

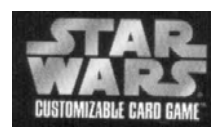
27th February - Bruce Mason - Constructed deck
Starts 10.15am, Taff's Well Town Hall, near Cardiff

28th February - Andrew Sims - Constructed Deck
Starts 11.00am, Travelling Man, Corn Exchange, Leeds

13th March - Bruce Mason - Constructed deck
Starts 10.15am, Taff's Well Town Hall, near Cardiff

14th March - Neil Gow - Basic Constructed
Starts 12.00am, McNulty's Internet Café, Newcastle

20-21st March - TRIPLES AT SHEFFIELD



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