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Warp Rift:
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Hi, and welcome to issue six of Warp Rift. I hope that everyone had an enjoyable Christmas holiday period. It has been an eventful few months, with the news that Fanatic will be 'downsizing' considerably, leaving only three staff members, and that Fanatic magazine will shortly cease as a printed magazine and will go online only after issue ten.

The start of 2005 saw a fresh start for me as I start a new project. In a repeat of the 'Tale of Four Gamers' articles that grace White Dwarf and various web sites, I am participating in a similar version. Four months, £25 each month, and the end result must be an Epic force of at least 1000 points and a Gothic fleet of at least 750 points. So, the start of the month saw me frantically putting together two Marine Strike Cruisers as the start of a new fleet for me, along with a horde of Epic Orks.

Issue six of Warp Rift also sees the announcement of the first Battlefleet Gothic painting competition. I have wanted to do something like this for a while now, and I have been waiting for the completion of the Epic competition that I have been running on my web site. Hopefully, this is an opportunity to showcase the best of the hobby, and I am looking forward to seeing what everyone comes up with. So, get painting, and please do consider submitting, no matter how good your painting ability is. Also this issue, the second part of the Alliances article, rules for the fleets of the World Eater chaos Marines and a new campaign idea and the first part of new fiction.

Good hunting,
CyberShadow

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Raising the Colours

The Warp Rift Painting Competition 2005

Welcome to the first 'Raising the Colours' Battlefleet Gothic painting competition for Warp Rift and www.epic40k.co.uk (also known as GothiComp'05). I have run a painting competition for Epic for two years now, and it has been reasonably successful, and so the inevitable question was 'when would I do the same for Battlefleet Gothic'? I have held off until now for the simple reason that there was already a painting competition for Gothic. However, now the time seems right to step up to the plate and get this off the mark.

The general aim of this competition is simply to encourage players to get painting and show off what they can do. I encourage people to enter no matter how good or bad their painting and converting skills are. So, on to the details.

The Details

This competition is open from today, and the deadline for submissions is Wednesday 6th April 2005, 1pm (UK time).

The Categories

Generally, there is only a single category and all submissions are entered into this. This will be voted on by the Battlefleet Gothic players. However, in addition, there will be a 'conversion prize'. This will be a token prize for one entry based on the skill and style of any conversion work which has gone into the vessel, in an effort to encourage creativity in modeling as well as painting. This will be judged by a select panel. All entries are automatically submitted into both competitions simultaneously.

The Prizes

Prizes will be announced at a later time. I do not benefit from the backing of Fanatic in this competition, and so prizes will most likely be a single Battlefleet Gothic cruiser or similar. If there are any kind benefactors who would like to contribute to this competition, please do get in touch!

The Vessel

Each separate entry should consist of a single miniature to be used for Battlefleet Gothic (however, note that conversions, scratch builds and even vessels from outside manufacturers are welcome). The only exception to this is:

If the vessel is a light cruiser or lights, one or two vessels may be submitted as a single entry in the same photograph.

If the vessel is an escort or equivalent, then the submission must consist of between two and four vessels in a single picture.

Aside from this stipulation, the entry is largely down to the participant.

The Pictures

You should submit a single picture per entry, no more. Each photograph should be no more than 640 x 480 pixels large, and should remain under 100Kb.

The Submission

To submit your entry, simply email it to me at: gothicomp@epic40k.co.uk. I will compile a gallery of the entrants which will be available online. This gallery will remain as a permanent fixture to the site, and so you will be able to browse the pictures in the future. Please note, I am sure that there will be a rush in the last 24 hours before the end of this competition, and while my email account should be able to handle most traffic, it is possible that it will have problems at the end. Therefore, please don't wait until the last few hours if you can avoid it.

The Voting

Voting will take place in two places - using the Battlefleet Gothic Yahoo Group [BFG-List], and using the EpiComms forums on the web site www.epic40k.co.uk. This means that it is possible for people to vote twice, however the number of voters involved should negate this as a factor in the result. Please also note that the individual heats will be organised in the order which the entries arrive. Therefore, if you plan on entering this competition more than once, it is in your interest to wait a few days between entries. Otherwise you may find that you only three submissions are in the same heat in the first round, and therefore pitched against each other and only one will go through. Waiting to ensure that the three entries are in different heats maximises the odds of at least one of the entries getting through to the next round.

Additional Rules

All decisions are final, any prizes are non-negotiable and the competition organizers reserve the right to remove competition entries or request that they are resubmitted or altered. We will hopefully never need this stuff, but just in case...

That is it. I will present more details soon, and in the meantime feel free to email me with any questions that you may have. Now, what are you doing still reading this? Get painting!

The Imperial Modular Cruiser Concept

By Chris French

It may not be apparent, but I'm the type of gamer Game Designers simultaneously hate and fear. Why, one asks? Simple - I actually read everything the Designer writes.

Everything.

Every last word - including, and especially, the "flavor text" (the bits that purport to explain how a piece of technology or a type of society works).

Now, any long-service gamer knows full well the disasters that can ensue when a not - at - all - well - thought - through bit of flavor text is introduced into the game. With the sickening inevitability of sharks sniffing out blood, or Masked Psycho Killers seeking out teens engaging in Illicit Acts, Rules Lawyers lock in on these bits of flavor text, and use them to create Things Fair Game Play Was Not Meant To Know. The usual result of this is month after month of discussion on various forms of Internet communication endeavoring to fix the problem - and creating something infinitely worse....

So, with this in mind, the Author recommends to anyone who

considers himself a "BFG traditionalist" the following: Skip to the next article in the magazine; what you will read here will cause your blood pressure to increase like America's national debt, only in this case, it actually is an American's fault that the number is rising.

(Lovely - I have just become the Lemony Snicket of the BFG world....)

The idea for this comes from a single line of text in the description of the Imperial Lunar cruiser: "The uncomplicated design of this class ensures its enduring utility, enabling vessels to be built at hive and industrial worlds normally unable to muster the expertise to construct a capital ship." The thought struck me that the Imperium, being a hopelessly hierarchical outfit, would need to design ships (among other things) in much the same way the late, unlamented Soviet Union did: Make it easily replaceable - if it breaks, don't try to fix it, but yank it out and stick in a replacement. That way, even the room - temperature - I.Q.s operating the beast can keep it operating (as long as the parts supply holds out...).

The idea I had was simple: Take a Basic Ship Frame. Strap on a few common elements (one engine type, one shield type, one turret type, and so on). Then add whatever weapons kits were desired. (Rather like building the actual minis, true?) Voila, a Modular Cruiser. Simplifies the rear-echelon - since all ships use the same parts, save for the weapons, there's less likelihood of a ship being laid up for a while waiting for parts (and if the weapons are lunched, it can always be rebuilt into something else - a la the Lunar-to-Dominator mod).

Further research determined that, wonder of wonders, the Imperial cruiser list actually seems to have been designed around this idea. The hulls all share the same handling type (Cruiser), hits (8), speed (20cm), turns (45°), shields (2), armor (6+ F; 5+ P/S/R), turrets (2), number of weapon mounts (3 - Prow, Broadside 1, Broadside 2), and weapon mount arcs (Prow: F; Broadside 1: 1 each L, R; Broadside 2: 1 each L, R). Only the actual weapon mounts varied.

This became the basis of the Modular Cruiser. Expressed in game terms:

Gothic Sector Modular Cruiser

TYPE/HITS: Cruiser/8; SPEED: 20cm; TURNS: 45°; SHIELDS: 2; ARMOUR: 6+ Front/5+; TURRETS: 2; ARMAMENTS: 1 Prow Slot, 2 Broadside Slots; POINTS: 180 (sans weaponry).

Now, the available weapons. Rather than bore the reader with the details of figuring these out (I should know how boring it is - I had to figure it out myself), I will leave it as an exercise for the reader:

PROW WEAPONS LIST (Arc: F)

(select one of the following, and add the points to the basic cost)

TORPEDOES: Strength: 6; Speed: 30 cm (0 pts.)

NOVA CANNON: Range: 30-150 cm, # shots: 1 (+20 pts.)

LANCES: Strength: 3; Range: 30 cm (0 pts.)

WEAPON BATTERIES: Firepower: 9; Range: 30 cm (0 pts.)

[Author's Note: The lance and WB mods actually derive from the Dauntless; however, as the ST6 torp - ST3 lance conversion is "canon", and Imps are the only race without conventional prow weapons....]

BROADSIDE WEAPONS LIST (Arc: 1 each L, R)

(as above, but select two weapons; both bays may mount the same weapon type)

LANCES: Strength: 2; Range 30 cm (0 pts.)

WEAPON BATTERIES: Firepower: 6; Range: 30 cm (0 pts.)

[Modification 1: Increase Range to 45cm. (+10 pts.)]

[Modification 2: Increase Range to 45cm; reduce FP to 3 (-5 pts.)]

LAUNCH BAYS: Capacity: 2 sqdn. (+40 pts.)

(Note: Remember, the described ST/FP/etc. is for one side; so, for example, adding Lances would place one set of ST2/30cm lances to Port, and one set of ST2/30cm lances to Starboard.)

So, let's see how these work out. Most of the Basic Set ship costs work out the same using this; however, Dominator seems to be out-of-line with its fleetmates (under these rules, it should cost 200 pts., not 190).

Now, the Fun Part: Let's see what happens when we create Ships That Will Annoy The Blazes Out Of The Purists. We'll start with the "Imperial dedicated aircraft carrier" (AKA the Smotherman Class CV - it's an old joke...):

Basic hull (180); Prow WB (0); Broadside 1 LB (+40); Broadside 2 LB (+40) = 260 pts.

Wow. Yes, it can crank out the aircraft, but it's completely vulnerable on its flanks, and costs nearly as much as a Mars BCV. Somehow, I don't think introducing these into the game is going to turn the Imperium into an unstoppable death machine. All right, let's move on to the "Eldar Eater":

Basic Hull (180); Prow WB (0); Broadside 1 WB [mod 1] (+10); Broadside 2 WB [mod 1] (+10) = 200 pts.

The Eldar supporters out there might be justifiably miffed about this beast, but it's not that much worse than a Dominator or Zealous/Dominion-model Tyrant. (Remember, readers: Unless the target is a Defense-class unit, WB never get to apply their full values against a target. Don't believe me? Read the WB Chart again.)

Really, allowing the Imperium a Modular Cruiser doesn't change the game a whole lot. Granted, there are a lot of possible configurations, but in the end, they all balance out. And none of them address the Imperial weaknesses - lack of speed, lousy weapon range, and lack of a decent aircraft carrier (like one that can carry Assault Craft and doesn't need three accompanying cruiser hulls...). So, allowing this shouldn't cause too much trial and tribulation. Of course, that's just my view of things; your fleet list may vary.

BFG Alliances - Part Two

By Ray Bell

In part two of BFG Alliances, we learn of the allies of Eldar (including Craftworld and Dark Eldar) and Space Marines (including Grey Knights and other Space Marine Chapters).

Fleets in the 40K universe are sometimes accompanied by various allies, depending on the primary Fleet list. Each fleet below may spend up to 20% of its points on allies as described for each fleet.

Eldar Corsairs

The Eldar Corsairs on occasion ally themselves with other races but only in a supporting or directing role (as allies of other races). However Craftworld Eldar vessels have been noted as being part of Corsair fleets, sometimes even the flagship is of Craftworld origin.

Craftworld Eldar: The various Eldar Craftworlds lend support to aspiring Pirate Princes in the form of supplies ships and crews. Craftworld Eldar ships used as allies will count as a separate fleet for fleet composition only (e.g. if you want a Dragonship you must first have two Wraithships). All Craftworld Eldar ship classes may be used. Craftworld Eldar ships can use fleet re-rolls as normal. Craftworld Eldar leaders and re-rolls may not be bought. However Aspect Warrior fighting crews maybe bought for any Craftworld Eldar capital ship and may be bought for the Pirate Prince's capital ship (it can not be bought for an escort captained by the Pirate Prince). The Pirate Prince's capital ship may carry assault boats if it has launch bays for the usual cost of 10pts (So they can be bought for an Eclipse, Voidstalker, Dragonship or even a Wraithship).

Craftworld Eldar

Eldar Craftworlds are accompanied by vast armadas, and so there must be dire circumstances indeed if a Craftworld Fleet needs allies. But not all Craftworlds are as strong, some are small, stranded in hostile systems or under constant attack from those that have made their location well known. (Look forward to Special Rules for each of the Major Craftworlds in future issues of Warp Rift. These special rules may include different alliance rules, such as Saim-Hann's excessive

use of Corsair escorts and light cruisers).

Allied Craftworlds: Different Craftworld Battle Fleets vary in terms of classes of ships, fleet composition, and certain upgrades such as Iyanden Ghostships.

When the time calls for it weaker Craftworlds have their Battlefleets reinforced by sympathetic Major Craftworlds. The Primary Craftworld (most points) doesn't count as an Ally. Ships from other Craftworlds will be limited as Allies.

Eldar Corsairs: Corsairs ships and even entire fleets return to their home Craftworld in times of need, such as Yriel's Corsair Fleet saving the Craftworld of Iyanden from the fate of the Great Devourer. Eldar Corsair ships used as allies will count as a separate fleet for fleet composition only (e.g. only having Corsair capital ships will not allow Dragonships to be bought), however the Voidstalker maybe bought as part of the 20% allowance for allies without any of the normal restrictions, but counts as a Dragonship for fleet composition (so it would just be possible to field a Voidstalker in a fleet of 2000pts). All Eldar Corsair ship classes may be used. Eldar Corsair ships can use Fleet re-rolls as normal. Eldar Corsair Leaders and re-rolls may not be bought. Aspect Warrior fighting crews maybe bought for any Eldar Corsair capital ship and they may carry assault boats for the usual cost of 10pts, if they have launch bays (so they can be bought for an Eclipse or Voidstalker).

Dark Eldar Raiders

Dark Eldar Fleets gain resources from slave labour, raiding trade lanes, working as Mercenaries and from 'Fallen' Eldar Corsairs. (Look forward to alternate rules for the Dark Eldar fleet list in a future issue of Warp Rift).

Fallen Eldar Corsairs: Eldar Corsairs like Rangers have left their Craftworld and tread the path of the Outcast, some return, but many give in to their dark desires and become Dark Eldar. All Eldar Corsair ship classes except Battleships maybe used as allies, you must pay an extra 5% (rounded up to the nearest 5pts) for the additional rules that follow. For each capital ship included in the fleet you must have three escorts, these maybe of Corsair or Dark Eldar origin (i.e. treat all ships as Dark Eldar for fleet composition). Eldar Corsair ships can use fleet re-rolls as normal. Eldar Corsair leaders and re-rolls may not be bought. If Dark Eldar and Corsair ships are mixed in squadrons, Eldar

ships move twice in the movement phase (instead of moving in the ordnance phase). Corsairs gain Dark Eldar boarding rules, may use Slavebringer assault boats on ships with launch bays, Leech torpedoes may be used on ships with torpedo tubes. Mimic Engines may be bought for corsair ships at the normal cost. (If using the alternate Dark Eldar rules in a future issue of Warp Rift, the Corsair ships gain Mimic engines automatically for plus 5%pts (rounded up to the nearest 5), as all Dark Eldar ships have Mimic Engines instead of Shadowfields).

Space Marines

Space Marines are an Elite fighting force of the Imperium and will fight along side the Imperial Navy if the occasion calls for it. There are also many Space Marine Chapters with differing traditions and ship designs who will often work together to defeat a particularly dangerous foe.

The Imperial Navy: In fleet engagements of significant size, standard Space Marine fleets are outgunned and cannot match the resilience of other fleets in similar circumstances. But as the Space Marine fleets are not intended to be in a fleet engagement, accompanying Navy vessels will be extremely rare, mainly being components of Chapter fleets that hold dominion over numerous worlds (such as the Ultramarines). But from time to time a Navy vessel finds itself reinforcing a weakened Space Marine Chapter out of vital necessity. If the vessel survives through the Chapter's strife they will often be absorbed into the fleet. All Imperial ships may be used as allies but count as a separate fleet in terms of fleet composition. Because these vessels will be fighting alongside their Space Marine counterparts, the Chapter will make sure that the crews will be trained to a standard far higher than that of the Imperial navy. To represent this navy vessels have +1 to the D6 when determining Leadership (this gives them a leadership between 7 and 9, but if they are reinforcements in a standard campaign they will have

leadership 6). Imperial Navy ships may not be squadroned with Space Marine ships.

Grey Knights: Grey Knights are Space Marines that possess probably the most advanced strike cruisers in the Imperium due to their proximity to Mars. Grey Knight Strike Cruisers that are used as allies will count as a separate fleet for fleet composition. May use Grey Knight Strike Cruisers. (The rules for Grey Knight strike cruisers can be found in BFG Mag 16. A Grey Knight fleet-list will be in a future issue of Warp Rift).

Space Marine Chapters: Space Marine Chapters have fought battles side by side for millennia. Unlike other allies, allied Space Marine Chapters can be up to 30% of the fleet as well as the 20% for being an ally. The primary Chapter (most points) must have the Master of the Fleet (and therefore the largest Space Marine capital ship for him to Captain). (Note: A maximum of 50% of the fleet maybe allies in total. e.g. you could have 50% Normal, 30% allied Chapter, 10% Imperial Navy and 10% Grey Knights). (Look forward to Space Marine Chapters in a future issue of Warp Rift).

Grey Knights

The Grey Knight fleet just like normal Space Marine fleets will require assistance when numbers are required to defeat an otherwise overwhelming enemy. But unlike normal Space Marine Chapters, Grey Knights have far more resources to call upon. (A Grey Knight fleet-list will be in a future issue of Warp Rift).

Space Marine Chapters: Space Marines are normal allies (up to 20% of the fleet), and count as a separate fleet in terms of fleet composition. Space Marine leaders and re-rolls may not be bought.

Imperial Navy: It is quite common to see Imperial vessels in a Grey Knight fleet, given the power of requisition the Inquisition holds. All Imperial ships maybe used as allies but count as a separate fleet in terms of fleet composition. Because these vessels will be fighting alongside their Grey Knight counterparts, the Inquisition will make sure that the crews will be trained to a standard far higher than that of the Imperial navy. To represent this navy vessels have +1 to the D6 when determining Leadership (this gives them a leadership between 7 and 9, but if they are reinforcements in a standard campaign they will have leadership 6). Imperial Navy ships may not be squadroned with

World Eaters

By Ray Bell

The World Eaters legion is totally devoted to the murderous ideals of Khorne, fighting only to mound skulls at the base of their master's throne. The World Eaters are now a fractured legion, fighting in self-sufficient warbands and occasionally joining in battle when the prospect of blood and skulls is great.

The World Eaters have access to the Kharnath Class Grand Cruiser and Kharn the Betrayer as well as alternate Space Marine Crews (Khorne Berserkers), Warmasters and Lords.

World Eater capital ship squadrons

Each capital ship squadron (including squadrons of 1) must have one Lord of Khorne or the Warmaster/Kharn to lead it. Any Capital ship may have a Mark of Khorne for +20pts each.

Khorne Berserkers (replacing Chaos Space Marines): 20pts

Khorne Berserkers are terrifying and unrelenting warriors dedicated to the worship of the Blood God. All World Eaters are Khorne Berserkers.

Khorne Berserkers give a +2 Boarding Modifier (extra +1 boarding modifier instead +1 Leadership), +1 to the results of Hit and Run attacks (including ordnance), enemy conducting Hit and Run attacks against the ship suffer a -1 to the result, scores two Assault points every turn in Planetary assault instead of one.

Temple of Summoners

A Temple of Summoners allows you to use a Daemonship in your fleet (using the rules in Warp Rift 2), the Daemonship must have a mark of Khorne.

0-1 Kharn the Betrayer

You may include Kharn the Betrayer in the World Eaters fleet if it is worth 750pts or more. If there are any Battleships in the fleet he must captain the fastest.

Kharn the Betrayer (Ld 9, 2 re-rolls): 175pts

Special rules: +D3-1 Boarding Modifier (giving results of +0/+1/+2). This represents Kharn's renowned indiscriminate psychotic behaviour affecting the fighting ability of his warriors. Kharn also has the following upgrades: Mark of Khorne, Khorne Berserkers, Terminator Teleport Assault.

*Kharn's ship has a 'standard' Boarding Modifier of +3 to +5 (includes +1 for being Chaos) whilst having Double Boarding Value (max of +4 Modifier).

Warmaster of Khorne (replacing Chaos Warmaster)

You may include one Warmaster of Khorne in your fleet to command the most expensive capital ship. If there are any Battleships in the fleet he must captain the fastest. If Kharn is commanding the fleet you may not have a Warmaster of Khorne.

The Warmaster of Khorne (+2 Ld, max of 9, one re-roll): 120pts

The Warmaster of Khorne has the Mark of Khorne and may have either a Temple of Summoners or the Khorne Berserkers upgrade. The Warmaster of Khorne may be given an extra re-roll for +25pts.

0+ Lord of Khorne (replacing Chaos Lord)

Any capital ship, apart from that of a Warmaster of Khorne (or Kharn), may be captained by a Chaos Lord. *See World Eater capital ship squadrons.

Lords of Khorne (+1 Ld, max of 9): 45pts

Lords of Khorne have the Mark of Khorne and may have either a Temple of Summoners or the Khorne Berserkers upgrade. A Lord of Khorne may be given a 'ship-wide' re-roll for +25pts (may only be used on the ship or squadron commanded by the Lord).

0-1 Kharnath Grand Cruiser

In the year 232.M38 a World Eaters warband, The Head Hunters, left the Eye of Terror in pursuit of a lone experimental Imperial Battleship, the Trepidation. Whilst on the hunt they were ambushed by a small Emperors Children Raider Fleet satisfying their desires for vengeance.

+++Historical note+++

The Head Hunters fleet consisted of a squadron of Iconoclast class destroyers (The Flesh Hounds) two Slaughter class cruisers (Doomfrenzy and Bloodfury), a Styx heavy cruiser (Gorespiller) and a Repulsive grand cruiser (Marauder of Khorne), the flagship of the fleet.

The Emperors Children Fleet was quickly annihilated. Their cruisers were boarded and the escorts destroyed by boarding ordnance. The Head Hunters fleet had not passed unscathed however, all of the Iconoclast class destroyers had been lost and the Slaughter class cruisers had suffered serious damage during a frenzied boarding action, when the plasma drive overloaded on the Emperors Children's flagship.

At this point the Trepidation turned back using its prototype Warp Drive, confident the accident that brought them into the Eye would not repeat itself. The Trepidation was considered heavily armed even for a Battleship and quickly crippled or hulked the remaining Head Hunters above the world of Arkhar. But just before it could deal the final blows a Warp Rift tore the Trepidation into the Warp.

As none of the remaining vessels were in space-worthy shape the surviving Head Hunters landed on and then conquered the primitive world of Arkhar, enslaving the population for the purpose of repairing their ships. All the other vessels were cannibalised to rebuild the Grand Cruiser. Salvaging Launch bays from the Styx, Scartix coils from the Slaughters' engines and various other components from the wreckage.

By the year 284.M38 (over 50 years later) the Grand Cruiser was completed. Named Kharnath by the now Khorne worshiping people of Arkhar (Kharnath meaning Blood God in their native tongue).

Chaos Kharnath Class Grand Cruiser				260 Points	
TYPE/HITS	SPEED	TURNS	SHIELDS	ARMOUR	TURRETS
Cruiser/10	25cm	45°	3	5+	3
ARMAMENT		RANGE/SPEED		FIREPOWER	FIRE ARC
Prow Boarding Torpedoes		30cm		6	Front
Port Launch Bay		30cm (Assault boats)		4 Squadrons	-
Starboard Launch Bay		30cm (Assault boats)		4 Squadrons	-
<p>Notes: +1 to boarding due to 'Talons of Khorne' - huge boarding harpoons to snare their prey as boarding craft tear through the wounds of the enemy vessel. Improved thrusters, moves +5D6 on All Ahead Full special orders. Must have Terminator Teleport assault troops. Must have Mark of Khorne. The Kharnath Grand Cruiser uses a large flying base.</p>					

The Bait - Part One

By Space Cadet

Captain Warris nearly fainted when he read over his orders. Although the standard ship for this run was assigned to a Noble family, they had decided to pass on the job to a 'loyal and trustworthy servant of the Imperium', namely him. The run itself was usually taken once in a person's life, for two reasons.

The first reason was that performing a run as the Captain of the vessel would allow you to retire to any planet you desired, with a fortune to create one's own home, with whatever you wanted inside. The money paid for it, in conventional terms, was over fifty times what one would make in a year. Even ordinary personnel were paid massive amounts, both to prevent temptation, and to keep their mouths shut about the true cargo, and its schedule.

The second reason it was a once in a lifetime trip, was because of recent statistics. Normally, Imperial vessels have a 2% chance of being attacked, let alone destroyed. Unfortunately, along this route, the figure had risen to over ten percent, and the last three transports had not even arrived at their destination. Obviously, some pirates had gotten wise to the freighters, and

what they were actually carrying.

The cargo was, unusual. All the reports given out, the financial scrolls, everything, would tell of stock metal, of processed iron, and a few megatons here and there of rare earths and high-grade ores. In reality, the material loaded made the iron and other ores worthless. His three kilometer long transport would be hauling over a billion tons of platinum, gold, and gems. The value of it would make anyone collapse in shock, except for the Head Adeptus on his ship, who would provide the exact value of the cargo, down to the millicredit. His XO kept on referring to it as a thousand million tons, but given the feudal world he came from, Captain Warris had long since tuned out his many eccentricities.

Still, the five thousand crew of the transport 'Fat Belly' were another matter. Chief Gunner Hannison certainly looked like the ship's name, while Navigator Bannera, when they saw her, was the complete opposite, her head needing support to avoid having her neck break from holding her head up. Still, she was the second most important person on the ship, and when they went into the Warp, she was in command.

Master of Ordnance Falkstein often acted as third in command during a battle, when pirates would pop in, and try to steal whatever the Fat Belly was hauling. Most pirates were not expecting a heavy transport though, so the volume of fire was often enough to make the pirate vessels turn and run, for those that got away.

Chaplain Adressin and his staff kept busy, either going around and ministering to the crew, or listening to rumors, and acting upon them. Without his help, the last run would have been compromised by a mutiny, and the information passed on to the ship's Commissar had allowed the ringleaders to be captured, their souls purified, and sent to join the emperor. Of course, the Chaplain Adressin spent the next few weeks praying with the others who had been suspected, but their souls were deemed pure, except for a few more, who had to be forcibly purified, and sent to join the Emperor.

Commissar Gadelkin appeared to be a casual and relaxed person, but behind his image was one of the sharpest minds on board the Fat Belly. His ability to keep track of everyone's loyalty, and spot heresy was remarkable, and his courage in battle was near legendary, even approaching that of Commissar Cain. He was often the first into battle, and the last to

retreat, often dragging a wounded man with him. As a result, those under his command grew to admire him. Unfortunately, with the Fat Belly having to get a new crew after this mission, he would have to start all over again. A few of the senior personnel might stay on, and they would likely get promoted, or even made probationary officers. Others were simply too valuable to be promoted, and they would be stuck at their current positions, wielding almost as much power as the Captain, but obeying the Captain's orders.

Captain Warris looked out over the viewglass again, watching the series of heavy lifters move the gold into the main cargo hold, slowly filling it with enough riches to buy an Emperor class Battleship. He might be hauling one of the most valuable cargoes in the Imperium in a few days, but until then, he was just another ship's Captain, and the Port Captain was calling.

Port Captain Vagris stared at the Fat Belly with disgust. The ship had rust all over its hull, and the Imperial aquila was recognizable by the lack of rust, rather than shining proud like a proper ship would have displayed it. The crew was among the worst misfits he had on his station, causing riots when other merchant crews started insulting them. Of course, most other merchant ship crews

were in the four to six hundred range, so suddenly finding yourself on the receiving end of a five thousand person riot was often a once in a lifetime experience for them. Captain Warris had been gracious in those times though, simply detailing off enough of his crew to make up the losses, and accepting the wounded into his crew. The remainder of the losses were made up by having press-gangs go through the city, and anyone too slow to get clear of their sight was drafted into the crew. There had been a tense moment, as a press gang company had faced down an Planetary Defense Force platoon, when a local gang had started shooting up a nearby bar. That gang found itself on board the Fat Belly within half an hour.

Still, the ship was an eyesore to the clean lines of his station, and the ominous prows of the system defense monitors floating nearby. Nearly the size of the station itself, the Fat Belly could not reliably dock, so he had been forced to allocate half his limited supply of shuttles simply to ferrying the crew back and forth from the ship. The only good news he had was that the ship would be leaving in five days, after the loading was finished.

Heh, loading. Loading a mere freight hauler with enough riches to make a planetary governor pass out, and with hardly any security around. Oh, he had heard

rumors about another Black Crusade, and something about splinter fleets, but those came by with every new ship, and he had learned to dismiss them. Now if one of the nearby systems began reporting an Ork Waaggh, then he might get nervous.

Still, he could always have fun by tweaking the Captain's nose, as while the Fat Belly was moored in orbit, he was in charge, not Captain Warris.

"Get me Captain Warris, and be quick about it."

The servitor turned in its mindless task, as it pressed the runes and made the proper benedictions over the viewglass, then reported, "Comm ready."

A lieutenant nearby dashed forwards, either eager to earn favor with him, or just to get the job done so he could get out of sight of the Port Captain. It didn't matter, as long as the job was done.

Vagris listened for a few minutes, as they exchanged the proper greetings, then relayed his message. After Captain Warris was on the screen, Port Captain Vagris slowly walked over to talk to him.

"Greetings Captain Warris. The loading goes well?" He already knew the answer, but this conversation wasn't about

information, it was about authority. Vagris was a bit annoyed though, that Captain Warris had taken the call in his room's viewglass, rather than on the bridge.

"Indeed it does. Your shuttles have been a valuable aid to us, and the Adeptus Mechanicus personnel were able to get the ship reconsecrated very quickly." 'Either a bone tossed to make me go away, or a genuine compliment, still . . .'

"Of course Captain. Still, there have been a few complaints about your personnel since yesterday, as the local shopkeepers have commented about personnel from your ship going in off-limits areas." Only two, actually, and they were merely retrieving people who had been press-ganged, and had escaped for a short time.

"Indeed, if you put me in contact with those personnel, I am sure the proper personnel can be identified, and proper punishment administered." 'I'm sure some form of punishment, probably being confined to the ship for the next two weeks.'

"There is no need for that Captain, I've already dealt with the shopkeepers, and have settled for damages. Still, the next time your ship arrives, I will have to insist on more of your personnel assisting in surface patrol, to keep your

personnel in line." 'That should really twist in his crew's gut, as they will have less time to have any liberty on the surface. He'll have a real fun time with his crew when he announces that, for their next shore leave.'

"That is your prerogative of course, Port Captain." Vagris could see the muscles along his jaw bunching, and hid a smile. "Still Port Captain, if I may point out, my crew's share of port incidents is equal to the smaller crews, so perhaps a number of personnel only twice their size would make more sense?"

'Arrogant bastard! I know that your crew is almost ten times the size of the other freighters up there, yet you've had only twice the number of incidents. That is no reason for you to insist on reducing your surface patrol numbers. Ohh, Captain, I've got you right where I want you.'

"Actually Captain, this coincides with the item I was calling about. Given the nature of your cargo, and the potential for leaks, I am going to have to restrict all further travel by your crew to the planet. After all, you wouldn't want someone to tell the real cargo you are hauling?"

Captain Warris mentally counted to three, and barely managed to speak calmly at the screen. "That is an excellent point Port Captain. I will issue the necessary orders to my crew, to avoid as you say,

potential for leaks'."

"Thank you Captain. I will call you if I need to communicate anything else to you. Vagris out." He calmly pressed the rune to cut communications, and allowed himself a mild chuckle at Captain Warris' anger. Seeing an officer nearby appearing to be overhearing, Port Captain Vagris merely said, "lieutenant, consider yourself confined to the Station for the next week, for potential insubordination."

The lieutenant in question merely accepted the judgement, but inwardly he seethed, 'Will someone please shoot the idiot, before he gets everyone around us mad enough to shoot the station out of hate!'

Captain Warris cut the communications a little differently. His left arm had received the blessing of augmentation, after a boarding attack that came too close for comfort. That augmentation was put to use now, as he shattered the thick viewglass with the first punch, and the next dozen ruined the components behind it. It was when his fist finally met the metal bones of the ship that he finally stopped. He slowly returned to anger, then to calm, and began thinking again. Seeing the debris in front of him, he pressed a communication rune nearby.

"Tech-Magos, the viewglass in my

room doesn't appear to be working properly, can you send someone to pray over it? It appears to be the result of a recent load of organic waste caused the display to not work."

"We will send an adept immediately Captain." Tech-Magos Vilhare meant that literally. Even though he was a member of the Adeptus Mechanicus, and technically outside the chain of command, he simply interpreted it as being outside the chain of command only when someone wasn't asking him or his priests and adepts to do something. It allowed his crew to learn new prayers to the Omnissiah in their spare time, but kept them busy when they needed to appease the Machine Spirit in the ship.

He also understood the hidden meaning in the Captain's message. It likely was a large amount of organic waste that caused the problem. Also known as a load of bullshit.

Navigator Bannerera was in her sanctum, reviewing the recent warp charts, and she sighed in frustration. The warp shear had come into existence fifty standard years ago, and due to that shear, any ships trying to make the run had to drop into normal space, accelerate past the shear, and then pop into warp again. Unfortunately, the local pirates seemed to know it also. Of the

eight thousand ships that had traveled there in the past fifty years, over three hundred had been lost. Twenty of them had been in the past two years, and it was obvious the pirates had learned that Imperial shipping had to pass through that region in normal space.

Ships had a hard time tracking anyone in warp, but in realspace, a high-speed vessel could easily run down a lumbering transport, board the ship, and kill anyone that was resisting, or was deemed worthless. The others would be sold as slave stock to any one of a hundred races in the nearby regions. Those races did not dare defy the Imperial Navy openly, but the spoils from a pirate raid were well within their capability to handle, and provide the pirates with a reliable base for rest and repair. The Imperium was stretched in this sector, and with the Navy being forced to send ships to the Gothic sector, some sectors were about to break.

So she was sweating her brain off, trying to find a safer route, that didn't take them past the shear. The four dimensional mathematics involved, plus the warp itself made ordinary minds melt at the thought, but a few people were trained for this. The charts were clear unfortunately. The shear was right on the shortest route, and any delay would mean adding weeks to their voyage. As risky as the path was,

they had to take it.

"All right you lazy slogs, heave!" Cargomaster Fenrer called out cadence for the loading crew. Over a hundred men were pulling on the ropes to transfer each 'ingot' of gold. Due to Imperial specifications, each cube was precisely half a meter on a side, and as a result weighed slightly over two tons. That made roughly 25 kilos per person, but when they had several thousand ingots to load, those kilos added up quickly. The main storage chambers had been modified to hold the gold, to avoid having the deck collapse under the weight, and the Adeptus Mechanicus personnel had gotten finished consecrating the hold only hours before. They had complained about the desecration to the ship's Machine Spirit, until Captain Warris told them the vessel was only a hundred years old. Their opinion had radically changed after that, as they weren't working on an ancient and respectable Machine Spirit, but a brand new Spirit, that could be shaped into a proper avatar of the Omnissiah.

So the crew of the ship was now hauling one of several million ingots of gold into the hold. Across the hold thousands of crews were doing the same, others using rollers to ease the blocks in one of many levels to haul the material. The gems and platinum had already been loaded at the center, and all that was left was stacking

the millions of blocks on the floors that had been installed for this purpose. They were almost finished, but there were still several hundred thousand more to go, and the men hauling at the cords were starting to get tired.

Cargomaster Fenrer watched one of the men stumble and get crushed by the block, but he smiled. They had only the one death in the load crew so far, compared to several dozen in the other crews. His team knew their job, by the Emperor!

Executive officer Lieutenant Gadelphus sighed in pride as he watched the new recruits being led into the ship. They were all strong of body, and would make excellent workers in the holds, generariums, and if necessary, weapons bays. He had started off as one of hundreds recruited at his world when the Fat Belly had taken on a load of food there, and had worked, killed, and dominated in his drive to be the one on top.

When the riots on board had started to get out of control on the run ten years ago, it had been his skill with a sword that had killed the ringleader, and settled the rest down. He still wore the ears of the ringleader on his belt, both as trophies of his success, and to impress upon others not to pick a fight with him. The fact that the duel had been against someone twice his size, and he had won in less than a minute was also told. Since then, he had ruthlessly drilled many of the defending crew on combat, and even they were in awe of his blade.

There were a few smaller ones in the new recruits, and Lieutenant Gadelphus looked at them carefully. Most seemed to be afraid of their new surroundings, a few were curious about being on board anything in space, but a few seemed to be eyeing the rest of the ship carefully, seeing where the strengths and weaknesses were. There were only a dozen, tops, but those were the ones to

watch. The strong fought and conquered, the fearful were used as living shields, but the smart ones would keep others around to be strong, and provide the intelligence. A brief passage about a lion and a fox came to mind, but he just smiled.

Chief Petty Officer Baraxus looked over the new recruits. His last force had been engaged with Dark Eldar when they tried to raid the Fat Belly, and several of his better personnel had been kidnapped, for purposes unknown. As a result, he had to train these new recruits in the fine art of killing enemy boarders quickly, instead of capturing them for ransom. Fortunately, most of the people here were ex-gang members, so they had some ideas of how to operate as a group, instead of just running forwards as a mob, then running away when they saw a threat.

Even better, several of the personnel that had not been kidnapped were standing with him. All of the new boarding party volunteers had looked at them and decided, as a group, that the veterans standing beside the Chief Petty Officer were dangerous. And those personnel were very dangerous, from the hulking Magnus, who would literally break someone's spine by cracking it with his hands, to the lethal Garmo, who would do knife tricks while moving his hands in a blur. Garmo was also dangerous with a

laspistol, and he would do trick shooting every few days, just to keep his skills sharp.

After that, there were the standard Petty Officers, carrying their shotcannons, to patrol the ship during the Warp, to make sure that if anything got loose into the ship, that it would be destroyed quickly. All of them were veterans as well, and had been judging the new volunteers also. They had decided that most of the new volunteers had potential, some would be excellent, but a fourth of them should be flushed out an airlock, and new stock brought in.

House Father Vandread, of the House Baledicto stared at Handeros, one of his sons. He was all but shaking with fury at the insult that his son had just done to him.

"You assigned the job to an independent trader? It has been our house that has traditionally carried the treasure along the route, and you assign it to a mere independent! How can you sit there so casually, when the losses will rock this house for decades, if not centuries!"

"Because father, there will be no losses. I merely took the contract upon our house, and then hired the Captain of the independent to do the actual shipment. You yourself said that Captain Halgren, of your trading fleet, was

getting too proud of himself, and needed to be brought down a notch. This is the perfect way to do it.

"We still get paid for the treasure, Captain Halgren gets slapped down, and none of our ships are at risk. Given the losses incurred on the trip recently, it does matter who carries it. Our ships will get stopped, and boarded, but the pirates will ignore the independent, figuring the ship to be carrying grain, or iron ore. By the time they realize which ship is carrying the treasure, the treasure will be past the shear, and well on its way. Our house gets paid, and the treasure gets dropped off. The 'Fat Belly' then picks up the grain load our ship would normally have picked up, and returns here."

"And what happens the next time we have to send the treasure ship? They will simply stop all ships heading along that route, not just the ones from our house."

"Next time father? We are not due for another twenty years to send a treasure fleet, so by then the new cruisers will be built. The funds from the treasure will allow us to buy a pair of Lunar cruisers, and we can use those to escort the treasure ship, whichever one we use. Or we can simply load the treasure into the cruisers, to make it better protected. Pirates versus a freighter, even a large one, I can see. But pirates attacking a proper

cruiser, is another matter entirely."

"So you've thought this out have you? All right then. If it works, I'll get you on the naval board, to get additional funds for our construction yards. If it fails, you're going back downhive, without your armor."

"Don't worry Father, Captain Warris is a reliable man."

"Good."

Handeros smiled on the inside, 'Oh don't worry father, everything is taken care of. I have made the evidence point to you ordering the transfer to the independent, so if he fails, or decides to run, you'll get the blame. If he succeeds, I'll get the credit. And even better, I've made sure Captain Halgren knows that it was you that decided not to go with his ship, and knowing his crew, the news has already reached hundreds of ears by now, ears connected to other worlds, other races, that have dealt with the Imperium before. Each one of those worlds has a score to settle with the Imperium, and a ship like this would be too good an opportunity for anyone to resist.

'If the ship gets through, I get the credit, within the family. If it fails, you will be ruined, and that fop Undreas will be in charge. And Undreas is already my puppet. Either way, I win.'

The Ilithrium Campaign

By Ray Bell

These campaign rules offer a very different kind of campaign without intensely complicating the rules, which aren't suited for more casual gamers (although highly in-depth campaigns can be a lot of fun!). Even though the two races fighting in this campaign are Imperial and Chaos there is nothing stopping any other races participating in a similar campaign, just change the setting.

The Ilithrium Campaign

This campaign is set during the 13th Black Crusade where two massive Fleets, Chaos and the Imperium, fought in the Ilithrium Belt of the Ormantep system. Both fleets were split into numerous smaller fleets to search or hide from the enemy as having such large fleet in an asteroid field of this magnitude would fatally limit any response to an enemy attack.

Although this was technically one very long, very big battle it can be said that each skirmish was also a battle of significance, containing a number of ships equal to or even greater than noted fleet engagements across the Imperium.

Campaign Rules

Unlike the standard campaign rules in the Rule book the damage suffered by your ships is vitally felt, as there are few opportunities to repair or refit your vessels. The entire campaign takes place in one system where there are NO planets of importance and virtually NO system defences. There are NO resource points to repair your vessels. There are NO Space Stations capable of refitting your vessels.

So what's left I hear you cry! The Campaign is Renown based: the idea is to have the most renown by the end of the campaign and for your fleet (or your part of the fleet) to survive to the end. Reinforcements aren't received as newly built vessels, they are detachments from other parts of the fleet so they can arrive with good leadership or even refits! Also you can start with refits on some of your ships.

The Scenarios that can be used in this campaign are Cruiser Clash, The Bait, The Raiders, Escalating engagement, Fleet engagement.

Making the Fleet Roster

Create a 2000 point Fleet Roster as normal (even for Pirates such as Eldar and Orks).

Refits: Up to three of your capital ships (or escort squadrons if your fleet allows this) may have refits with the usual cost of +10% added (the cost of the fleet must still be 2000 points or less, this isn't an after purchase upgrade!). The refits are rolled for randomly: roll a D6 to determine the refit number then pick which type of refit it is.

If there is a Commander (including his re-rolls and extra bits) on a ship being refitted do not count their points value towards the +10% for the refit. However, if the ship is upgraded with either another refit, a Chaos Space Marine Crew (and Mark if there is no Lord or Warmaster), upgraded Ordnance (such as Special Torpedoes, Torpedo Bombers or Orbital mines), or another type of upgrade that isn't considered a Captain or Commander this cost is added towards the +10%.

Build-up

1. Determine the Attacker

The attacker is determined as usual but without any additional modifiers that are associated with campaigns.

2. Receive Orders

The attacker should now roll a D6 to determine what type of battle is to be played.

Incoming Orders: D6 Roll, 1-2 = Skirmish (500-750),
3-5 = Battle (750-1500), 6 = Engagement (1500-2500).

Deciding Scenario:

Skirmish: D6 Roll, 1-2 = Cruiser Clash, 3-4 = The Bait,
5-6 = The Raiders.

Battle: D6 Roll, 1 = Cruiser Clash, 2 = The Bait, 3 = The Raiders,
4-6 = Escalating Engagement.

Engagement: D6 Roll, 1-3 = Fleet Engagement,
4-6 = Escalating Engagement.

Deciding Location:

Unlike normal campaigns there is NO campaign map as it all takes place in one system.

Deciding Size of battle:

The Attacker can determine the size of the battle and then the defender can change the size by 100pts up or down (but not below the minimum or above the maximum for the type of battle).

3. Pick Fleets

Both Players must now pick their fleets using their fleet rosters.

Fight The Battle (Subplots):

All that needs to be done now is roll for a sub-plot and then get fighting.

Subplots:

As the campaign takes place over a much shorter space of time as usual almost half of the Subplots in the Rulebook are unsuitable. Roll for the type of Subplot as described below. Roll a D3 as usual to determine which type of Subplot you have.

Legacies of War: D6 Roll 1-2 = 4 Fleet Experience, 3-4 = 5 No Quarter, 5-6 = 6 Vendetta.

Chance Circumstances: D6 Roll 1-2 = 3 Unexpected Help, 3-4 = 4 Navigational Hazards, 5-6 = 6 Enemy Plans.

Secret Ploys: D6 Roll 1-2 = 1 Surprise Attack, 3-4 = 2 Secret Intelligence, 5-6 = 6 Hit and Run.

Aftermath

1. Extended Duty

If your ships have suffered unrepairable critical damage, such as Bridge smashed or Shield Collapse, you can repair these critical hits by rolling to repair once with each ship on your Fleet Roster after each game (roll to repair these critical hits as you would normally, ignoring the effects of blast markers, e.g. a cruiser with 7 hits remaining rolls 7 D6 hoping for a 6 to repair it's shields). So it is possible for a ship to have suffered a Shield Collapse critical, fail to repair it after each battle and be stuck with it for the rest of the campaign.

2. Spoils of War

After each battle leave all hulks on the table then remove all the other ships. If any of the Hulks are blazing roll a D3 for the number of times rolled on the Catastrophic Damage table and apply the highest roll (If the ship explodes remove it from the table).

Each hulk with a starting damage of 6 or less is worth D2 repair points, 8-11 is worth D3 repair points and hulks with 12 or more are worth D6 repair points. These points can be saved up throughout the campaign.

Escorts and repair points: Escorts can be recovered with repair points as usual representing the trade of resources between the different elements of the overall Battle Fleet. Keep in mind that the squadron leadership will be lowered if the squadron is crippled.

Eldar, Dark Eldar, Craftworld Eldar: These races may salvage off each other's Hulks but no one else's, and no one else may salvage off their Hulks.

Tyranids: Tyranids may salvage repair points off other races vessels as if they were its own, no one else may salvage off their Hulks.
Critical hits: All Tyranid critical hits are repaired in time for the next battle.

Necrons: Do not give or receive repair points at all, they are just worth a lot of victory points. Necron vessels do not need to repair; they fight the next battle with full hits. All Necron critical hits are repaired in time for the next battle, but Leadership reductions from critical results 6-12 may remain. After each battle roll a D6 for each point of Leadership the ship is reduced by (below it's 'natural' value). Each 4+ recovers a point of Leadership.

3. Adjust Renown

Renown is adjusted in exactly the same way as in normal campaigns.

4. Promotions and Demotions

Promotions and demotions are exactly the same as in normal campaigns.

5. Ship Experience

Ship experience is exactly the same as in normal campaigns.

6. Repairs

As explained earlier you can only gain repair points from Hulks (friend or foe). These repair points can be stored up until needed. If you are using a public renown table it would be a good idea to note how many repair points each person has stored. After a battle you can use up your repair points to regain hit points as in a normal campaign.

7. Appeals (Reinforcements)

The only appeals you can make are for reinforcements, these can vary in quality depending on the roll needed for a successful appeal. As in a normal campaign you gain extra appeals depending on how much renown you have.

Reinforcements (NOT Battleships, D6 roll)

2+ *Desperate*, Ld 6 (base Leadership for that race)

4+ *Skilled*, Ld 7-9 (Roll a D6, 1-3 = 7, 4-5 = 8, 6 = 9)

(+1 or -1 when necessary, depending on the race)

SM Ld 9-10 (Roll a D6, 1-3 = 9, 4-6 = 10)

5+ *Honoured*, Ld 7-9 (Roll a D6, 1-3 = 7, 4-5 = 8, 6 = 9)

(+1 or -1 when necessary, depending on the race)

SM Ld 9-10 (Roll a D6, 1-3 = 9, 4-6 = 10)

One random refit.

6+ *Elite*, Ld 7-9 (Roll a D6, 1-3 = 7, 4-5 = 8, 6 = 9)

(+1 or -1 when necessary, depending on the race)

SM Ld 9-10 (Roll a D6, 1-3 = 9, 4-6 = 10)

One random refit. One random crewskill.

Tyranids: The Appeals for Tyranids are: Desperate as above, skilled = +1 Refit, honoured = +2 refits, elite = +2 refits (choose one).

Necrons: The appeals for Necrons are: Desperate as above (escorts only), skilled = base leadership (cruisers), honoured = same as skilled, elite = leadership 9. (This may change in the future, keep an eye open for Necron refits in a future issue of Warp Rift.)