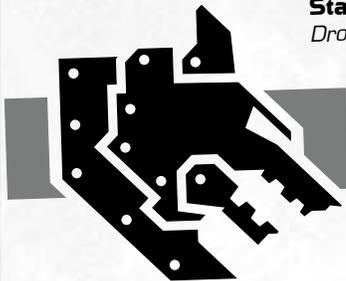


Information Is Ammunition: The Battle for Achernar

Scenario #1: Lady Luck

Following the disastrous first attempt to take the world of Achernar, Kal Radick ordered Tassa Kay—in-transit to Tigress—to return and try again. The Wolves' failed bid to capture Ankaa, followed by the first Achernar setback, makes them appear weak—something Radick will not tolerate. Part of Tassa Kay's bargain with Republic troops on Achernar was that she leave and never return. Radick's demand forces her to renege on her word, soiling her honor to further the goals of the Wolves. With no other choice, Tassa relents to Radick's demands, but she sends her bondsman, Yulri Wolf, in her stead. This violates the spirit of her agreement, but not the law—she'll not forget Radick's coercion. Under orders from Erik Sandoval-Groell, who is acting on behalf of Duke Sandoval, Skullcap Garret and a small Swordsworn force have been left on Achernar to help loyal Republic forces on the planet should the need arise.



Star Commander Yulri Wolf

DropShip Lupine

Inbound to Achernar
Prefecture IV, The Republic

Star Commander Yulri Wolf casually leaned against the small holographic table, his eyes heavy-lidded. He knew from experience that his facial expression combined with his body

language could convey a sense of disinterest in his surroundings. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. But unlike most Clanners, he'd learned that subterfuge had its time and place, just as did the type five autocannon mounted on his *Black Hawk*.

"Star Commander, it would appear that our grounding zone is near a makeshift bivouac. *Perhaps* we should change our touchdown point?"

He didn't turn; he had no need. He'd recognize the deep, sullen voice of Nikola Demos any time; her subtle attempts to emphasize what she would do were akin to a rhino charging blindly into a glass house. Not very Clan-like. After all, she'd already challenged him to a Trial of Grievance over the fact that Tassa had simply given him command of a small force, which included Nikola, without a proper batchall to determine who would command the mission. Then again, it was also supremely unheard of for a Star Commander, much less a bondsman, to be ordering around a Star Captain. He didn't look, but he could feel the weight of the cord around his wrist. How she must hate taking orders from him!

"Whose forces are they?" he responded, not taking his eyes from the holographic map of the terrain they'd be setting down in.

"What?" she said, taken slightly off guard.

He finally moved his gaze to meet hers, and allowed a hint of hardness to creep into his deep brown eyes; he said nothing.

Nikola visibly shook herself as though trying to regain momentum she had lost. "Um, defending forces, Commander."

"Swordsworn or Republic?"

"Um . . ." once more she stumbled as she tried to remember what to her had been an irrelevant fact. "Swordsworn."

He looked back at the projection, and the silence stretched for almost a full minute before Nikola worked up the courage to ask again. Clanner or not, he'd beaten her soundly enough to take the edge off their encounters. "Commander?"

"No change. Twice now the Swordsworn have bested us. We will not run and hide. Wolves tear at throats—and theirs is open and vulnerable."

Leftenant Skullcap Garrett

Swordsworn Bivouac, Highlake Basin
Eridanus, Achernar
Prefecture IV, The Republic

"Devlin's Blood! You've got to be kidding me." Skullcap Garrett's voice carried across the makeshift Swordsworn compound that looked as though it were a kicked anthill, with men scrambling to their machines.

As usual for this time of year, the temperature hovered above 40 degrees Celsius on the Highlake Basin, and Achernar's blue-white sun hammered the air, sending heat eddies up in every direction; he wiped the sweat off of his bare scalp and wished he'd remembered his hat. Skullcap grasped the leather pouch he always wore around his neck, and felt the twin six-sided dice that had saved his life more often than he could count. Now he wondered if lady luck wasn't loading the dice again. Of all the places on the entire planet to land—and the raiders were practically going to drop on their heads!

"I'd never joke about something like this, Leftenant," Collie said. He turned to find her towering over his own diminutive frame, yet it was she who appeared to be cowering. How could someone so big be so timid? He'd never delved too deeply, but he wondered if she'd had a tough life. Of course, he couldn't imagine how she'd been pushed around, when she stood at two meters and had shoulders that most men worked years to acquire.

"Just throwing words around, Collie," he said, gazing skyward. "You know how I am. Trying not to kill the messenger."

"That's okay, sir." He didn't look at her; from experience, the look of absolute gratitude on her face was sickening.

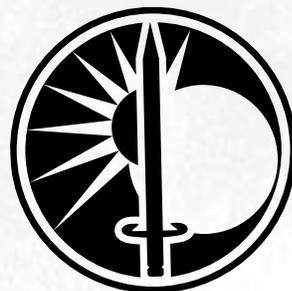
"Have we identified them yet," Garret said, as he began moving toward his own BattleMech.

"No."

He walked in silence, the bustle of activity swarming around him, and Collie a second shadow no amount of shade could dispel. As he neared his BattleMech, he looked up at "Dino Killer." He knew that his nickname for the *Spider* light BattleMech drew endless derisive smiles behind his back. That, however, didn't matter. Dino Killer had saved him from a fate worse than death: ignominy.

"Well, Collie, ignominy isn't one thing I'll have to worry about today, is it? In fact, if I die today I just might be a legend."

He laughed out loud, knowing the look on her face would be one of complete confusion. If he'd had the time, he would've taken out his dice and actually given them a roll. Lady luck or not, he always loved spitting in Fate's face and sitting back to see what happened.



MECHWARRIOR[®]

DARK AGE

Scenario #1: Lady Luck

Background

The Steel Wolves are returning to where they'd previously occupied Achernar: the Highlake Basin. Under direct orders from Galaxy Commander Kal Radick, they are returning to attempt to capture the world after their failed bid to do so only a month earlier. As luck would have it, the remaining Swordsworn forces on the planet are near the Wolves' grounding zone, and fighting erupts almost immediately.

Objective: Each player aims to defeat the other.

Battleforce Size

Two-player game; 300-point battleforces; three orders per turn. The Steel Wolves player must have at least one unit from the Steel Wolves faction in his or her battleforce. The Swordsworn player must have at least one unit from the Swordsworn faction in his or her battleforce.

Rules Set: MechWarrior[®]: Dark Age

Time Limit: 60 minutes

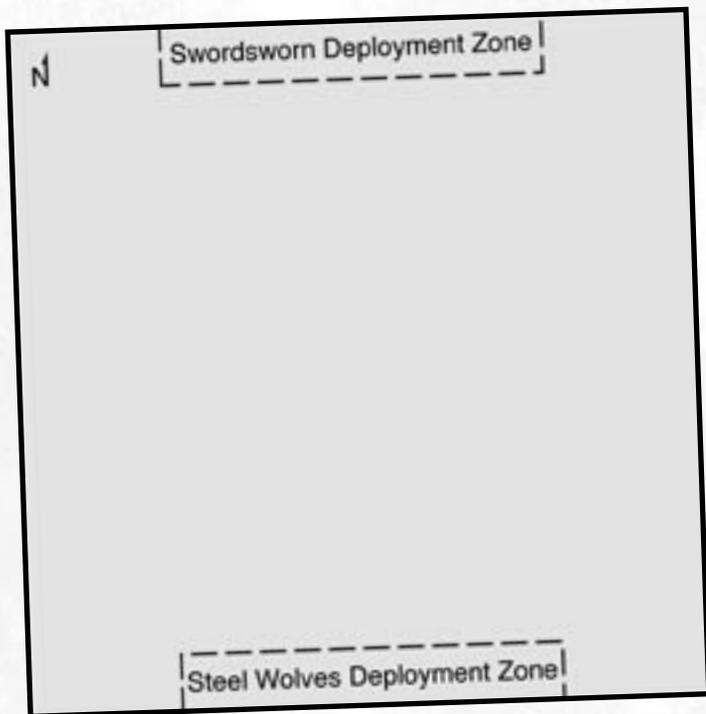
Preparing the Battlefield

Players prepare the battlefield per the **MechWarrior: Dark Age** standard rules. The Steel Wolves player is the first player.

Special Rules: None

Victory Conditions: Use standard **MechWarrior: Dark Age** victory conditions.

Battlefield Map



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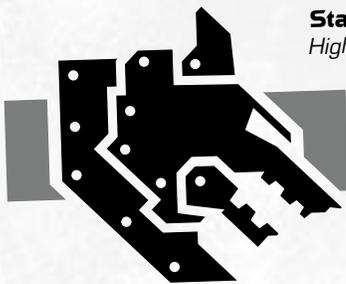
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MECHWARRIOR DARK AGE

Information Is Ammunition: The Battle for Achernar

Scenario #2: Predator and Prey

Determined to destroy the on-planet Swordsworn forces, Star Commander Yulri Wolf employs the tactics of his namesake. His Steel Wolves have managed to put the Swordsworn on the run, and are now nipping at their heels and flanks. He knows he cannot waste too much time, however, or forces loyal to The Republic might arrive to reinforce the Swordsworn and end the Wolves' second bid for Achernar.



Star Commander Yulri Wolf

Highlake Basin

Eridanus, Achernar

Prefecture IV, The Republic

The precipice loomed before Yulri, dropping some four hundred meters in an almost vertical fall to the prairie below.

As far as the eye could see, fields of hardy grasses and errant patches of yellow and lavender flowers dotted the plain—tough vegetation that could stand up to the high temperatures and arid conditions of the Highlake Basin.

Even though he had already confirmed the precipice's enormous scale, he still moved his *Black Hawk* side-to-side to take in the entire view, which seemed like it had no end. As his *Black Hawk* peered this way and that—its body and cockpit slung between back-canted, oversized legs, making it almost impossible for the giant machine to simply "turn its head"—it appeared to be a huge metal stallion, pawing the ground, impatient to continue the chase. Or a giant wolf, sniffing the ground to gauge the scent and preparing to launch into a loping run to catch its prey. Finally gazing forward again, Yulri toggled his view screen to maximum magnification and found his elusive prey: The Swordsworn had known of a quick way down the precipice and were getting away.

"Star Commander, how will our troops get down?" Leave it to Nikola to always poke and prod. Perhaps he would have to deal with her again soon.

"The Swordsworn are getting away, Commander. It could take us half the day to locate their means of descent."

"Which is why you will stay to herd the units without jump jets until that way is located," he responded.

"Commander!" Her voice was filled with barely concealed anger.

"Do you have a question, quineg?" His unperturbed response and his inclusion of the Clans' traditional suffix, which meant he didn't expect an answer, was apparently enough to quell her . . . for now.

"Neg."

"Good. Jok, Kara, Samel, and Wel, follow me. Nikola, we will keep you apprised of their position until you can rejoin the chase."

A series of affirmatives answered his orders and Yulri immediately stomped down on both foot pedals, igniting his jump jets and sending plumes of superheated plasma to lift his *Black Hawk* up and out. He cut the jets and the fifty-ton machine plummeted, pushing Yulri's stomach into his throat—the chase was on again.

Leftenant Skullcap Garrett

Highlake Basin

Eridanus, Achernar

Prefecture IV, The Republic

Skullcap Garrett suddenly had the urge to roll his dice again. Where was a good poker game when he needed it? The laugh—only slightly forced—bubbled over until he was laughing maniacally.

"Leftenant?" Collie's concerned voice broke over him like a balm. He may have hated her constant attention (almost adoration) at times, but she had her uses . . . now and then.

Blinking several times to clear the tears of mirth from his eyes, he continued to jounce along as his "Dino Killer" raced forward at almost sixty kilometers an hour, pacing the column of Swordsworn units. Of course, that was less than half the machine's maximum potential speed, but a good leader couldn't simply abandon the slower units in his force. Good thing he had several Giggins and Maxim Mk2s; he shuddered to think of the speed they'd have to go if the infantry had been forced to move on foot.

He cleared his throat and answered. "Don't worry, Collie. You know me. Just trying to live up to my yellow patch. Nothing wrong with that, right?" This time his laugh was genuine.

The glowering silence on the other end made him laugh again—how she hated that patch!

"Sir, I don't understand why you allow such insubordination. You should paint over your *Spider's* left leg and reprimand the lot of them." How Collie could manage to fill her voice with so much indignation was beyond him.

"Cause I don't care. Let them poke fun at me. 'Runaway Skullcap.' Isn't that what they call me?"

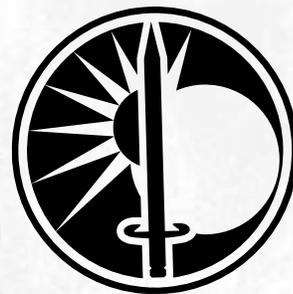
"Not while I'm around!" Skullcap smiled to himself. He could just imagine her indignation and size discouraging any such comments whenever she was around.

"Collie, don't worry about it. I certainly don't. I live to fight another day and so do they, and that's the important thing. Let them have their fun."

"But that doesn't . . ."

"Leftenant Garrett, they're coming over the edge," the voice of one of his outriders interrupted.

His mirth fled as quickly as it had come. He should've known from the last time around, but he still found it hard to believe just how tenacious those damn Wolves were. They just kept coming. He'd sent out the call for reinforcements; now he just had to keep the raiders at bay long enough for them to arrive.



MECHWARRIOR® DARK AGE

Scenario #2: Predator and Prey

Background

The Steel Wolves have gained the initiative, and the Swordsworn are on the run. Attempting to run them into the ground, the Steel Wolves must catch and eliminate them before Republic reinforcements can arrive.

Objective

Each player aims to defeat the other, with the Steel Wolves player specifically aiming to occupy the Swordsworn deployment zone with sufficient force to prevent reinforcements from arriving.

Battleforce Size

Two-player game; 300-point battleforces; three orders per turn. The Swordsworn player has both an initial 200-point or less battleforce and a reinforcement battleforce of no more than 100 points. The Swordsworn player has three orders per turn for the entire game. No units with speed mode Hover may be used in the initial Swordsworn battleforce. The Steel Wolves player must have at least one unit from the Steel Wolves faction in his or her battleforce. The Swordsworn player must have at least one unit from the Swordsworn faction in his or her battleforce.

Rules Set: MechWarrior®: Dark Age

Time Limit: 60 minutes

Preparing the Battlefield

Players prepare the battlefield per the battlefield map. No additional terrain is placed. The Steel Wolves player is the first player. The Swordsworn must deploy his or her initial battleforce within the hindering terrain, even if the units have Infiltrate.

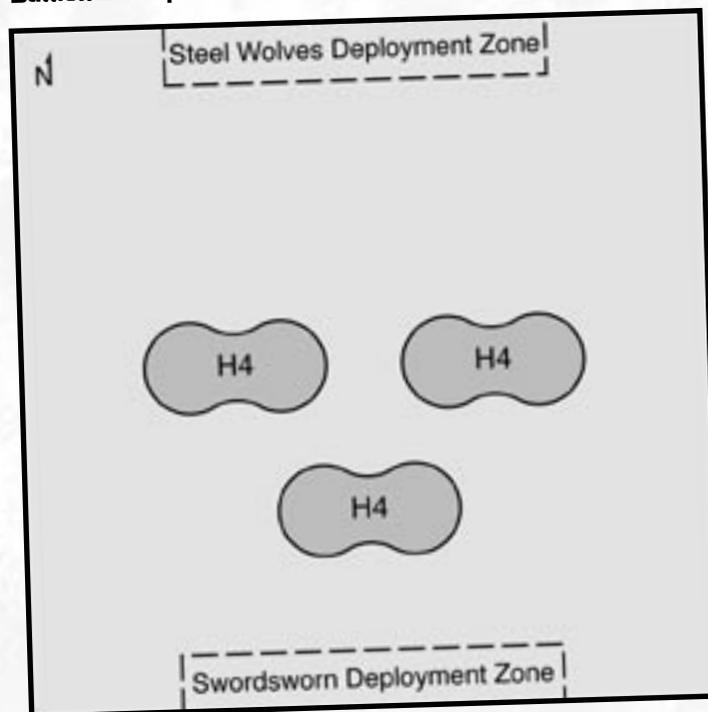
Special Rules

- 1) Starting on the Swordsworn's third turn, there is a chance that the Swordsworn's reinforcement battleforce arrives. At the beginning of turn 3, roll 1 six-sided die. On a result of 5 or 6, place the reinforcement battleforce in the Swordsworn deployment zone. If the reinforcement battleforce doesn't arrive on turn 3, roll 1 six-sided die at the beginning of turn 4. On a result of 3, 4, 5, or 6, place the reinforcement battleforce in the Swordsworn deployment zone. If the reinforcement battleforce hasn't arrived by the beginning of turn 4, the reinforcements arrive in the Swordsworn deployment zone at the beginning of the Swordsworn's turn 5.
- 2) If the Steel Wolves have 100 points of units in the Swordsworn's deployment zone when the reinforcements arrive, the reinforcements do not arrive that turn—except on turn 5, when the reinforcements will arrive regardless of how many Steel Wolves units are in the Swordsworn's deployment zone. Only move orders may be given to units in the reinforcement battleforce the first turn they're on the battlefield.

Victory Conditions

Use standard **MechWarrior: Dark Age** victory conditions, except that no Victory Condition 3 points may be gained.

Battlefield Map



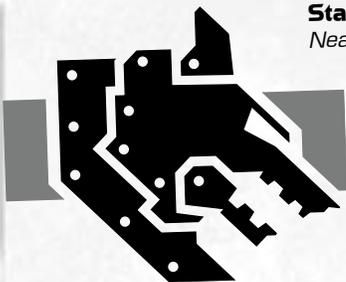
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MECHWARRIOR DARK AGE

Information Is Ammunition: The Battle for Achernar

Scenario #3: Steel Rain

Though they managed to engage the Swordsworn, the Steel Wolves were unable to completely eliminate them before the Swordsworn disengaged and withdrew. The Wolves were, however, able to capture a precious Swordsworn sniper artillery tank. Though decades ago the Clans generally frowned on the use of artillery—considering it not very “warrior-like” to strike at your enemies without even seeing them—contact with the Inner Sphere has generally purged them of that sentiment. Now, as Yulri launches another assault, he will use whatever is at his disposal to achieve victory.



Star Commander Yulri Wolf

Near Swordsworn Field Repair Base,
Highlake Basin
Eridanus, Achernar
Prefecture IV, The Republic

The exhaust from the massive tracked tank stained the air with sickly, dark ochre, and the fumes jabbed at Yulri's nostrils with a thousand tiny needles. The thrum of the powerful engine shook the very

air, and the ground rumbled in painful protest as the big vehicle slowly moved into position.

Yulri knew that some of his ancestors might be rolling over in their graves. After all, though he'd been born in The Republic and had known nothing else, he'd studied the history of the Clans and understood them better than most. Though they had made use of artillery, the Clans had generally attempted to limit its use. Then again, the Clans had used their rituals of zellbrigen when they'd first encountered the Inner Sphere, fighting one-on-one duels of honor and prestige. The treachery and barbarity of the Inner Sphere, however, had quickly disabused the Clans of their ways, and their fighting style had slowly begun to change. What was the saying? To destroy a monster, you must become one?

“Star Commander, we are in position.” The voice of the sniper artillery tank's commander filled the small headset he wore, interrupting his thoughts. At times like these, when his fellow Clanners thought of nothing but fighting and glory, and his own contemplations strayed to weighty matters of history and societal change, Yulri wondered if he really belonged among the Clans.

“Excellent.” He reached to toggle a switch on the headset, changing frequencies. “Nikola, are you in position?”

“Aff, Star Commander.”

Yulri was prepared for some form of resistance and was actually surprised when none came. Nikola must be too excited to be leading the charge herself. He'd decided that instead of using vinegar with Nikola, he'd offer her some honey. Not only might this actually win her over to her side, but when the vinegar came—and he knew that it would come—it also might shock her.

He switched back. “On my mark,” he said. After the initial shelling, his Wolves would strike. “Fire!”

Forgetting how close he was to the vehicle and unused to such firepower, he was simply physically unprepared for the power of the artillery shot. The massive concussive blast literally knocked him from his feet. After half a minute of ear ringing, the second shot lofted into the air. A Wolfish grin lit Yulri's features: If it was this bad here, the other end was in for a real surprise.

Leftenant Skullcap Garrett

Swordsworn Field Repair Base,
Highlake Basin
Eridanus, Achernar
Prefecture IV, The Republic

Skullcap watched as the lift hoist of the J1100 recovery vehicle swung the heavy-aligned crystal steel armor patch into place over the right arm of his “Dino Killer.”

“Watch it! Slower, you fool!” Joshua yelled. Joshua—his personal tech who refused to let anyone work on the machine but himself, even if it required that Joshua be in the field where an attack could strike—was beside him supervising the repair. He'd already launched into his usual diatribe concerning his *Spider*. Skullcap tried not to roll his eyes—that generally made Joshua simply talk longer and louder. By now, Skullcap was certain that he could repeat the rant word for word.

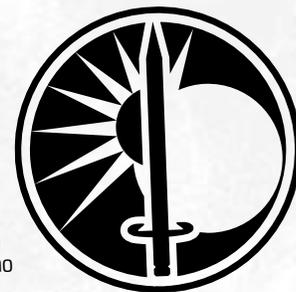
Back in the middle of the last century, House Kurita's Nimakachi Fusion Products, Ltd. produced a new *Spider*, which it planned to sell almost exclusively to House Marik. Sales proved lackluster, however, even after Nimakachi began selling the design to any bidder. But in the mid-3060s, a new phenomenon emerged. Called Project Phoenix and originating with Vicore Industries, outdated 'Mech designs were given new technology and physical facelifts—a radical approach given that most BattleMechs had retained the same look for centuries. Sales began to increase, and other manufacturers began the same program with even newer designs. Nimakachi quickly jumped on the bandwagon in hopes of finally recouping their investment in the *Spider*. Unlike most of these upgraded designs, however—which usually maintained a semblance of their original look—Nimakachi went to the extreme in order to separate its new design from past failures, changing the design's appearance so that it looked little like its predecessor. In doing so, however, they created complex and intricate armor placement, which made the machines extremely difficult to repair in the field.

Unable to stand the rant any more, Skullcap broke in. “Joshua, I asked a simple question. Will it be ready at 0900 hours?”

Cut off in midsentence, the short, stocky man turned with almost a hurt look on his face. “Of course. Why wouldn't it not be?” He sounded as though Skullcap had insulted him.

As Skullcap walked away, he shook his head at his eccentric tech. If that's all I had to deal with, I'd be lucky. Where are the Wolves?

Just then, the piercing shrill of artillery jerked his head to the sky.



MECHWARRIOR® DARK AGE

Scenario #3: Steel Rain

Background

Having captured an artillery unit, the Steel Wolves make a bid to destroy the encamped Swordsworn. Catching them off-guard, the Wolves launch a rain of steel and then vault their forces into melee.

Objective: Each player aims to defeat the other.

Battleforce Size

Two-player game; 300-point battleforces; three orders per turn. The Steel Wolves battleforce must include at least one artillery unit. The Steel Wolves player must have at least one unit from the Steel Wolves faction in his or her battleforce. The Swordsworn player must have at least one unit from the Swordsworn faction in his or her battleforce.

Rules Set: MechWarrior®: Dark Age

Time Limit: 60 minutes

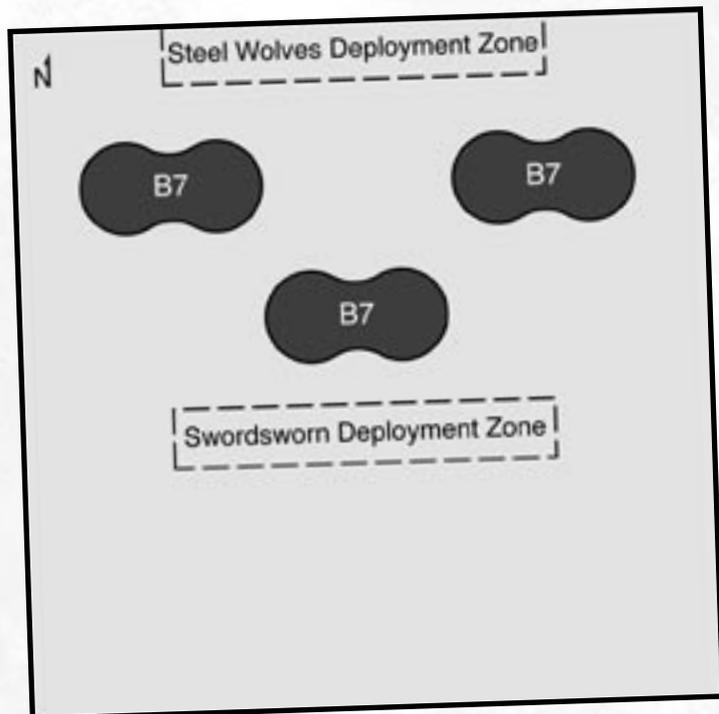
Preparing the Battlefield

Players prepare the battlefield per the battlefield map. The Steel Wolves player is the first player.

Special Rules: The Steel Wolves have six orders on the first turn.

Victory Conditions: Use standard MechWarrior: Dark Age victory conditions.

Battlefield Map



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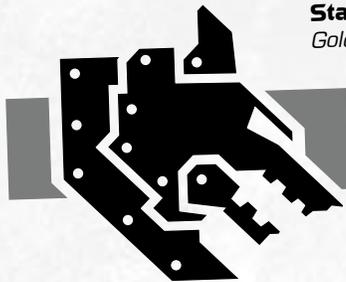
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MECHWARRIOR DARK AGE

Information Is Ammunition: The Battle for Achernar

Scenario #4: Final Stand

Having been pushed the length of the Highlake Basin and down to the Goldensands Cove on the edge of the Tolec Sea, the Swordsworn have no choice but to entrench themselves and try to repulse the attacking Steel Wolves. Because of the ever-changing political climate on Achernar, however, Skullcap Garrett doubts he'll receive the Republic aid he requested—his Swordsworn will live or die this day on their own.



Star Commander Yulri Wolf

Goldensands Cove, Tolec Sea
Eridanus, Achernar
Prefecture IV, The Republic

The Swordsworn Tamarlane strike sled actually attempted to gain some measure of cover from the pitiful building; though it looked like a tiny house, its obvious luxurious accoutrements collided with its diminutive size. Why

would a rich person build such a small house? Even after all these years, Yulri doubted he would ever understand Inner Sphere ways, no matter how much studying he did.

Of course, it simply didn't matter.

Moving the right-hand joystick on his command couch, Yulri waited until the golden hue of his targeting reticule deepened and the tone of a target lock sounded in his ear before clenching his fist. The Mydron Excel type five autocannon belched a stream of depleted uranium slugs at the target. The wash of death splashed a line into the ground, and he tracked the bullets up into the house, causing massive destruction as the 'Mech-sized autocannon ate into the small structure, literally turning it into a pile of kindling with a single shot. Shoddy workmanship!

"Star Commander," Nikola said over the comm-line, "they are trying to breach our left flank again."

The Tamarlane immediately kicked up a fan of sand as it attempted to speed away, like a jackrabbit whose tumbleweed was suddenly blown away. While Yulri's conscious brain worked to track the vehicle—he immediately pressed down on the left pedal to walk his machine to the left and pressed the right-hand joystick to track with his targeting reticule—Yulri wondered why she was telling him this. Even in the midst of battle, she could not resist insinuating that this was somehow his fault. Perhaps it was time for his own Trial of Grievance. Aggression was one thing; such was the Clan way. Ambition that actually threatened a mission was something else entirely.

"Stop them," he said calmly and put it behind him as he got a lock and tightened his middle finger, sending a volley of long-range missiles at the target. Seconds later, the explosions ripped through the area the hovercraft was moving through, tearing into its air skirt and sending the craft into a slough, where it eventually flipped over several times.

Yes, stop them.

Leftenant Skullcap Garrett

Goldensands Cove, Tolec Sea
Eridanus, Achernar
Prefecture IV, The Republic

The keening whine of the giant chainsaw saved Skullcap's life.

The battle had been raging for over an hour, as the Steel Wolves forces tirelessly pushed against the defensive perimeter he'd thrown up around the vacation bungalows of Goldensands Cove. Though his troops had forced the Wolves to pay dearly for the Swordsworn's shrinking perimeter, it simply wasn't enough; more Prince's Men littered the sand than Wolves.

Still, his men fought on, knowing that the final stand was here; they couldn't run any more, with the ocean at their backs. Though his "Dino Killer" could have slipped away beneath the waves, the vehicles, infantry, and IndustrialMechs under his command were not so equipped. Though his men liked to rib him for constantly "running away," it generally was in all of their best interests. Though he might take longer than some, Garrett usually accomplished his objectives, with fewer casualties than other commanders in the Swordsworn. When push came to shove, however, he would not leave his men. He would stand by them and survive . . . or not.

As the struggle continued, with men and vehicles falling all around him, he didn't notice the modified ForestryMech until it was on top of him and swinging down its horrendous chainsaw that would cut through his *Spider's* armor as easily as kilojoules of energy poured from a laser. With instinct honed over years, he managed to crouch, Dino Killer, lean slightly forward, and stomp down on his foot pedals to ignite his jump jets.

Shooting into the air at an odd angle, the *Spider* barely missed careening off a bungalow. Slightly off balance, it began to list to the right. With an intimate knowledge of his 'Mech, Skullcap leaned back to force the *Spider* to do the same, while partially spreading out his right arm to create drag on that side and right himself. Even that wasn't enough, however, and the 'Mech began to drop like a rock when he cut his jump jets. Just then, a strong gust of ocean wind slammed into his *Spider*, righting it just enough for it to come down inelegantly in a spray of sand and surf. Though he was slightly stunned, nothing appeared to have been damaged, and he was alive.

Gulping air, he reached up to grasp his dice. Like so many times before, it was better to be lucky than good. Lady luck was on his side again, and with her this battle could end only one way.



MECHWARRIOR[®] DARK AGE

Scenario #4: Final Stand

Background

With their backs to the wall of the Tolec Sea, the Swordsworn have nowhere else to run. They must defeat the Steel Wolves here or risk complete destruction.

Objective: Each player aims to defeat the other.

Battleforce Size

Two-player game; 300-point battleforces; three orders per turn. The Steel Wolves player must have at least one unit from the Steel Wolves faction in his or her battleforce. The Swordsworn player must have at least one unit from the Swordsworn faction in his or her battleforce.

Rules Set: MechWarrior[®]: Dark Age

Time Limit: 60 minutes

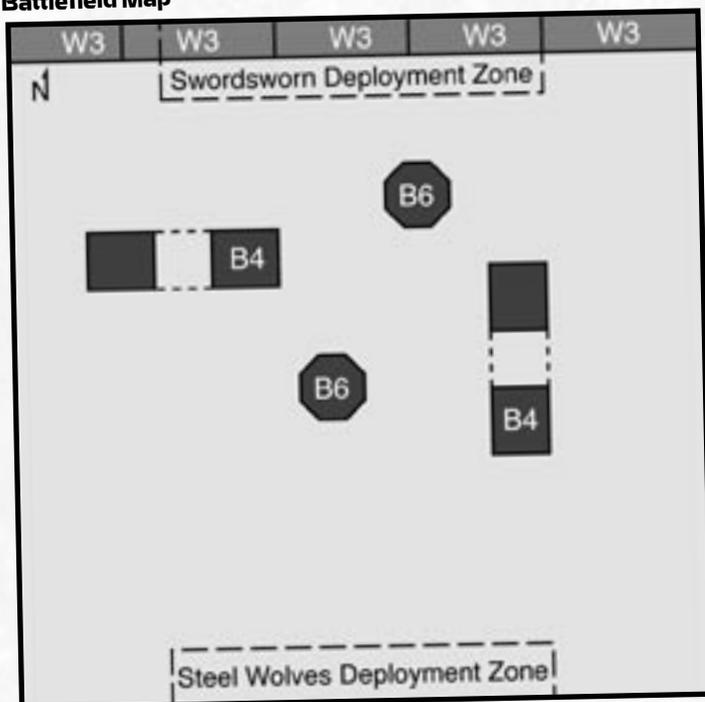
Preparing the Battlefield

Players prepare the battlefield per the battlefield map. No additional terrain is placed. The Steel Wolves player is the first player. The Swordsworn deployment zone is 4" deep and includes the water terrain.

Special Rules: Treat the water terrain as shallow water special terrain.

Victory Conditions: Use standard MechWarrior: Dark Age victory conditions.

Battlefield Map



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