

Back at it once more! >☺
Welcome to Issue #3

INCOMING! (Letters to the editor)

I just finished looking at Issue #2 (The first issue I have seen) and I think its great! Where can I get Issue #1 from? I liked the format and think this will be a great hit since the Battle Technology magazine went out of print. I also e-mailed a couple web pages that deal with Battletech stuff and pointed them to Solaris7 site (hope ya don't mind!) so others could see your work. I do have a personal vote/request for "Mech of the Month"... the Wolverine! I think it is one of the best medium Battlemechs there is , next to the Enforcer (at least in 3025 tech). Once again my hat is off to you any all the folks that put the Fanzine together!

-Larry

Thanks, Larry. We all mourn the loss of BattleTechnology (those were some of the first things about battletech that hooked me). The niche left vacant by that publication was temporarily filled by Herb Barrent's (and now Jon Pherson's) 'Future Wars' publication. As I understand it, Jon works on Future Wars when he can. It's been a while since I've seen an issue, so I thought a fan-written electronic publication would be a good supplement for the gamers out there. The Wolverine is a favorite of mine as well. Keep your eyes peeled.

Hi,

This is Rob Robinson at Badkarma. Great job on the newsletter ('zine) I hope you don't mind if we place an announcement on the location to download it. From experience I am very aware how much goes into making those things
>

Outstanding

BTW, Skyhigh's Solaris7 site was were I found out about it.

It's always nice when well-know web sites like BadKarma and Solaris 7 offer free advertisement. My appreciation goes out to

the Battletech gurus who run these sites. For those of you not in the know, BadKarma offer an excellent monthly new-letter filled with the current buzz on all things mech-related, and Skyhigh has a large amount of battletech source info as well as great chat boards at Solaris 7. Thanks, guys.

Hey,

This is great! I think it's ten times better than 'Future Wars'. I'd like to help you with it, if you'd like. I'm an English major at a community college and could do some writing/editing for you. I'm also a GM for a local mercenary campaign, here in Alabama. I'm including the unit's TO&E here. I'm planning to have a homepage up for them sometime in the near future. Anyway, here are a few suggestions/responses:

Humor? How about a Berserker kicking a little Fireball like a football. Have another mech hold it's finger on its head...we had a situation like this in one of our games...the mechs were in just the right position! A Javelin or UrbanMech will work too...

[Editor: Here's some of his responses to the question of the month in Issue #1]

3055-3058 is the best era to play in because of the limitless possibilities presented in that timeframe. Advanced tech becomes increasingly common and Clan raids/battles get really good without getting too climactic. Also, the Chaos March gets going with full force. Everybody gets a piece of the action.

No, the targeting computer makes the game more colorful and challenging as long as it's used in considerable moderation. House rules like "no more than 10% of mechs on the board may have a targeting computer make it fairer when everyone on a team wants to play a Goshawk.

I think the current Battle Value system is by far the superior of the ineffective Combat Values. I'm personally quite satisfied with it. I think it accurately represents the all-purpose utility of a unit to any probable battlefield situation.

I think your review of the Rifleman was exceptional. Do you think that you'd cover the 14 basic mechs first? Or 3025 designs anyway? Newer mechs just don't have that same classic feel to them...too generic. Maybe two a month would be better, considering that there are umpteen hundred designs out there, more

coming with every sourcebook.

I have a good first Battletech game, but not the time to write it here and now. Let me know if you're interested. I have a miniature-painting webpage, Defiance Industries of Hesperus II. Have you been there? It's down right now because Microsoft is having Y2K problems on their free homepage server. When I get it back up, I'll add you as a link.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Ester a.k.a. Dr. B. Banzai (on my page)

Thanks for all the great input, Jon. Send me the URL and I'll post it in issue #4. I think a little variety will go farther than doing the all the classic mechs at once. This issue, the Raijen gets looked over by a reader, and the Wolverine at Larry's earlier requests. I've deliberately avoided doing a front line clan mech so far due to the massive variants (and writing!) available (required).

Of course, the old classics had many variants as well. I guess I'll have to throw caution to the winds and do a review in Issue #4 of that most-feared clan mech, The Mad Cat/Timber Wolf. A lot of people love or hate this mech, so I hope I don't step on anyone's toes too hard if the review goes contrary to their opinion. Ah, what the heck...fortunes of war and all... ☺

Hey Justin,

Just wanted to say that I appreciate your magazine. I downloaded the issue #1 and have begun reading it. Still have a lot left to read, but I've enjoyed it so far. I used to belong to MechForce NA but let that lapse since I didn't think the magazine was worth the \$20 fee. I've enjoyed yours as much and you're offering it for free. I appreciate it!

It doesn't sound like I am as experienced a player as most of you guys on Slayer's forums, so I don't think I could offer you much content. Luckily, our local group has slowly grown so I am getting back into playing. We hope to play next Saturday, so maybe I could pass on a summary or humorous story if anything interesting happens.

I might offer a suggestion- I noticed that Issue #1 had a "smaller" scenario (Urbies vs. Atlas) and then a much larger one. I

recommend you continue to have a mix of large and small scenarios. Scenarios with several lances can be exceedingly long if you don't have enough interested players, and often aren't finished at all. I hope to get my group to try the Urbie scenario, as it looks rather interesting. I like to play a couple of games in one sitting, as opposed to just one game that drags on and on.

We have also been trying scenarios with victory conditions that are based on strategic conditions. In other words, the conditions require certain actions like get so many units across the board, pick up so many tons of ammo, etc. So many games we played were always -each side has even tons, destroy every Mech you can, regardless of how many you lose. Last guy standing wins the battle. Makes for a more even game I guess, but that's not how most military encounters happen.

We played a scenario with Mechs and vehicles awhile back that required the "attacking" side to cross a bridge and get across the board. As "attacker" we had about 3 times as many battle points of equipment so we outnumbered them. However, it paid us more to get units across the board as opposed to trying to destroy all of them. It worked out well- ended up being a nail biter.

We barely won, only after our command tank crashed through (literally) a vehicle blocking the bridge. Wildest part was, the other blocking vehicle put it in reverse and paralleled the command tank- trading shots with their turrets! Our tank roared off the bridge and charged a Mech of theirs that had fallen in the road. The 60-ton tank crashed through the Mech and led our last units of the board. Pretty exciting, if you were there. Hey- maybe that might be something for your magazine.

One other idea- you think there are many folks who would like stories about painting miniatures or making terrain? Our group has been playing with miniatures rules and really prefer it to the hex maps. The link below is a great site with many ideas and pictures for making terrain. It's really geared for Warhammer players, but the ideas there are pretty universal. Maybe you could put the link in your next issue.

<http://www.players-society.com/terragenesis/>

Anyway, thanks for all your efforts on this. I look forward to another issue.

Nathan (AKA "Slag")

As a matter of fact, your letter was the inspiration for a good vehicle-trashing fight, a scenario that smashed its way into Issue #2. Be sure to send me the results of the Urbi-Atlas match up. (My money's riding on the Atlas). Thanks for the link, and be sure to send in any articles about our favorite hobby. A well-written article can hardly fail to spark our reader's interest. (Not to mention it gives us the needed content to make the issue worth reading ☺.)

Hi!

I really enjoyed reading the 1st issue of the magazine. Sorry that I haven't got any better article ideas, but I thought that the new "Mech of the month" should be either the Marauder or the Warhammer". Both are classics, and have many different variants to keep things interesting.

Antti "Rafale" Pohjoisaho

Thanks again, "Rafale". The Marauder was reviewed, as per your desire. Hope you enjoyed the review. If you have any more suggestions, or think you'd like to try your hand at an in-depth review of a favorite mech, by all means, send it my way. Another reader suggested I add more detail to the Marauder house-rules. In order to conserve playability (and not require a 5x8-note card for each mech) I kept the house rules to a minimum. If readers have some rules they feel fit in or were left out, by all means send them this way.

OPENING SHOTS: "The Dirty Dozen"

[As told by **Richard Rowell** from a bog-infested campus somewhere in Louisiana...]

"It's called a Hollander." is what he told me. It was a scrawny little thing with a huge gun. The miniature had yet to be painted so it caught the eye for several reasons. "That big gun is called a Gauss Rifle, and it is the baddest gun in the game." He further explained.

"I'll take that one." I was also given three other "mechs" to flesh out what my allies called a "lance". I had never seen, much less played battletech before and I was to be in control of four mechs in a crucial battle to defend something called the "Inner Sphere", from some vastly superior "clan" invaders.

Too cool.

I lost the Hollander in the second round. Some clan mech pumped a PPC into it from extreme range and that was the end of that. It was the first mech to die in the battle, and it pretty much set the tone for the whole thing. It was slagged without every inflicting a single point of damage.

The Inner Spheres only shining moment in the whole battle was when a SRM carrier ambushed a clan Battlemaster at point blank range. The SRM carrier knocked the Battlemaster pilot out cold with multiple head hits. Other than that, it was pretty much a complete route. In the end, even the Battlemaster got back up to help clean up our last few mechs.

It turns out the scenario worked on several levels. The clanners where a group of buddy's who had been playing the same set of mechwarriors for some time. They not only had great pilots, but knew the ins and outs of the game as well. My poor IS friends, on the other hand, where mostly complete greenies, as was I. None of us knew each other before starting the game and a cohesive strategy wasn't really a possibility. We didn't just get wiped. We got wiped hard core.

That Saturday in the back room of a Pizza Hut I pledged to avenge the poor Kuritan who had died so mercilessly that day. I went out and bought the Rules of Warfare. I read it from cover to cover several times. Then I designed a custom C3 mech company. As luck would have it, I caught the same group of clanners at a gaming convention a few months later. I challenged them to a duel against my C3 company [EDITOR: against a star of mixed clan mechs using strict clan honor ☺]. They accepted, and for my first serious game, I don't think I did bad. I still got wiped, but I at least did decent damage to a few of them.

I designed many more C3 companies (known as the Dirty Dozen, Sons of the Dead Dirty Dozen, etc) and played the same group of clanners many times. I never did deliver a decisive victory, although I believe I was on my way in our last big battle when one of the clanners started whining about this and that then left and effectively ended the game. (Don't worry, I won't name any names, *DAVE!*☺)

All of that was 5 years ago, and a thousand miles away now. I still talk to the ring-leader of the clanners though. We play e-Chess and chat on ICQ about our kids occasionally. My hats of to you, Xiang, I wouldn't trade all those little mechs in my closet for anything. I only hope one day we can sit down and play at the same table again... and I can finally deal you the ass kicking you so rightfully deserve.

[EDITOR: Hehehe. We *all* have dreams...]

SMALL-UNIT ACTIONS

Stealing Their Thunder...

SITUATION:

*Prototype Test Center Lima
Brooms Hills, Huntress
Smoke Jaguar Space
3060*

Captain Sanders zoomed his visual scanner in on the large, boxy mech that stood outside the bunker-like test structure. The pouncing cat logo of the Clan Smoke Jaguar was clearly visible on the mech's left shoulder.

"Alright, Eridani, listen up. The rooster is still in the hen house. No sign of activity, so we close and secure the facility fast. They're supposed to only be tech types working out here in the boonies, so watch the fire on civis. Who knows what the Light Horse will learn from these tech-heads. Most of the special-ops buildings we've taken had at least a star of Elementals guarding them though, so keep an eye out just in case intel was wrong. For all we know the place will be crawling with proto-mechs once we engage. Hmm. Anyone got a war-book rundown on that mech? Mine's drawing a blank."

"Negative here, boss-man. Could be a new prototype. It's- Crap! Fusion engine flare-up, sir! She just went active!"

Damn it!

"All right, people, let's get him. Trey and Boomer, provide cover fire while we engage. Look sharp, boys. It's four on one, but don't get cocky..."

SETUP:

Lay out 3 mixed terrain battletech maps and one spaceport map, in two rows that meet on the long edge. East and west are the short ends of this block. The northeast map is the spaceport map. The other three maps should be fairly open terrain-wise. Place a heavy Level-1, one-hex building anywhere on a paved, non-road hex of the spaceport map. This represents the test-bunker. The test-bunker has no weapons and has a CF of 85.

ATTACKER:

The attacker is a lance of Eridani Light Horse mercenaries assigned to capture low-priority facilities. The Eridani enter from anywhere along the south edge on turn #1. All mechs are in perfect condition.

Captain Sanders (G: 3/P: 4)
TDR-9SE *Thunderbolt*

Sgt Treymorlin (G: 3/P: 4)
GRF-3M *Griffin*

Pvt. Grig (G: 3/P: 4)
HBK-5M *Hunchback*

Pvt. "Boomer" Levy (G: 3/P: 4)
RFL-5M *Rifleman*

DEFENDER:

The defender is a solitary clan Star Captain who was on a surprise inspection of the test site when the Inner-Sphere forces landed. He has commandeered the *Thunder God* prototype in order to defend the facility. The Star Captain sets up first, anywhere on the test-site map within 3 hex of the bunker. The Elemental star assigned to this facility is also in the area, currently returning from perimeter patrol and will enter on turn #3 from the north edge.

Star Captain Peelo Osis (G: 1/P: 2)
Thunder God

Round #3 reinforcements:

Point Commander Burns + 4 Elementals

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

The Eridani win a decisive victory if they destroy the defenders and lose two or fewer mechs. They win a marginal victory if they destroy the defenders and lose three mechs. Any other result is a loss.

The defender wins a decisive victory if he destroys all attacking battlemechs. He wins a marginal victory if he destroys 3 mechs. Any other result is a loss. [NOTE: it is entirely possible for both sides to lose this scenario at the same time. In this case, there is no draw. Complete loss of such valuable equipment is considered a loss by both camps.]

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:

NAME: Thunder God (Unique Prototype)

TONNAGE: 100

TECHNOLOGY LEVEL: Level 2 (Clan)

WALK: 3

RUN: 5

JUMP: 0

ENGINE: 300 XL 9.5

GYRO: 3.0

HEAT SINKS: 18 (36) 8.0

INTERN. STRUCTURE: 5.0 [ENDO-STEEL]

ARMOR: 19.5 (307)

H: 9

CT/(R): 47/15

ST/(R): 32/10

ARM: 34

LEG: 42

WEAPONS:

ER-PPC CT 6.0

ER-PPC RT 6.0

GAUSS RIFLE LA* 12.0

GAUSS RIFLE RA* 12.0

GAUSS RIFLE LT 12.0

Gauss Ammo (8) H 1.0

Gauss Ammo (8) RT 1.0

Gauss Ammo (16) LT 2.0

Double Heat Sink LA [Already added]

Double Heat Sink RA [Already added]

Double Heat Sink LL [Already added]

Double Heat Sink RL [Already added]

Double Heat Sink LT [Already added]

Double Heat Sink RT [Already added]

CASE LT 0.0

CASE LA 0.0

CASE RA 0.0

* No lower arm/hand actuators

BV: 2,981

\$. 23, 666, 000.00

OVERVIEW:

The *Thunder God* was discovered in a mech-hanger on the research facilities of Huntress, within Smoke Jaguar space. Apparently, the Jaguars were attempting to improve on the venerable *Behemoth* design. This was an important, if somewhat belated discovery, as it indicated the Jaguars were refitting old machines instead of spending resources on new ones...a sure indication the Jaguar economy was suffering.

CAPABILITIES:

The *Thunder God* is clearly a superior design to the *Behemoth*, packing more armor and greater firepower at increased ranges. The triple Gauss Rifles are deadly in the extreme, but when coupled to a pair of extended range PPCs, the *Thunder God* becomes truly awesome. Even the Inner-Sphere *Thunder Hawk* can only match roughly 60% of the *Thunder God's* hitting power at great ranges.

Invariably, however, no mech is without weaknesses, and the *Thunder God* is no exception. The machine suffers from a lack of sufficient ammo for its many gauss rifles. And, like the *Behemoth*, the design is very slow, lacking even the *Behemoth's* jump jets. The *Thunder God* is, however, completely heat efficient.

DEPLOYMENT:

The *Thunder God* was merely a Smoke-Jaguar prototype, and as such is not, and probably never will be going into deployment.

HISTORY:

The *Thunder God* was still in the design & test stages when the Inner-Sphere forces of Taskforce Serpent seized the mech bay holding the *Thunder God* prototype. Rumor has it Victor Davion took the prototype with him when he returned to the Inner-Sphere.

VARIANTS:

No known variants of the *Thunder God* exist.

SCENARIO VARIATIONS:

If you find the *Thunder God* consistently beats the attacking lance, disregard the use of Elementals (they are busy fighting another Eridani probe, perhaps...). Likewise, if the Light Horse constantly destroy the clan machine, replace the Elementals with a star of protomechs, or an extra Elemental point. Starting the Elementals in a hex next to the test facility can also affect the game.

THE 4TH WAR

The ugly side of war rears its head as the Dragoons and the Ryuken square off on Misery.

Chu-I Samuel Jenkins watched what remained of his Ryuken unit as it marched in an orderly line down the snowy slope toward the forest below. There were five mechs left in his company, including Jerkin's own *Battlemaster*. The Dragoons had annihilated the rest in two separate firefights over the last week, and now Jenkins was trying to get his boys home in one piece. '*Misery is a suitable name for this damned planet.*' he mused. Why the hell couldn't the Dragoons fight somewhere where it was warm?

The cold was playing havoc with both men and machines. Even worse, Mech battles tended to be highly mobile. If you had to eject somewhere far from civilization...like out here in the cold mountains...no one was going to stop for you, especially if they were being shot at by an enemy mech. If you didn't find shelter and a fire quick, your chances of surviving were non-existent.

"Just let us get to the staging area without another Dragoon ambush." he pleaded out loud. As if in answer, a thundering barrage of missiles arched up out from the forest below, slamming into the midst of the lead combine mechs. Snow and frozen dirt were thrown up in a curtain that momentarily blocked Jenkins's vision. It cleared enough for him to see one of the Ryuken mechs stagger forward another step, then collapse on the pitted slope.

'*No! Where the hell did they come from? This grid was labeled clear by CAP less than an hour ago!*' Another salvo of long-range missiles vectored in on the scattering Combine mechs as they broke into a run, some up the slope and some toward their attackers.

Jenkins keyed his tac-com.

"Head down to the forest, Ryuken! It'll take too long to crest the hill. They'll crush us before we clear the summit. Close and attack! They're blocking the only way out of this valley, so we're going to have to go right through them!" Jenkins brought full power to his *Battlemaster*, thundering down the slope toward the Dragoon mechs in a desperate sprint. What was a prayer came out more like a curse.

"There can't be enough of them to stop our breakout. There just can't be!"

GAME SETUP:

Place 3 lightly wooded or hill's maps in a row long end to long end. Designate one end as North, the other as south. This is an attempt by a Ryuken force to break out of a Wolf's Dragoons encirclement. The Draconis forces are attempting to exit the southern-most edge of the map. The Dragoons are trying to prevent the Draconis mechs from achieving their objective.

Attacker:

**Elements of Ryuken-NI,
2nd Company, 2nd Battalion**

BLR-1G <i>Battlemaster</i>	(G: 3/P: 4)
CPLT-K2 <i>Catapult</i>	(G: 3/P: 4)
TDR-5S <i>Thunderbolt</i>	(G: 3/P: 4)
PNT-9R <i>Panther</i>	(G: 3/P: 4)
PXH-1K <i>Phoenix Hawk</i>	(G: 3/P: 4)

All attackers enter from the north map edge on turn 1.

Each defending mech has suffered 20 points of random damage, in 5 pt groups on the front chart, from previous battles. Pre-roll these, as well as any critical that result from a lucky series of hits. Re-roll and critical hits that result in a second gyro hit, third engine hit, cockpit hit or ammo hit. Combine pilots cannot start the scenario unconscious.

Defender:

**Elements of Wolf's Dragoons' Zeta Battalion
'White Company' and Light lance from
Laskowski's company of Baker Battalion,
Alpha Regiment.**

SHG-2E *Shogun* (G: 2/P: 3)

IMP-2E *Imp* (G: 2/P: 3)
ANH-1A *Annihilator* (G: 3/P: 3)
MAD-4A *Marauder II* (G: 2/P: 4)

HNT-151 *Hornet* (G: 2/P: 3)
FFL-4A *Firefly* (G: 2/P: 3)
HNT-151 *Hornet* (G: 2/P: 3)
WSP-1W *Wasp* (G: 3/P: 4)

The defender may set up anywhere on the middle and southern maps. Some, none or all of the defender's may be placed using the hidden unit rules.

Special Rules:

The frigid arctic climate makes ejecting analogous to suicide. All warriors automatically have their ejection seats disabled at the start of this scenario.

Pilots who later enable their chairs and do eject take one pilot hit every 6 rounds, due to virtually no attire, deep snow and arctic temperatures that assail the mech-warrior's sweat-soaked body. The cold allows battlemechs to vent 3 additional heat points each turn.

Victory conditions:

The DCMS warriors win a major victory if they exit 4-5 mechs off the southern map's far edge. They achieve a marginal victory if they exit 3 mechs off the southern edge. Anything else is a defeat.

The Dragoons win a major victory if they destroy 4-5 DCMS mechs. If they destroy at least 3 mechs they win a minor victory. Anything else is a considered a defeat.

OPTIONAL RULES:

For a tougher game, use the snow rules extra movement costs anytime a unit enters a hill hex and ice rules for slipping when a unit changes elevations up or down. Units that slide while changing elevations automatically slide to the lowest elevation for normal fall damage and cannot move for the rest of the turn.

CAMPAIGN CORNER:

The third and final chapter in the Black Halo series. The remaining members of Black Halo make a run for their drop-ship, only to be intercepted by a trinary of light clan battlemechs

that have raced ahead of the front-line clan force in an effort to stymie the Halo's retreat.

*Grid 31, Keller's Jungle,
Jabuka
Steel Viper Space
August 13, 3059*

'Damn it's pretty here. If things weren't so bad, I think I could even learn to love it.' Dash though as he stared at the last streaks of rose started to fade from the clouds of the evening sky. Within moments, all trace of daylight was gone. The soft glow of his various HUD displays weren't quite bright enough to blur out the growing glow of the stars that were visible through the opening in the thick jungle canopy. Dash glanced to his left, where the dark outline of Sgt. Creel's *Berserker* loomed among the underbrush.

'At least you made it, Kathy.' He mused, though there was no humor left in him. The Black Halos were effectively destroyed as a fighting force. What had started out as a powerful reinforced company of sixteen battlemechs had now been reduced to half that number, and all had received significant battle damage.

The fighting for the Hyper-Pulse Generator had been savage beyond anything in Dash's experience over a rather eventful career as a professional warrior. The 'Vipers had fought to the last Elemental, throwing themselves against Halo's superior numbers with utter contempt for any danger the Inner-Sphere warriors might pose. After the initial shock of the Viper's assault, the Black Halo warriors returned their clan enemy's aggression in kind. With interest, in fact.

The fight had been close-in and lethal, mechs razing each other's armor with energy weapons, missiles and large-bore autocannon. Dash himself brought down two of the clan defenders, though his *Falconer* showed the scars gained in accomplishing the feat. He'd have died in that fight, vaporized by the enemy commander's *Marauder IIC*, had not Mechwarrior Nightingale interceded in the battle.

She charged into the midst of the fiercest fighting, her *Hunchback's* AC/20 vomiting death at the Steel Vipers. One of the bursts blew the leg off the clan assault mech. Dash had hardly had time to thank her when her mech exploded, the target of a twin burst from each gun of, ironically enough, a clan *Hunchback*.

When the shooting finally stopped, the halos had gained their objective, but there was little to rejoice about. Nearly half their comrades had died in the slaughter. Mechwarrior Krakow was killed after the fighting, when his badly damaged *Valkyri*, which had survived two fierce firefights, stumbled into the minefield that surrounded the Generator. His machine had fallen headfirst into the field, the resulting explosions turning his mech's cockpit into confetti.

Dash shook his head to clear the image of the battle several days past. Still, he knew the screams of his men and women would haunt him for a very long time, if not for life. The Generator worked as they had anticipated. The mercenaries received a return signal on the low frequency band they had assigned the dropship, the response actually coming in basic pulse code.

That code had contained the grid coordinate the dropship crew had plotted for retrieval. As luck would have it, the location was fairly close, less than 5 days forced march by mech from the Generator. Which was to say it was nearly a thousand miles south, in dense jungle. Two mechs had mechanical problems along the journey and had to be abandoned. Not willing to risk destroying the mechs with weapons fire or overloading the fusion engines, the machines were booby-trapped and hidden as best the unit could.

Now, eight mechs and ten mechwarriors were hunkered down in the thick overgrowth of 'Keller's Jungle', a small, hot and humid tropical stretch of growth on Jabuka's southern-most continent. Dash had no idea who 'Keller' was, and the information was about the most worthless thing in the universe he could be thinking of right now.

A tense four hours passed with little conversation among the warriors. Dash could sense the unease creeping into his men. The almost palpable tension, born of hope and desperation, hung between the mechwarriors and their dark surroundings. As Dash ran through his computer screen's diagnostics a third time he frowned. Two gauss rifle rounds left. One of the Falconer's medium mechs had also been knocked out from the Generator battle.

'What am I worried about? We're almost out of here.' He criticized his fear.

As if in answer, Kathy shouted over the network.

"There! The ship's inbound!"

A cheer rang out among the warriors as Dash brought his vis scan into zoom, picking out on star among the thousands that dotted the night

sky. Running dark, there was still enough solar glare on the ship's hull to make it visible to the naked eye.

"Alright people, lets get the hell out of here!" Dash barked.

"Hell yeah!" someone replied. As the mechs started to debark their hiding places, the inky blackness was pulled away in a blinding flash of Particle Cannon light. A shrieking lash of man-made lightning played across the *Berserke's* head, leaving a charred crater in its wake. The huge assault mech pitched forward silently then landed with a crash muffled by thick undergrowth.

"NO!" Dash bellowed both in grief and rage. He swung the *Falconer* on its heel, dropping the crosshair on the clan mech he knew would be there. And it was. The triangular shape of a midnight blue *Puma* flared to life under his mag-scan.

Even and he fired off one of his last two gauss rounds into the guts of the *Puma*. Dash scanned the undergrowth, searching for a second target, one that would be carrying the ECM they must be using to have gotten so close undetected. A second omnimech appeared on his mag-scan, a *Koshi*.

"Move it, people! Get to the ship!" he growled. His mind snapped back into clarity as several halo mechs thundered past, *into* the clan formation that was starting to appear on the sensors.

"Goddamn it!" he shouted, but even as he brought his mech into a run at the staggered *Puma*, Dash was grinning with pride.

GAME SETUP:

Lay out 4 battle tech maps in a row, small ends to small end. Designate one end of the row as West, the other as East. These maps should be heavily wooded, representing the thick jungle terrain the unit is moving through. To that end, all wood hex are treated as Jungle terrain. Use *Maximum Tech* rules for jungle, or treat all woods as heavies if this supplement is unavailable. Black Halo must exit the map off the East End with as many operational mechs as possible. Once a unit exits, it come under the protective envelope of the Halo dropship and cannot be pursued.

ATTACKER:

The attackers are elements of a Clan Steel Viper Pursuit Trinary, composed primarily of light omnimechs. The first star enters the

Western edge of the map on Turn #3. An additional star enters each following round. The clan player may not break up stars, though he can determine which star enters on each round. Zellbrigen does not bind the Steel Vipers, since their targets are honorless mercenaries.

Mamba Star:

- Star Captain Coober (G: 2/P: 3)
Battle Cobra Primary
- MW Owen (G: 3/P: 4)
Koshi 'B'
- MW Preen (G: 3/P: 4)
Puma Primary
- MW Tage (G: 3/P: 4)
Uller Primary
- MW Ghane (G: 2/P: 4)
Uller Primary

Fire Star:

- Star Commander Reece (G: 3/P: 4)
Uller 'D'
- MW Fang (G: 2/P: 3)
Puma 'A'
- MW Dokker (G: 3/P: 4)
Koshi 'A'
- MW Chibba (G: 3/P: 4)
Puma 'A'
- MW Reeks (G: 3/P: 4)
Uller 'C'

Pursuit Star:

- Star Commander Ekkel (G: 2/P: 3)
Dasher Primary
- MW Hugh (G: 3/P: 4)
Dasher Primary
- MW Keel (G: 3/P: 4)
Dasher 'D'
- MW Jeebs (G: 3/P: 4)
Koshi Primary
- MW Qual (G: 3/P: 4)
Koshi 'A'

DEFENDER:

The defender is the surviving elements of the Black Halo mercenary unit from two previous battles. If playing the series as a campaign, use whatever units survived the second battle. No armor, critical damage, pilot hits or ammunition has been fixed, healed or replaced. If playing the scenario as a stand-alone fight, use the units described below. The mercenaries enter the western edge of the maps on Turn #1.

Remnants of Command Lance:

Major Dash Bowie (G: 1/P: 2),
FLC-8R *Falconer* (LL & LT stripped of armor, 6 pts of internal damage to LT., 15 armor damage to RT, 6 Damage to CT Rear armor, LT Medium Laser Destroyed. 2 Gauss ammo left.)

MW Omar Panayotus (G:2/P:3),
ARC-4M *Archer* (22 armor damage to CT, 7 Armor damage RA, 14 Armor damage RT, 10 armor damage LL, 6 rounds of LRM 20 ammo left)

Remnants of Shock Lance:

Lt. Wrendel Popinjay (G:1/P:2),
TDR-7M *Thunderbolt* (21 damage to CT armor, 14 armor damage to RT, 14 armor damage LA, 2 LRM 15 ammo left. 40 SRM ammo left.)
Sgt. Kathy Creel (G:3/P:4),
BRZ-A3 *Berserker* (10 damage to CT, 7 damage to RT, 5 damage to RL)

MW Are Shambula (G:3/P:3),
MAD-5S *Marauder* (RA missing, 15 armor damage RT, 7 armor damage to Head, 1 pilot consciousness hit, gauss rifle empty)

Remnants of Skirmish Lance:

MW Tu'Phang (G:2/P:3),
CN9-D *Centurion* (12 damage RT, 5 damage LT, RA stripped of armour, one engine hit (slot 1, table 1 CT), 3 Cluster rounds left, 2 LRM ammo)

Remnants of Recon Lance:

Sgt. Jeff Sinclair (G:2/P:3),
WLF-2 *Wolfhound* (2 armor on LL remaining, LA has 7 armor damage)

MW John Zanmanov (G:2/P:3),
PXH-3M *Phoenix Hawk* (15 armour damage CT, 7 armor damage to both LA and RA, 2 damage head, 1 pilot hit. -10 rounds from mg ammo, AMS empty,)

Victory Conditions:

The Black Halos must exit mechs off the East Side of the map. For every mech that exits the map, the Halo's receive one victory point. For each clan mech they manage to destroy, they gain 2 points. The clan player receives 1 victory point for each Halo mech destroyed. Since this battle is all or nothing, the side with the highest points at the end of the game is the sole victor.

Variations:

If the clan warriors seem to have an easy time of it, drop the Mamba Star from the clan forces, or remove the Eastern-most map. Clan honor rules can also be used. If the I.S. warriors get away easily (highly unlikely), cut down the clan's entrance to turn #2.

FICTION:

New tales of the Heike

A Kurita soldier finds death is lighter than a feather, and duty really is heavier than a mountain.

Ancestors, guide me. I cannot believe what I have been asked to do. I am *Chu-I* Sensho Kuruiyitsu, a soldier of the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery. a warrior in an institution I once considered honorable, pursuing what I once viewed an honorable profession. I entered the Wisdom of the Dragon Officer's academy five years ago along with another class of some 120 noble-born children of House Kurita. It is not as prestigious as some schools, but I found the training excellent, even if the instructors lived up to their reputation as tyrants.

Nearly all of us successfully graduated, as was to be expected, for the prospect of failing not only brought great dishonor to a family, but many of the students who fell short of the goal became Undesirables. Being an Undesirable means you are dead to normal society, a fate worse than death to most Combine residents. But I digress. I successfully completed my term at the academy, and found a place with the 3rd Amphigean Light Assault Group, at the rank of Chu-i.

That was in 3035...four years past. One can be expected to toil as a Chu-i for at least six years before being eligible for promotion, but the fates were kind, and my excellent record of loyalty to the Dragon has been rewarded. I now control a lance in the 2nd Company, 3rd Battalion of the 17th Galedon Regulars, a well-respected unit that wards the Davion and Steiner borders. I have undertaken many raids, attacks and counter attacks against these enemies, but nothing like the mission the Dragon has laid on my shoulders this day.

One born outside the Combine rarely understands the adherence our military places on the code of Bushido. It seems a harsh, inflexible mindset, and this is true. But even here, in the heart of Draconis space, the average citizen lacks true clarity of insight into the Way of the

Warrior, for to understand the code, one must live it. To be samurai is to consider yourself already dead.

It is hoped that in this way, one will be unflinching when faced with one's imminent passing. For what is the sting of death to one already dead? But I am not dead. Can the dead have a conscience? If not, then I should feel nothing... and yet my spirit cries out... rebels against the awful duty the Dragon compels me to complete. We are taught that duty is all. To serve the Dragon, you must perform any action your superiors so order. That is the essence of an honorable warrior.

And yet, how can an honorable warrior willingly partake of atrocity? We are to destroy a town of innocent citizens. Destroy a town of simple peasants, non-warriors who are to become an example for the rest of the indigenous population. The instructions were very specific...we are to leave no man, woman or child alive in the target area. Uchida, our company commander, said little in the officers meeting when he told the lance commanders of the mission., but I can tell these orders are as troubling to him as to me. The others seem unaffected by the news. Shamnou Kurtia, distant cousin to the Coordinator himself, actually made a joke about the command. Such a thing defies and defiles his lineage.

But was it not a Kurita who ordered the butchering of an entire planet's population? Khenatrus IV still remains the biggest blight on the Combine's history. Have we learned nothing from that greatest of mistakes? I will talk to Uchida, and ask him to get confirmation of these orders. It is improper to question authority, yet it is also said that to sacrifice one's honor to ensure the honor of the Dragon is maintained is the highest calling of all Combine warriors. And which is the greater crime against ones honor?

The slight of questioning authority or the dishonor gained if one fails to prevent an ignoble action for the sake of personal pride? I remember well the story of the Rat King. I *will* talk to Uchida...tonight.

The sun rises beautifully today as it has our entire time on this planet. And yet, the colors of dawn that have always filled me with wonder now chill me with a winter's cold, numbing my very soul. Uchida has confirmed the worst. We will proceed as ordered. HE will proceed as ordered. He again assembled the men, shortly before dawn. He did, at great personal risk, announce his belief that it was our prerogative to

act as our own individual conscience dictates. Every regular unit has at least one ISF attaché.

However the mission turns out, Uchida will most certainly be punished, perhaps even 'removed'. At the least, his career will have reached its peak at the rank of Tai-Sa. It may be Uchida's own form of self-punishment for following such cruel orders. Perhaps he will even be able to live with himself. There is a popular tale of 47 ronin, samurai who vowed to avenge the treachery that caused their lord's death. After success, these warriors committed seppuku, something they normally would have done after their lord had died, had they not known it was a plot that brought down their master.

I am no coward, but I am not anxious to rush headlong into death. Yet, to defy the lawful order of a superior, even an order so tainted, is to invite summery execution. So be it...it is the path I will walk. In some things, personal honor...personal beliefs... must be placed before even the honor of the Dragon.

To kill myself before taking action would be a breach of my own code. Some warriors would think doing so would preserve their honor, as they feel such an act would be a form of passive resistance. They thus refuse a lawful order, nor yet do they hinder the completion of the order. To me, such an act would be truest futility, for unlike these other samurai, I believe the spirit of the Dragon does not rest in the hearts of fools, be they company commander or District Warlord.

Divorcing yourself from an action against evil is the same as committing evil. Better to fight and die in combat, attempting to right a wrong...this is the true Spirit of the Dragon. I have no illusions about defeating my former comrades. True, I pilot a *Grand Dragon*, one of the heaviest Draconis mechs and a newer design, but that will hardly be enough against eleven other war machines. Uchida ordered us out to our machines an hour before sunrise. The other warriors fell in to traveling positions and followed Uchida's *Crusader* as it moved off south.

He halted the company only for a minute, turning his machine toward my unmoved battlemech. The others noted his action and turned as well. After a moment of silence, Uchida bowed his mech's head slightly, then turned and continued south. The others followed as well, none breaking radio silence.

After shunting away the ominous feeling that wormed itself into my abdomen, I turned my battlemech southeast, bringing the machine up to its full running speed in a matter of seconds. The

Grand Dragon ate up the miles quickly, thoughts of the past, of my family, of my friends clouding my mind to the beautiful scenery that speeds by. Within an hour I arrive on the outskirts of the town. The shocked villagers were frozen in the middle of their daily routines when I came upon them, all eyes locked onto the *Grand Dragon* as it emerged from the nearby forest.

The squelch of my amplifier shook many of them back to reality as I keyed my microphone's external speakers.

"Warriors are coming. They have orders to lay this entire village and all its residents in the earth. I suggest you leave. Now." I grinned despite the seriousness of the situation when I saw them bolt into action. It must have been quite a surprise to have a metal giant crash out of the undergrowth and tell you someone's coming to kill you. I think they were true believers even before I relayed the information.

The villagers, now turned refugees, used the time effectively. In less than an hour, the town was abandoned, except for someone's pet hound, lame with age and unable to travel far. His head glanced upward when I spoke a greeting to him and he showed no fear. We both knew there would soon be a closure our lives, and he must have understood a last human was somewhere inside the metal giant standing before him. Someone he could pass the time with. His tail even wagged a little from side to side.

I smiled, thought the action quickly died as I saw the old dog's ear's perk up and his head tilted north. I glanced down at my sensor grid, confirming what the animal's still-keen hearing had detected. The four blue hexagons that glowed there told the story well enough. Uchida knew me sufficiently to have guess what I would do, and had sent the recon lance to scout the town for my position. Uchida...what will become of you after this is over? What path will be left?

I nodded my head solemnly, my hand brushing the sensor display panel. The blue hexagons immediately repainted themselves into red circles. *'Warning. Hostile battlemechs detected within engagement envelope. Suggest immediate evasive action!'* The computer's monotone voice instantly blared. The computer starts to scrawl data on each machine in the recon lance, but I pay it no mind, for I knew full well the type of mechs I faced. A pair of *Panther* battlemechs would act as support for a *Jenner* and *Spider*, who would take the most risks. Their incredible speed and standard doctrine required them to launch most of their attacks close to their targets.

As powerful as the particle cannons on both *Panthers* were, they were not my primary focus. My own PPC would suffer considerably when I brought it to bear at the close, fast moving Jenner and Spider. It was a virtual guarantee that the *Spider*, with the longest jumping ability of any mech yet designed, would be behind my *Grand Dragon* for the length of the engagement, however brief. The Combine variant of the *Spider* battlemech replaces a more powerful laser with a machine gun for better anti-infantry ability. This is useful in the city and would be devastating against the townspeople, but the trade off was ill conceived when engaging another battlemech.

I turned the *'Dragon's* torso toward the hound. "Sayonara, venerable *Enu*. It is time for you to go." As if he understood my words, the old dog turned and trotted off toward the edge of the village, leaving me alone again. The enemy lance was dispersing, a *Panther* moving to each flank as the *Jenner* and *Spider* cautiously approached. I knew in a moment that both mechs would spring forward to attack speed.

Rather than wait for the attack and be bracketed on all sides with fire, I bolted to the left, the *Grand Dragon* leaning forward like a athlete in a sprint. This brought me into sight of the Panther on the hill guarding their right flank, a blinding flash of light arced out toward me as the pilot fired off a hurried shot from his PPC. The beam played across half a dozen villagers' homes in the *'Dragon's* wake, ripping them off their foundations and shattering them with a thunder-crack of lightning on wood.

I unleashed a wave of long-range missiles in answer, more to throw the *Panther's* aim off and make the mech dodge for cover than in the hopes of inflicting crippling damage. The maneuver works, eight of the missiles slamming into the light machine and spinning it around.

'Not enough', I thought.

Not enough to make the pilot lose balance and fall. I hurdle the *'Dragon* around the base of the *Panther's* hill, moving out of the sniper's sight. But the threat from one direction is instantly replaced by another the threat from another, as the *Spider* rockets in behind me, landing in the smoke screen the burning buildings now provide. The pilot landed firing, the medium caliber laser slashing a line across my mech's back. The machine gun barked, spitting out a shower of bullets that rend the ground all around the *'Dragon*.

Even the machine gun, pathetic when compared to most mech-class weapons, can

whittle away at a mech's armor. Eventually, this weapon will find an opening. I answer with my rear-mounted medium, the shot missing wide to the left. The *Jenner* clears the forest at a run, its lasers burning into my mech's left arm and the left side of its back. Another shot there and the *'Dragon* will be sorely wounded.

I shifted the *'Dragon's* direction 90 degrees and sought cover behind a farmer's silo, spotting the *Panthers* briefly as they rocketed down to the base of their hill. In a billow of dust, I nearly slide as I brought the war machine to a brief halt, pivoted and thundered back the way I'd come. This caught the *Jenner* pilot by surprise, as he had started to run an intercept path that would have placed him on my left flank, had I continued in the direction I started.

The *Spider* had already rocketed over the buildings, finding only the fading dust cloud of my skid. The *Jenner* pilot tried to turn his machine as effectively as possible at its high speed. I dropped the PPC targeting pip onto the light mech and winced at the bright flash of man-made lighting lashed over my target. Unbalanced by his high speed turn and the impact of the charged particles, the *Jenner* pilot crashed into a tall farm house, going down in a heap of strained, seared metal and shattered lumber.

'He's down, but hardly out.'

Before I could add a finishing volley to the downed mech, my *'Dragon* was rocked off its feet as both *Panther's* own PPCs found their mark. Both beams ravaged my left arm, shredding myomer and internal skeleton in a blind burst of energy. The fall cracked the last of my weakened left flank armor and jarred my neuro-helmet violently against my command chair, sending lances of pain lacing through my skull and causing spots to appear before my eyes.

I am not sure how I managed to gain my feet, as I think I blacked out for a minute, but I was up and moving again, dodging more of the *Panther's* PPC fire and now their short-range missiles as well.

'Forgive me, townspeople. The village will be a village no longer before this fight draws closed.'

Fire and smoke engulfed me as I thundered forward, which direction I could not be certain. A hunched-over shape loomed close in the smoke...it is the *Jenner*, still only on its knees. The fall must have rattled its pilot even more than my own jarred me. I screamed in a sudden rage. That pilot must not get up! I pushed the *Grand Dragon* to its limits, and beyond. As the

Jenner, aware of his danger, quickly lurched up, I thundered into it, my right arm outstretched as I passed.

The collision rocked me back and almost caused a loss of balance again, but at top speed, the impact literally tore the smaller mech in half. The disk-like head bent over my PPC then snapped off as my 'Dragon's wide feet slammed into the little mech and drove it down into the ground.

I had no time to even acknowledge the defeat of the light mech. Light and sound engulfed my machine, tearing at its already savaged armor, picking us up and dumping us back to the ground in a shattered ruin of diamond mono-filament and myomer. I blackout again. Something warm and wet brings me up from the blissful haze of my subconscious.

Blood now flows from my mouth and nose, sure signs of internal hemorrhaging. And there's a mist starting to cloud my vision. Is that smoke in the cockpit? Few people understand that a mech can burn...I can't make out the primary visuals...if they are even online anymore. It doesn't matter though. I don't need them to tell me the heavy mechs have finally arrived. Several of them must have targeted my once proud 'Dragon. Now my mech is destroyed, and I am in little better shape. *I can hear them approaching...the sound draws me back to the first day...the day I saw the first battlemech... it was in summer...the cherry blossoms were in bloom...**

Tai-i Menogi Uchida stared at the remains of Chu-I Sensho Kuruiyitsu's *Grand Dragon*. The heavy battlemech was now a mass of tangled and smashed salvage, though Uchida doubted much could be saved. The machine would certainly never fight again. He found the idea of salvaging the mech somehow repulsive. Shamnou Kurtia's *Phoenix Hawk* stalked forward toward the ruined 'Dragon.

"Tai-I Kurita, resume your place in formation. No one has given you permission to move."

The *Phoenix Hawk* paused briefly, then continued.

"He is a traitor to the Combine. I intend to make sure he is dead. You are already in enough trouble with my ISF superiors, Uchida. Do not compound your error. As ISF attaché, I now assume my command prerogative and relieve you of your position in the--"

A full 30 missiles slammed into the back of the *Phoenix Hawk*, the solid fuel contrails leading back to the commander's *Crusader*. Before the force of the explosions could drive the 'Hawk prone, laser and PPC fire from the other mechs

of Uchida's company joined the assault. The *Phoenix Hawk's* machine gun ammo eventually detonated, but there was little left of the machine to contain the explosion.

That evening, Uchida addressed his men as a group. He told them not to worry about the future. He would take care of them. The combat footage each mech carried would be subject to a magnetic field, or some other plausible anomaly. Likewise, he would speak to the village elders. If they were wise, they would say nothing, and the possibility of them being interviewed by ISF agents seemed remote in any case.

There wasn't enough left of the *Phoenix Hawk* to worry about surviving gun camera images, and the 'Dragon's recorder also suffered a similar fate. Uchida was sure an ambush cover story would work what with the resistance elsewhere on the planet that was the reason for his company's mission in the first place. The rest of his warriors were too fearful of the ISF to deviate from the story, and a lack of witnesses would make the truth difficult to sort out should a full investigation be launched. The warriors stood now near their fire, Uchida staring out at the wreckage of Kuruiyitsu's machine.

'Sensho. Yours was the true spirit of Bushido. And now, because of it, you are dead. Yet, I think there will be a special place for you in the after-life, if there truly is one... and perhaps we will meet there again, and I will be able to tell you of my regret. Duty is NOT all there is for a samurai. I know that now. Farewell and sleep well honored warrior. Sayonara.'

Uchida turned back to the fire and his men, with much to think about...everything, in fact.

MECH OF THE MONTH:

MECH REVIEW #1: WOLVERINE

Wolverine:

- 1- A fierce, badger-like member of the skunk family.
- 2- A member of a Michigan college football team.
- 3- A tough, medium-weight battlemech.

Some mechs are fearsome looking, some look gangly, but few look quite as cool as this month's mech, the *Wolverine*. The *Wolverine* is one of a set of three classic medium mechs. The other two are *the Shadow Hawk* and the *Griffin*. First impressions tend to drive away damage-

happy players, chiefly due to the unimpressive weapon load out carried by the WVR-6R *Wolverine*, the most commonly produced variant.

True, this heavy-ended recon battlemech carries the awful AC/5, with only two moderate-damage weapons as backup. However, when you average out the damage potential of the mech, you get a higher yield than almost any other medium mech...or at least equal to the other mechs of its weight class. The *Shadowhawk* outguns it slightly at range, as does the *Griffin*...however the *Wolverine* holds a considerable edge in close over these LRM-equipped machines.

The *Wolverine* is also considerably more maneuverable than the *Shadowhawk*, being able to outrun and out-jump a large number of lighter medium class machines. The text says the *Wolverine* is a successful blend of speed and firepower, and this is fairly accurate. One *does* has to wonder how this machine fulfills its scouting duties though, when two of its hardest hitting weapons are ammo based. If I were making a scout mech, I'd tend to focus on survivability through armor and speed/maneuverability.

While adequately armored over most of the mech's locations, the pathetic four points of armor on this machine's rear side torsos is a major Achilles' Heel, since the mech carries ammo in its left torso.

In role-playing terms, this means you better jump and land facing the on-coming enemy when you retreat, or walk backwards when disengaging. The AC ammo is stored in the arm sidecar to the AC, not that this will protect you when it goes up. The mech is totally heat efficient, always a plus, but since the AC/5 will seldom hit the same target as the medium laser and SRM 6, especially after a jump, a few slabs more of armor might have served better than the extra 2 heat sinks.

Speaking of jumping: the design could have placed two jump jets in the side torsos. This would have freed up a heat sink to plug the unsightly hole that is the CT: Table 2, Location 6...not to mention allowing the mech to jump effectively when wading in level 1 water. One notable factor on all the *Wolverine* variants: they all manage to fill the all-important head slot that so many 3025 designs leave open, which effectively doubled the odds your pilot will get pegged.

Another nice factor: the *Wolverine* has all its upper limb actuators. This allows the mech to get

in there and club the hell out of those *Riflemen*. Things like girders work wonders on those assault mechs when the *Wolverine* lands behind them, allowing the mech to smash its target for a nice 11 damage as a good follow-up to the head and torso SRM fire (Your AC's not very effective at clubbing range anyway).

TACTICS:

It's a rare player who uses light mechs to recon in a typical battletech game. The small 2-4 map battlefield rarely allows 3025 era light mechs to function as scouts, since it's so easy to smash lone light mechs who come calling. Even a minefield will cripple a lot of lights. Best to keep them as your mobile attack force while medium mechs, like the *Wolverine*, probe an area's defenses. The *Wolverine* fills this role admirably. It can take a pounding, even step on several minefields, and live to fight on.

Heavy enough to cripple a lot of mechs with physical attacks, yet often ignored for its deceptively small weapons load-out, the *Wolverine* tends to be a jewel inexperienced warriors overlook. Veterans know well enough: you just can't ignore a 55-ton mech roaming behind your lines. Thus, the *Wolverine* tends to have a hefty throw weight tactically. Of course, that doesn't mean you can care-freely charge that lance of heavy mechs because you drive a tough heavy.

When the probe's done, it's time to play roving opportunist. Go for the weakened medium mechs and the support mechs. Layered defenses are death, so circumvent them and get behind the enemy. This will disrupt their formation and can put a serious crimp in the enemy's battle plan (assuming they have one). If you charge directly at a nest of heavies, chance are you'll be stripped of armor before your *Wolverine*'s close-in weapons come to play.

With 20 rounds of AC ammo, you can jump all day and fire that 18 hex gun, prodding a foolish enemy to ignore your actions until you get in close and start harassing them. Most people won't target the 5 hex jump into woods, provided they have an easier shot, especially when that target is guaranteed to take a beating before it goes down.

Although the *Wolverine* does not present the scary proposition of big-gunned bodyguard mechs like the *Hunchback*, it is sufficiently fast enough and carries powerful-enough physical attacks to give most enemy medium and light harasser mechs pause. *Stinger*, *Wasp* and even

Jenner pilots tend to avoid those nice rear-attacks on your support mechs when a mech as heavy and maneuverable as the *Wolverine* is lurking nearby. A highly versatile mech.

VARIANTS:

There are 5 stock variants of the *Wolverine*, many of them exceedingly useful. There's also the clan 2nd line machine that appeared in "Inbound", a British Mech Force Supplement. While it's a great mech, there's a *Shadowcat* variant that's very close to weight and weapons (the 'A' I believe), and since MF: NA or UK for that matter won't appear here, there's no review included for the clan *Wolverine*. If you want the stats, simply email me.

3025 ERA:

WVR-6K: Kurita loves nothing more than ripping out jump jets and adding armor to its House variants. The WVR-6K *Wolverine* is a perfect example (see the Phoenix Hawk 'K' for another). While it seems this machine goes a long way beyond the power of the 6R, a few things, apart from no jump jets, catch the eye after more than a cursory glance.

Chiefly, the 'K variant houses two SRM ammo critical slots in its right torso, without the benefit of hit-absorbing equipment like heat sinks or (of course) jump jets hanging out in the same place. Another dangerous problem: Most of the weapons this variant has are housed in the right arm. A few solid hits there, and the *Wolverine*'s threat profile drops lower than Dolly Parton's brassier. You could also do better moving a heat sink to fill up that navel hole in the 2nd CT slot.

What goodies do you get to offset these flaws? The low power AC gets thrown to the four winds, replaced by a no-minimum Large Laser. True, it loses 3 hex from maximum range, but the nearly double damage and large volume of heat sinks will make the trade-off fair. Plus, lasers won't blow you to the moon when you run hot or someone hits the heat sink that would have been ammo. Your front armor is miles thick, so you can do a more direct approach as the need arises. Your back armor also goes up a few points. Not a lot, but it will stop a Medium Laser from penetrating anywhere back there on the first hit.

Apart from this, the BV of 970 is fairly cheap, should you play points-wise. Short and Sweet:

Great for samurai duels where no one plans on hiding. Also useful to fend off the massive damage from the expected Steiner heavy and assault mech opposition. No bargain if you enter a city.

WVR-6M: Every weight class has a mech that nears the limits of the class's abilities...and the Marik *Wolverine* comes about as close to a "10" as you can get. The WVR-6M has it all...speed, maneuverability... a good weapons profile and weapons that are spread out across the body. Almost a clone of the WVR-6K, this gem keeps the jump jets in exchange for the excess armor. 14 heat sinks will keep you nice and cool when running and shooting all hell outta the enemy. The SRM ammo has a large amount of 'fodder' critical slots housed snug next to it, so you most likely won't end up being scooped into a pail when the shooting stops, should something get through your rhino skin armor.

The armor overall gets beefed up, including the fragile flanks. Not only that, but none of your weapons have a minimum, and the weapons profile exceeds the 6K's threshold, laying the smack-down on your target at 9 hex, and a nasty sting out to 15.

Why no "10"? Well, they left that damn 2nd critical in the CT open, which could easily be filled with one of those side torso heat sinks. But who gives a damn? You still pack more armor than a stock *Warhammer*, and will probably thrash one in a duel. The BV's fairly steep at 1,059, but you have to pay for quality, and with the WVR-6M, you get what you pay for. Short and Sweet: A mech that lives up to its formidable name.

3050+ Variants:

Some mechs get improved with new tech, some don't. While I'm not a huge fan of the XL, a few of the 3050 era *Wolverines* have their combat roll dramatically changed by the use of it.

WVR-7D: Davion seems to like the old WVR-6R *Wolverine* enough to copy its weapons profile, add a new-tech face lift and label it a House variant. Their use of a XL engine allowed the WVR-7D to add MASC technology to the 55-ton mech. From a battletech game-session standpoint, this sounds good. However, if you're a role-player, how far from character would you be if you complained about the possibility of

your main weapon seizing up on you during combat, only to be followed by your leg actuators moments latter as you flee?

Armor is substantially better, including the back, and the CASE in each torso will allow you survive an ammo 'accident', but the XL will end your offensive drive short of the end-zone. The weapons envelopes do not overlap well, either. Just as your medium pulse laser goes into medium range, your AC comes out of a penalty. Your AC will also make a poor weapon when you try to fend off the guy who you KNOW will eventually get back there in your flanks.

If your MASC freezes, stick a fork in your mech.... It's done. On the plus side, those expensive double-strength 'freezers' won't cost you an arm and a leg to replace, since you don't have them. You still feel like a frozen mackerel despite the lack of new-tech sinks. The BV is fairly low for a new mech, primarily due to single heat sinks. Maybe you can get your tech to move one of those side torso single heats into your naked CT slot.

S&S: New tech gone the way of the Doe-Doe designer. Stick to the old 6M before you crawl into this flashy new coffin.

WVR-7K: It seems Kurita found a way around that troublesome "Massive armor or Jump Jets" quandary. They threw in an XL engine to let you get away with both. They also threw in another SRM 6 launcher, to quell the critics. Each SRM ammo slot also has a lot of critical-friendly slots filled nearby, so you probably won't die in a fireball even though you lack CASE.

Unfortunately, you're as useful as a Nun at a tail-hook convention at any range greater than 9. Consider yourself a highly mobile *Hunchback* armed with pulse lasers, and fight accordingly. They also have that open crit in the CT, but nothing stood out as being able to fill it. No 'loose' items already used that were only one slot. Despite these problems, the 7K would make a tough-to-beat city fighter, loaded with pulse lasers and jump jets as it is. The 1,165 BV is pricey, but the great armor and close-in fighting ability CAN make it worthwhile.

S & S: The mugger from hell. Not so fearsome to fast 'ranging' mechs, but no pushover either. Unwise to approach from the rear for what you hoped would be an easy attack with your *Spider* or *Locust*.

WVR-7M: Hmm. The 7M is a mixed blessing. One of the few mechs at all to carry the nova-hot ER-Large Laser, the WVR-7M can rattle most of

its targets before they can fire back. The back armor got beefed up but they took a bit of the arm armor to accomplish this. Like the 7D, you get MASC to let you act like a *Locust* for a round or two, and unlike the 7D, you actually have some good weapons to take advantage of the MASC.

A pair of Medium Pulse Lasers and an SRM 6 will help flay the back off your target. The 12 double strength heat sinks will let you snipe or assault well, though you can still bake if you jump. On the down side, you have an XL and no case for your ammo, but the ammo has a lot of neighbors, so you might survive a few crits inside your left torso. Too bad there was no way to fill that last ever-present CT crit slot.

The BV is a kick in the groin, at 1,309, so make sure you REALLY want the 7M.

S & S: Perhaps the most versatile of the new *Wolverines*, able to accomplish any role, but not spectacularly. Still, you could do worse...and better.

HOUSE RULES:

The older *Wolverines* were noted for temperamental jump jets. To simulate this, roll 2d6 each time the *Wolverine* jumps. Any doubles represent a 'misfire', resulting in 1d6-1 jets failing to fire. If a 6 is rolled, the *Wolverine* may not jump or move for the rest of the movement phase. Landing after a misfired jump requires a normal piloting check due to uneven thrust. If the result of the initial misfire roll was 'snake-eyes', the jump jet flow system is rendered inoperable and must be replaced before the *Wolverine* may jump again (i.e. the mech must spend time in the repair bay).

The *Wolverine* also has a notable communications system. This has little bearing on a battletech game, but should be significant in the role-playing game. If you DO want to have this system affect the standard game, allow the *Wolverine* to act as if his mech were one hex farther away from an enemy ECM unit for purposes of carrying any equipment that might be affected by jamming.

For instance, a *Wolverine* is carrying a C-3 slave and is playing spotter against a clan star with an ECM unit. The clan *Loki* closes to 6 hex to try and block the C-3 link by engulfing the *Wolverine* in the ECM bubble. However, the advanced communications of the *Wolverine* allows the I.S. mech to act as if it was really standing 7 hex away from the *Loki*, and would be allowed to spot against the clan machine normally.

OVERALL RATINGS(from 1-10)*:

WVR-6R:	=	6
WVR-6K:	=	6
WVR-6M:	=	9
WVR-7D:	=	4
WVR-7K:	=	6
WVR-7M:	=	5

MECH REVIEW #2: *Raijin*

Reviewed by what's-his-name...(send your name again and I'll credit it...sorry)

The RJN101-A *Raijin* is somewhat of a visual relief from the mediocre designs of TR:3058. It has a bold, striking appearance. Statistically, I'd call it one of the new replacements for the now-banned and much-loved Phoenix Hawk. Let's take a look.

The machine moves at 6-9-6 and weighs in at fifty tons. It holds 125 points of armor, and, with a fifty ton frame, winds up being comparable to the durability of the 3025 'Hawk with its 129 points. Full head armor is a plus. When you take into account the XL engine on the *Raijin*, however, it ends up being not quite as survivable.

Ammo is mounted in both torsos, and guess what? It doesn't have CASE. In the right torso there's a 25% chance that any critical hit will hit the ammo for the Streak SRM 2. Not a very durable mech, so it's advisable to keep it moving.

The mech has a dummy right arm. I'd advise taking weapons hits on the *Raijin's* right side if not for the 25% chance crit in the Streak ammo. The torsos only hold 13 points of protection, not Gauss Rifle friendly. Under Level 3 rules, the arm would be removed and its armor dispersed among the torso locations, which would do wonders for the design.

If you fire everything in this sucker all at once you'll wind up overheating your twenty double heat sinks by eleven points, and that's not counting movement. Obviously, the mech isn't designed for that. The largest single source of heat is the ER PPC mounted in the right torso; the other weapons are all short range. This suggests an either/or fighting style, of either long range weapons (ER PPC) or short range (SRM 6, SSRM 2, 3 Md. P. Lasers).

Using the particle cannon, the mech could fire

and run or fire and jump without worrying about heat buildup. Jumping six with the PPC would raise the heat scale by one. This makes it a very mobile fire support mech with a closing range potential of 32 hexes (about two maps). As the unit closes it can fire its two SRM launchers in tandem with the PPC and raise the temperature by two points walking, three points running or up to seven points (-1 MP) at full jump.

At close range (six hexes or closer) the mech can bring its considerable array of crit-finding weapons to bear. Ten SRMs and three pulse lasers make for thirteen potential hit locations with an average of nine and for 38 potential points of damage averaging at 30. Not a bad short range punch for a fifty-toner. Providing that the mech doesn't jump or fire its ER PPC, it won't heat up. It's a classic one-two combo mech. "Fire big gun/fire little guns" is the most likely strategy. This adds up to 430 potential damage points in ten rounds with no foreseeable heat if the mech jumps every other turn and walks/runs the next.

TACTICS:

Overall, I would not advise taking this machine into battle alone unless opposition is Very light...tonnage-wise. It needs a bigger, more heavily armored "easy" target to accompany it. That way, the enemy fire comes at the likely target and not your measly *Raijin*. Fast mechs with PPCs are very handy for sniping. Also, you get a chance for those fun back shots while your buddy(s) keep the bad guys' attention. By closing in once your opponents are considerably chewed, you have a very high critical hit potential.

Personally, I'd rate it a 5* in comparison to other 3058 IS medium mechs. The lack of protection just does the design in.

House Rules:

The text mentions the SRM 6 launcher being heavily insulated to protect it from the PPCs heat (why they didn't insulate the SRM 2 Streak sitting right below the PPC is beyond me). To reflect this, the SRM 6 can take two crits before destruction and is less likely to have an ammo explosion resulting from heat buildup, if SRM 6 is all the ammo in the mech, roll for potential ammo explosions with a -2 modifier.

[*Note that this rating is based on an over-all

comparison of mechs from a similar tech era. Also bear in mind that the rating applies to mechs of roughly the same weight class. A '6' rated mech of heavy design might or might not be a match for a '6' rated medium mech. The number rating from this gazette is not meant to replace BV, but to provide the reader with some feel of how the mech stacks up when comparing its inherent strengths and weaknesses.]

WEB SITES OF INTEREST:

This is a new feature I'm throwing in, since it will eat some space and provide a real value to this 'zine. Each site receives 1-4 mechs as a rating.

www.thechaosmarch.com

This place has everything official you could want without spending all of your hard-earned jack. Get to the site and take what you can, before the powers-that-be applies real pressure and the site becomes lost-tech. Worth a 4 full mechs.

MERCENARIES STAR:

The Black-Hole Bandits.

The Black-Hole Bandits history is one of constant loss and gain. The battalion-sized unit has its origins with a band of orphans that inherited a company of battlemechs in 3024 after their mercenary parents were summarily executed in a mock trial staged by a cruel DCMS general using trumped up charges of espionage and cowardice.

Speculation and innuendo placed the reason behind the atrocity as a desire to forego payment due to lack of funds on the part of the DCMS. Well-known for its miserable treatment of mercenaries, mostly due to tactics like 'The Company Store', the Black Cat Lancers command staff was prudent enough to hire out only half of its two company strength to the Arm of the Dragon. The remaining company stayed at its garrison posting on Hesperus II., within the Lyran Commonwealth.

Mike Bennegin adapted well to the command responsibilities suddenly thrust on him when his

parents died. His father and mother had prepped Mike for the life of an officer since his early teen years. However, his parent's execution drove home the reality of war and politics, destroying the glamorous illusion of the mercenary life the held the youth.

Tales of combat from the retired veterans and video-graphs made the mercenary life style seem one grand adventure. Massive amounts of paper work, ledgers for money owed and the daily details of TO&E were the grim reality of a life where you fight professionally. Before a years time, the remaining Lancers found themselves in serious debt. Selling off two of the family-owned battlemechs bought the Lancers a little breathing room, as well as providing sufficient funds for the hiring of expert administration.

With the arrival of fresh know-how, Bennegin decided to rename the unit, both to sever ties to old problems as well as to foster a new reputation and increase the unit's sagging moral. A problem of a larger nature now had to be dealt with. All of the unit's battlemechs were owned, and 90% piloted by, youths between the ages of 18 and 22, with virtually no combat experience amongst them. Mike refused to let the newly-christened Black-Hole Bandits fall into the pit of neglect that had swallowed so many other merc units, and put two more of the unit's mechs into hoc to rent a training facility for one year.

The facility boasted a complete company's worth of low-tech simulator pods and a large area for conducting simulated combat encounters. Two of the unit's retired warriors accepted modest salaries as training instructors, drilling the unit intensely for the reaming time on the lease. Although young, all of the Bandit's pilots had grown up with the Lancers, and the year's worth of drill and formation tactical training added sharpness to the unit's rough edges.

The last three months Mike and his best friend, Eric Kintop, advertised the unit's availability. Minor offers with little pay were fairly common, but would do nothing to pay off the unit's lean against the two mechs. Nearly on the edge of despair and financial ruin, Mike was forced to accept a contract within the Isle of Skye guarding grain depots and water-extraction plants. Mike accepted the contract not only for the unusually large financial offer, but also for the location. Skye was located on the boarder between the Lyran Commonwealth and the hated House Kurita.

Using the last of the money from the Bandit's loan, Mike purchased transportation for two of

the units lances to their new posting. The unit spent four years on Skye, serving three back to back contracts. The funds provided were sufficient to eventually repatriate the unit's missing mechs, bringing the unit back to a total strength of 10 machines.

Two weeks prior to the end of their third contract, the bandits got their long anticipated first engagement. Rebels fighting for a 'free' Skye commonality made a strike against one of the water purification plants guarded by the Bandits. Years of training and pent-up aggression came to the fore as the two lances of Bandit mechs assaulted the rebels shortly after they cleared their L-Z.

The firefight that followed quickly turned into a rout as the Black-Hole Bandits savaged the rebel mechs. Two of the eight rebel battlemechs were captured and another three destroyed before the attacking force retreated. After this first successful battle, the unit found itself deployed on more than dozen contract missions, the majority against the Draconis Combine.

Through careful planning and tactics, the majority of these missions were very successful. The roster swelled, as did the unit's mech assets. Eventually the unit had, by late 3048, a full battalion of mechs. The unit fought well against it's Draconis opponents during the 4th Succession War, as well as Clan Jade Falcon on Sudeton in 3050. Mike Bennegin was killed in action while battling a rival mercenary unit know as The Scorpions. Command fell on the shoulders of Eric Kintop, who currently leads his unit from a heavily modified *Rifleman*.

Special Equipment: The majority of the Black-Hole Bandits' mechs are older models refitted with double heat sinks, endo-steel internal structure and ferro-fibrous armor. Several variations of existing mechs are also used. For example, the Bandits' *Rifleman* mechs carry four large lasers. The *Marauders* add jump jets and replace the AC/5 with an extra old-tech ppc and extra armor.

Several unique mechs, some prototypes secured from House Kurita during a highly classified raid, have found their way into the 'Bandits' command company. These include a new *Hawkeye* ECM/C-3 heavy battlemech as well as Eric Kintop's C-3 assault-classed *Rifleman*, each housing an ER-Large Laser and an LB10-X Autocannon, with the addition of a C-3 master computer. The 'Bandits own no dropships, but carry a complete fighter squadron.

Next issue, a write up of some Bandit mechs.

To BV or not to BV...that is the question...

[This article appeared as a post on *Sarna.net*, and Ruf mentioned I should feel free to use it for the 'zine. So here it is, with a little editing for clarity, not content. Enjoy and thanks, Ruf.]

There are numerous problems with the BV system. It is a better system for rating combat effectiveness than the old CV, but can definitely be improved. One note on CVs though, I am disappointed these stopped being released. They did have their place and were useful in many cases for unit logistics as outlined in *Mercenary's Handbook* 3055. Being based on the tech level of equipment (e.g. XL engines had a high CV but negative BV), it gave a far more realistic representation of repair and maintenance costs than BV does, so CV should have been maintained for this purpose.

Anyway, on to BVs. There are several problems here, the chief among these being:

- "Dumb" heat resolution scale.
- Armor is under-valued.
- Adding defensive and offensive BVs rather than some multiplication factor.
- No potential "Strategic BV" compared to "Tactical BV"
- Ammo BVs not being realistic.

I shall deal with all of these in order.

1) Heat System

The heat system used is "dumb". Not necessarily stupid, but not thought out. The system is too simplistic. Should Laser AMS count as 12 heat? Should Streak SRMs count for full heat when they may well miss and build up nothing? Should some weapons often have negative BVs when heat is factored in (Laser AMS, ER-Small Lasers, ER-Medium Lasers being the best and most common examples)?

Should the system treat all weapon combinations equally (e.g. for the Nova Prime, at least 2 of the ER-Medium Lasers are effectively useless. Replace them with a Streak SRM-2 with

1 ton of ammo and BV drops lots. Or replace 3 with a Streak SRM-6 with 1 ton ammo [EDITOR: *You would need to replace 4 lasers to get a Streak SRM-6 and a ton of ammo*], or 4 with an ER-Large Laser.

In most cases I find I don't fire more than 8 ER-Medium Lasers, but if I replace the other 4 with a ER-Large Laser (giving 1 shot at ranges 15-25 hex), the BV drops by over 200. In the case of the SRMs, the firing pattern is also better. (e.g. with Streak SRM-6, can fire 7 ER-Medium Lasers, run and build up 1 heat (5 if SRM hits), which can be compensated for, compared to firing 8 ER-Medium Lasers which will build up 5 heat, and if the last one hits, does 7 damage instead of 12). So the weaknesses here are:

- Does not accurately reflect expected heat buildup for some weapons [EDITOR: *Excess weapons?*].
- Some weapons end up having a negative impact on BV.
- Does not reflect range splitting, resulting in hot 'Mechs with same range weapons (especially identical weapons, e.g. Nova Prime, Supernova) being overvalued, and 'Mechs with split-range categories (e.g. Cauldron Born A with ER-Large Lasers or ER-Medium Lasers and UAC20 or Cauldron-Born B with ERPPCs or LPLs+MPLs)[EDITOR: *being undervalued?*].

Suggested solutions:

This one needs some serious work, but for now I suggest:

- Weapons firing varied heat each round, like the Laser AMS, be valued at their average heat. In this case 7 heat. Streak weapons, which build up heat only if they hit, should be calculated using only half their heat towards the maximum heat value. In both cases, the firing unit may build up more heat than this system allows, but normally they can adjust weapons volume fire beforehand to not overheat too much. They can adjust afterwards if heat is not too much, and get better results by gaining the higher heat (i.e. stopping damage or inflicting more).

E.g. if in a 'Mech with several Streak SRM6s, you may plan to build up 11 heat if all hit, but expect to only build up 3 [EDITOR: 4?] (with 2 misses). Thus even if the best result is given (all hit), the unit is not disabled. The best players will use these averages to their advantages so the heat problems with the SRMs are as great a

factor in combat.

- For negative BV weapons, instead of the current system, every weapon has a BV/heat ratio. Up to the maximum heat dissipation limit, the weapons with the highest BV/heat have their BVs added in full, following this, only half this BV is added. E.g. the Nova Cat B has 6 LRM 15s and 2 ERML and can dissipate 32 of its 42 heat. The LRM15 has a heat/BV ratio of $5/164=32.8$, the ERML has $5/108=21.6$. All 6 LRM 15s are added fully to the weapons BV, with all the ER-Medium Lasers added half, giving a total of 1092 instead of the current 1057. (Note that in the original BV calculation the last ER-Medium Laser adds only 1 to the BV).

- For the split range problem, this is more problematic. At this stage, I can't figure out an easy way to do it. The only way I can see is to get FASA's original BV weapons formulae and figure out the potential of each 'Mech given its guns. Any suggestions here would be appreciated. We need to recognize that it is a significant advantage to have a Mech which is good at long and short range even if high heat, but it is a disadvantage having high heat if all weapons are the same range, like the Nova Prime or Supernova's weapons envelope.

2) Armor

Frankly, armor is undervalued in the current system. Pick any 2 Mechs of roughly equal BV and the high armor 'Mech wins most of the time. It has been reported the "larger" 'Mech wins in several places (including Brian Nystul's Battle-Talk installment on BV). This isn't true. It is the armor here that is at fault and this related directly to the next section. If you are going into a BV system battle, go for the 'Mechs with the highest armor in their class.

There is an exception which Lev's battle reports have illustrated, and this is if your 'Mech is fast enough to not need armor you can get by with very little. The Fire Moth is an example at 10/15[20], but this is the exception not the rule. [EDITOR: *Several mechs rank as being well armored AND fast, the Dragonfly, Phantom, and Fenris to name a few*]

Also note that a single lucky shot from a decent gun will kill the Fire Moth, so even this isn't really recommended unless you know what you're doing (like Lev obviously does).

[EDITOR: *Lev is a stravag Wolf Clan pilot hailing from Israel, his misadventures being logged in grim detail at www.sarna.net].*

Even then the 'Mech is likely to be improved with less pod space, more armor (e.g. remove the SRM4 from the primary variant and the 'Mech is better: about 25% less guns, but almost twice the staying power).

More on armor will appear in the next section. Once again I'm open to suggestions as to what to do, maybe increasing the Armor Factor ratio to 3.

3) Additive nature of Offensive and Defensive BVs.

Why is $BV_{\text{Offensive}} + BV_{\text{Defensive}}$? Is a well armed 'Mech with no speed and paper-thin armor any good? Is a 'Mech with good speed and armor but no guns any better? Shouldn't it be a balance? Keep the $BV_{\text{Offensive}} + BV_{\text{Defensive}}$, but also add another factor: $BV_{\text{Offensive}} * BV_{\text{Defensive}}$ to reflect that balance is best in combat situations.

This would need to be reduced by a factor of course, but this should be done to make sure that balanced 'Mechs have higher BVs for normal combat than those that concentrate too much on a specialized role. (Such mechs are not so good for normal combat, but might be superior in special circumstances (e.g. for the too high Defensive Value: various scout 'Mechs are effective at scouting, like the Ostscout, but virtually useless in combat.).

So much of the novels are based around the CLG (Combat Loss Grouping) theory, shouldn't this apply to BVs? A 'Mech is useful for however long it can utilize its weapons (armor and speed are key factors) times the effectiveness of its weapons (weapon power with a modification for mobility reflecting ability to engage where you want (eg rear)).

Anything else is rubbish according to the novels and common sense, so there should be at least some formula of $BV_{\text{Offensive}} * BV_{\text{Defensive}}$ to factor in the total BV equation.

4) Other BVs

Battle-Value is useful for regular combat, but what about looking at giving effectiveness in

some other circumstances? Three spring to mind.

· Strategic Battle-Value (SBV). Although BV may measure the tactical value of on-board Mechs, the fiction indicates the strategic value of 'Mechs is an important factor. In particular this includes an element of the Tactical Battle Value (BV), but also factors in elements like speed for increased weighting. E.g. in Malicious Intent, Cardoc Trevana's Titans defeated the Falcons at a strategic level, as well as defeating them in small groups on a tactical scale.

Had the Falcons had more very fast 'Mechs like the Fire Moth present in vicinity of these combats, even these relatively low BV 'Mechs would have had a major impact on the battle simply because they could make it to the combat. As it was, by the time the heavier Falcon units made it to battle sites, the Titans were long gone.

· Dueling Battle Value (DBV). For those who remember the good old Solaris VII dueling rules, the DBV could measure the effectiveness of a Mech under S7 rules. Most notably, weapons with low heat and low recharge times would be more valuable (e.g. ACs in particular), as would maneuverability, especially the ability to jump.

· Urban Battle Value (UBV). This is measure of the units BV in an ambush, the unit's short-range capabilities and ability to maneuver out of ambushes and urban environments. Armor, short range weaponry and speed / jump ability are key factors.

Are all these necessary? Well why not? They have value. Most people seem to play mainly with FASA 'Mechs or use design programs like TDB, so aren't they easy to calculate. Then you can actually see how good a 'Mech is where getting to the battle is a major concern, how good it is in a duel, and how likely it is to survive an ambush, or its usefulness in an urban setting.

5) Ammo BVs not realistic

Ammo BVs are not realistic at all. Take Clan LRM 15 ammo, and assume we're talking about an Adder (Puma) 'C'. Currently, the 'C' has 2 launchers and 4 tons of ammo, for a total of 16 shots per launcher. BV per ton for the ammo is 21. Why? Why does the first ton of ammo have the same BV as the fourth? The first ton is likely to be used, almost certain. However given the size of the Puma, it is far more likely the last ton

of ammo won't be fired, so it should have a lower BV.

What if the 2 Small Pulse Lasers were removed and 2 more tons of ammo added? Why are these still rated at 21 BVs when they are even less likely to be fired?? What really needs to be done is something to work out the CLG and factor this into the ammo: i.e. ammo is dependent on the Defensive BV and number of firing rounds you have. The first shot counts most, until the mech reaches the CLG, then dropping off gradually (reflecting the 'Mech is more likely to be killed after its CLG is reached).

Also why is the Clan LRM-5 ammo BV 7 when the higher classes are 14,21 and 27 respectively (i.e. about 7 for each LRM-5 pack added). I can understand the differences for the ACs, but LRMs and SRMs? Ignoring heat (which is factored in elsewhere), why are 4 LRM-5s the same BV as an LRM-20, but 6 firing rounds for the LRM-5s have only BV7 compared to 27 for the single LRM-20? Isn't the damage the same? So why do the BVs differ due to the ammo?

For the LRM-5, 1 ton of ammo represents 120 missiles to a range of 21. The LRM 20 represents 120 missiles to a range of 21. Shouldn't BV be the same? Currently this BV seems to be paying for 6 firing rounds per launcher, then the rest is free. This should be fixed, and is another error along the same lines as the Solaris 7 dueling rules for engine hits.

These things need to be thought out prior to seeing print for the first time, let alone making it into the optional print (Max Tech), later official rules printing (Master Rules), and then carrying on with the errors (the ATMs have the same mistake in the basic principles).

These BV problems are fixable, but need a little more work than I can do now for free. By the end, you might need to run a program to calculate all the BVs, but so what? Most people now are getting into Battletech through the Mech Warrior series and have a computer or can use FASA printed 'Mech sheets. Anyway, that's it for me for now (@2000 words). Any comments?

PARTING SHOTS:

Well, the issue has certainly grown. Does anyone out there have some good stories lying around? I do 90 % of the writing for this thing and work full time with two kids, so I can use the help (no, I'm not whining...it is a labor of love, after all ☺). Still, to keep the issue good-sized

and worth our reader's downloading, send all your best stuff this way.

On to other things: There are a few of us who get together every now and then for battletech mayhem on the web. For those not in the know, there's a somewhat laggy program out there that will let you play battletech with miniatures and all. Here are some screen-shots of the program in action.

Shootout on the frozen glacier

<http://www.iserv.net/~jeffkwr/b/Glacier1.jpg>

<http://www.iserv.net/~jeffkwr/b/Glacier3.jpg>

City Slugfests

<http://www.iserv.net/~jeffkwr/b/Tired.jpg>

<http://www.iserv.net/~jeffkwr/b/rd10fire.gif>

Alpine Attack

<http://www.iserv.net/~jeffkwr/b/hoverattack.jpg>

<http://www.iserv.net/~jeffkwr/b/aftermath.JPG>

Swarm attack

<http://www.iserv.net/~jeffkwr/b/on%20line%20b%20ash.jpg>

Genyosha Charge

<http://www.iserv.net/~jeffkwr/b/rd1overviewGen.gif>

Falcon Defenders before the attack

<http://www.iserv.net/~jeffkwr/b/the%20last%20hourahhh.jpg>

If anyone's interested, you can download the main program from www.WEBRPG.com. Once you do that, it's a small matter to download the minis I and others have made, as well as a dozen or so large maps (most equal 4 standard battletech maps, though a few are considerably larger). If you're interested, email me and I'll throw up the URL to download them from my page.

A word of note: ICQ is a must-have for those times the game freezes up, which happens at least once in a six hour game. So save the map after every movement phase. The program is totally free, comes with a chat log, and makes cheating dice rolls next to impossible. If anyone has any questions, email me at jeffkwr@iserv.net.

Till next issue, good hunting, Mechwarrior!