

CHARGE OF THE ORK BRIGADE

A Mass Combat System for *Earthdawn*

by Jennifer Brandes and Chris Hepler

"And then...over the hill...
came the entire Sioux Nation."
-- *Blazing Saddles*

The **Earthdawn** supplement *Prelude to War* has dropped a time bomb on Barsaive. It's pretty clear that very soon, the province that the player characters call home is going to be dunked in the biggest war of this age. And most likely, your PCs will end up in the thick of it.

Presently, **Earthdawn**'s combat system requires a lot of pounding on the average opponent before they go down, because the level of magic means every living being, especially adepts, can take more punishment than people in our world. This keeps player characters alive pretty well, but in battles with more than ten combatants, this turns into hours of seemingly endless dice-rolling, straining even the most creative GM to come up with fast-paced descriptions of each sword stroke, or even keep track of what's going on.

Why Would I Want Mass Combats?

Roleplaying a fantasy campaign during a war offers hundreds of adventure ideas; indeed, some gamers argue that every fantasy campaign (or novel series) eventually turns to war at some point for just such a reason. It means there are recurring villains with a stake in a long-term goal, and an authority figure that can direct the heroes to multiple adventures (e.g. the king that says "we need you here, here, and here"). No matter the independent streaks of the player-characters they'll probably pull together with the rest of the social body when their country is getting invaded. Presto: a campaign that can handle high-Circle (i.e. important) player characters.

While a war might look dramatic on paper, it poses a problem -- how do you make sure the engagements seem exciting rather than numbing? In *Earthdawn*, high-Circle heroes may be asked to command or fight in gigantic battles; it's just a fact of life in pseudo-medieval warfare. But there needs to be a way of keeping such battles as roleplaying games with a war background rather than going into wargame mode.

For the purposes of role-playing games, massive battles generally serve two purposes and require one of two types of description. In one case, the war serves as a backdrop to the player characters' personal quest to destroy the ultimate bad guy (e.g. evil commander of the enemy forces) and the legions of back-up goons are cinematic fodder for the PCs to hack through before reaching their goal. In the second case, the PCs are part of a larger force such as an army or ork cavalry: the unit's combined actions determine the fight's outcome, making the battle more like an upscaled individual combat.

The second option gets progressively thornier under the present system. When the player characters are riding with a cavalry of eighty orks and two hundred Therans come charging out of the forest, how can you tell who wins without rolling several hundred pounds of dice? Obviously, the adepts can make a difference -- but how much? When will the Therans break and run, and when will they simply slaughter

whoever's in their way, adept or not?

In this article, we give a simple system of handling each approach (called the Individual Level and the Command Level), allowing the PCs to wade through unimportant foes taking only cosmetic damage and also aiding the gamemaster in using large units of twenty or more fighters.

THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

This approach keeps the player characters in the thick of what is happening with "cinematic" results, saving the dice rolling for the exciting climactic fights with key opponents, not hacking through inconsequentials. In a given round, whenever the PC is in the thick of fighting with faceless masses, roll their Karma Action Die to reflect how lucky they are (though they spend no Karma) and check the following table.

MASS COMBAT KARMA DIE TABLE

Karma Die Roll	Result
1	The adept faces two enemy soldiers under normal combat rules.
2	The adept faces two enemy soldiers under normal combat rules, or may spend Strain to avoid dealing with them (see Strain Table, below).
3-4	The adept faces one enemy soldier, or may spend Strain.
5	The adept faces one wounded enemy soldier who has already taken Step 14 damage, or may spend Strain.
6	The adept faces a casual incoming weapon stroke, then the opponent retreats or moves on.
7	The adept is free to do something heroic: drag a friend away from the battle, attack an important enemy, strip the dead, or observe the fight in detail.
8+	As 7, but the adept has a chance to break out of the melee for safer ground, possibly long enough to take a Recovery Test.

By taking Strain to avoid combat, the adept takes abstract damage which represents maneuvers, nicks and cuts, uses of talents, intimidated opponents retreating or surrendering, and the general "movie approach" to big battle scenes. The hero wades through soldier after soldier, downing them with sword strokes, dodging their charges, tossing them aside, and carves a path to something important. Though the hero gets exhausted, worn down, and sometimes wounded, she doesn't make every die roll, saving the time and health to deal with the important leader the GM spent time crafting.

Strain costs are calculated on the following table. Costs are cumulative. You cannot take negative Strain.

MASS COMBAT STRAIN COSTS

Base Cost	1
Opponent has:	
Missile weapon	+2
High-damage weapon (Strength +6 or more)	+1
Forged or superior weapon	+2
Unusual weapon tricks (Riposte, Charge, True Shot)	+2
Wounds	-1
Opponent is engaged with another combatant	-1
Opponent is an adept	+ Circle
Hero is wounded	+1/wound

AN EXAMPLE OF CINEMATIC COMBAT

The troll swordmaster Reez charges through the Skull Wharg scorcher tribe, swatting orks like horseflies. Reez rolls his Karma die (a D4) and comes up with a 3. Rather than waste his time on a nobody, he spends Strain.

The GM rules the average Skull Wharg opponent is a Second Circle warrior adept (base cost of 1, +2 for Circle), and judges that his Air Dance and Anticipate Blow make him nastier than the average guardsman or front-line recruit who uses only Melee Weapons (+2). Thus, Reez spends 5 Strain, then whittles the Skull Wharg's shield down, and then the arm behind it. As the Skull Wharg falls, Reez blazes a bloody trail behind him for his allies, searching for his nemesis.

He finds him. There's Karak Bloodeyes, Skull Wharg chieftain and Reez's hated enemy, behind an elite guard of Sixth Circle swordmasters. Because the gamemaster is more intent on having a showdown between the two main characters, he lets Reez roll again. The die comes up a 2. Reez can take the option of fighting past two bodyguards in a masterful blur of enchanted steel, but it's going to hurt. To get past both of them (2), their threaded crystal two-handed swords (+3 each), high Circle (+6 each) and numerous tricks (+2 each), Reez takes 24 points of Strain: two Wounds. But his friends come to his aid and hold the battered swordmasters off while Reez faces Karak alone.

Naturally, using this system, the gamemaster may always declare any unusual or interesting character a major player that cannot be avoided with the mere application of Strain. In many campaigns, the swordmasters in the above example would be handled with normal combat rules, because they're probably formidable enough to be important. But using the cinematic system lets Reez get off relatively easily.

Usually, giving a player one or two opponents at once satisfies their need for both action and realism, and the game continues normally. However, if you want to scare the players, let them get separated in the midst of a massive battle like this, and make the Karma die rolls every turn *while the heroes are resolving normal combat*. This means the heroes may suddenly find themselves spending extra Strain to hold off two additional assailants at their back, *while* fighting those Sixth Circle swordmasters. Sheer bad luck on the Karma roll might keep their allies from fighting through to help out, watching their friends start to fall while they're just twenty feet away...

And you thought Horrors were dangerous.

THE COMMAND LEVEL

The command level is used to resolve enormous numbers of gamemaster characters crashing against one another, reflecting a tide of battle rather than the actual results. It is compatible with airship and riverboat combat (pp. 130-136, *Earthdawn Companion* [repeated in *Crystal Raiders of Barsaive*] or pp. 90-99, *The Serpent River*), and gives a method for calculating units of Name-Givers or beasts on the same scale.

Unit Attributes

Each attribute listed here except Hard/Soft and Speed can be rated on a sliding scale of seven degrees of competence: Legendary, Excellent, Good, Average, Fair, Poor, or Pitiful. The closer a unit gets to Legendary, the higher steps and ratings they receive, multiplying or adding to a base number. In any multiplication, round off to the nearest step. In the examples below, fourth through sixth Circle adepts are considered the most highly magical people likely to congregate in units of twenty or more. In a more magical game with phalanxes of Ninth Circle warriors fighting Horror armies, increase or decrease modifiers appropriately. Significantly enormous beasts such as dragons or ancient behemoths can be treated as single hard units.

See the **Design Worksheet** at the end of the article for a complete table of steps 10-25 and their appropriate modifications.

Hard and Soft

"Hard" units are structures such as war towers, castle walls, airships, and riverboats. Because they are huge and don't bleed or breathe, they can take a lot more punishment than soft units. "Soft" units are groups of Name-Givers and/or animals.

When a soft unit attacks a hard unit (for example, twenty archers shoot at an airship with their arrows), halve the soft unit's Damage Step; Armor-Defeating hits require three times the target's Maneuverability to reflect the cover the hard unit provides. When attacking a wooden target with axes, picks, or massive crushing weapons like thundra horns and behemoth feet, use three-quarters their step. Siege weaponry does normal damage. When the gamemaster thinks the units are close enough to aim at the crew of a boat or airship without the structure itself getting in the way, (e.g. boarding) treat both sides as soft units.

Obviously, people on the ground cannot attack airships and riverboats without missile weapons or some way of getting to the structure. Note the Maneuverability multiplier below for people on foot trying to cross a river.

Speed

This determines how fast the unit can move, in step numbers and in yards per turn. Soft units determine their Speed Step by finding the average Combat Movement Rate (e.g. 80 for a group mounted on warhorses) that corresponds to the Speed Step on the chart (e.g. 10 for that same group). Round off to the nearest step.

Combat Movement per turn	Speed Step	Approx. Miles Per Hour	Miles traveled in 8/16 Hours
8 yards/round	0	1	13/26
11 yards/round	1	2	18/36
14 yards/round	2	3	23/46
18 yards/round	3	4	30/60
22 yards/round	4	5	36/72
27 yards/round	5	6	44/88
33 yards/round	6	7	54/108
40 yards/round	7	8	66/132
50 yards/round	8	10	82/164
65 yards/round	9	13	106/212
80 yards/round	10	16	131/262
100 yards/round	11	20	164/328
130 yards/round	12	27	213/426
165 yards/round	13	34	270/540
220 yards/round	14	45	360/720
265 yards/round	15	54	434/868

Maneuverability

Maneuverability represents how fast the unit can turn around, flank opponents, or split and dive for cover. It is the step used for Initiative and is also the unit's Physical Defense. For foot soldiers, take the average Physical Defense of the Name-Givers and multiply it by 1.5 to get the base Maneuverability Step. For cavalry, use the average Physical Defense of the mounts and multiply it by 1.5 to get the base step. Maneuverability is then modified during combat due to unfavorable terrain, talents, teamwork or lack thereof, organization, and communication. A Group Pattern is considered Excellent communication automatically, as such adepts work as a single being.

Legendary: Thunderer *cerri* adepts with Wheeling Defense on open plains; high-Circle swordmasters with a Group Pattern Maneuvering and Sprinting in a wide plaza. **Multiplier:** 2

Excellent: A griffin wing in clear skies; a team of archer adepts using the Sprint talent; windling zoak cavalry. **Multiplier:** 1.5

Good: Cavalryman adepts on riding horses in open plains; beastmasters bonded with their animals. **Multiplier:** 1.25

Average: Warhorses or thundra trampling a field; humans on foot. **Multiplier:** 1

Fair: Foot soldiers in light forest; horses charging uphill. **Multiplier:** 0.75

Poor: Warhorses and thundra in forest; infantry crossing a shallow river. **Multiplier:** 0.5

Pitiful: Thundra in an alleyway or jungle; cavalry on ice; swimming obsidimen. **Multiplier:** 0.25

Firepower

Available only to units with missile or throwing weapons or long-range spells, Firepower measures how accurate and how damaging the unit is with arrows, bolts, cannons, spells, hurled tree trunks, or other long-distance weapons. It is represented with two steps. The first number is for Attack Tests; the second is their Damage step.

Firepower range penalties are exactly the same as in normal combat.

Ships have Firepower steps listed in their descriptions. To determine Name-Giver unit steps, start with a base Step of 1 per firer in the unit (e.g. step 20 for twenty people with bows) for both attack and damage. Multiply this number according to the competence level as follows.

Attack:

Legendary: Windling archers using True Shot; Rings of Accuracy and threaded bows. **Multiplier:** 2

Excellent: Third Circle elven archer adepts; adepts with Mystic Aim. **Multiplier:** 1.5

Good: First Circle archer adepts; most spells; non-adepts with crossbows. **Multiplier:** 1.25

Average: Human non-adepts with longbows. **Multiplier:** 1

Fair: Horse archers firing shortbows while moving. **Multiplier:** 0.75

Poor: Untrained peasants with crudely made bows. **Multiplier:** 0.5

Pitiful: Dumping rocks off a wall without looking. **Multiplier:** 0.25

Damage:

Legendary: Batteries of firebolt-ballistae; troll archers with elven warbows and weaponsmith-forged arrowheads; anybody using the Mask of Olition.

Multiplier: 2

Excellent: Troll archers with elven warbows; massed ballistae; catapults; poisoned arrows; the Flame Arrow talent; most Fireball-like spells or Death Rain. **Multiplier:** 1.5

Good: Heavy crossbows; elven warbows. **Multiplier:** 1.25

Average: Humans with longbows. **Multiplier:** 1

Fair: Humans with shortbows; hawk hatchets. **Multiplier:** 0.75

Poor: Slings and thrown daggers; windling archers. **Multiplier:** 0.5

Pitiful: Blowgun needles; chucked gravel. **Multiplier:** 0.25

Melee

The Melee attribute represents what the unit does in hand-to-hand, when ramming, charging, and hacking at the enemy. It is represented the same way as Firepower, with a Step Value for attack and a Step Value for damage. Ramming for ships is already calculated in their descriptions. Melee Attack and Damage Values are calculated for Name-Givers in the same way as Firepower, with a base value of the number of people in the unit. All soft units have a Melee rating, whether or not they carry weapons.

Melee Attack:

Legendary: The Protectors of Cara Fahd who never missed; Sixth Circle t'skrang swordmasters with a blade on every appendage. **Multiplier:** 2
Excellent: Fourth-Circle swordmasters with a good Maneuver setup; Throal's elite pony cavalry. **Multiplier:** 1.5
Good: Most Second or Third Circle combat adepts; most spells. **Multiplier:** 1.25
Average: First Circle combat adepts or trained non-adepts with multiple combat skills. **Multiplier:** 1
Fair: Anybody with Melee Weapons of 1 or 2 and little else. **Multiplier:** 0.75
Poor: Peasant rabble using only Dexterity. **Multiplier:** 0.5
Pitiful: Drunken obsidiman rabble; goat stampede. **Multiplier:** 0.25

Melee Damage:

Legendary: Obsidimen with forged lances mounted on charging dyres; Sixth Circle berserk Namdroth ork cavalymen on rampaging thundras; an ornery mother behemoth. **Multiplier:** 2
Excellent: Charging thundra with a cavalryman adept and a lance; sky raider trolls with forged axes; griffin cavalry; beastmaster-trained skeorx. **Multiplier:** 1.5
Good: Obsidimen with pole axes; charging warhorses. **Multiplier:** 1.25
Average: Humans with broadswords or spears; windling cavalry. **Multiplier:** 1
Fair: Humans with daggers or clubs. **Multiplier:** 0.75
Poor: Windlings with spears; unarmed humans. **Multiplier:** 0.5
Pitiful: Unarmed windlings; angry kittens. **Multiplier:** 0.25

Hull or Armor

A hard unit has a hull, representing how sound the structure of the ship or tower is, determining their armor, cargo, and ramming ratings.

Soft units have only their personal armor and carrying capacity. The Physical and Mystic armor ratings are directly equivalent to the individual troops' average personal armor ratings (e.g. padded leather and a rider's shield is Armor of 7). Cavalry average the mounts' armor into the figure.

Damage

Hard units have Derelict ratings, Destroyed ratings, and Critical thresholds to represent how sound their structure is. Similarly, a soft unit's damage ratings represent how many combatants are still alive and capable of fighting. This is broken down to three statistics; the Retreat rating, the Trashed rating and the Loss Threshold.

Retreat Rating: The Retreat rating is found by assigning 2 points for every Name-Giver in the group (i.e. a group of 20 has a Retreat Rating of 40), modified by the appropriate bonus. When the unit reaches its Retreat rating through damage, it scatters, no longer fighting enough to be a real force on the battlefield, though it may re-form with effort (see **Rallying**, below). Anything that feels no pain or fear (such as an army of steel false-men or Horrors) gets a +20 to this Rating (if higher than the Trashed rating, use the Retreat rating as Trashed).

Trashed Rating: The base Trashed Rating of a unit is three times the number of people in the unit. Anything that cannot feel pain or fear gets a +10 to this Rating. When

the unit has taken damage enough to be Trashed, they scatter and cannot re-form. Everyone is maimed, unconscious, gone AWOL, or dead.

Loss Threshold: Loss Threshold works much like the Wound Threshold of a Name-Giver. When the unit takes its Loss Threshold in damage in a single attack, approximately five percent of its people have been killed. Each Loss reduces all Melee, Speed, and Firepower steps by one to reflect the hole punched in the unit. The Loss Threshold is one-fifth of the Trashed Rating.

Commander Death: To determine if anyone important, such as a commander, was killed when the Loss Threshold was reached, roll a die appropriate to the size of the unit and the threat involved. If the gamemaster figures the fighting is pretty random with a twenty-person unit, he can roll a D20 and designate the commander a number (a 5% chance). If he feels the commander would be an obvious target (wearing golden armor or the only troll in a platoon of humans), he may give a greater chance (for example, rolling a D10, increasing the likelihood to 10%). If the commander dies, the group cannot re-form by being rallied unless another commander takes over (i.e. a PC charges into the fray and raises their standard, right?).

Base Retreat and Trashed ratings are modified as follows.

Legendary: Obsidiman warriors with Wood Skin; troll sky raiders with Durability burning their Fireblood; Blood-Sharing thundra cavalymen; all Fourth Circle adepts. **Bonus:** +30 Trashed, +15 Retreat.

Excellent: An angry mother behemoth; most Third Circle swordmasters; tough Second Circle warriors. **Bonus:** +20 Trashed, +10 Retreat.

Good: Thundra and dyre cavalry; Second Circle adepts with Durability.

Bonus: +10 Trashed, +5 Retreat.

Average: First Circle adepts and reasonably tough non-adepts. **No adjustment.**

Fair: Soft but able-bodied humans. **Penalty:** -10 Trashed, -5 Retreat.

Poor: Noncombatants making a stand; elf peasants. **Penalty:** -20 Trashed, -10 Retreat.

Pitiful: Children; anemic blood elves; windling peasants. **Penalty:** -30 Trashed, -15 Retreat.

Soft Unit Size

The maximum soft unit size is generally twenty individuals; after that it is simpler to calculate two smaller units. However, if the gamemaster wants to settle two 50-person teams in a single clash, they may want to note that larger units resemble eggshells armed with hammers. Whoever hits first does an immense amount of damage with their high steps, often enough to throw off the balance between hard and soft units, and Loss Thresholds do not always keep pace.

Smaller units than 20 will find their attributes quickly shrinking. No one may have a rating below 1 except in Armor and Firepower. For small units of Poor or worse ratings, Trashed Ratings may dwindle to below the Retreat Ratings; in this case, use only the Retreat Rating, and the group cannot Rally. Once units get below six individuals, it is best to use normal combat rules.

Example of Unit Construction

The adventuring group Mynbruje's Thunder has assembled forty able-bodied ork

peasants to defend themselves from a Theran "peacekeeping" team. The two units of peasants have the following statistics.

Speed: On average, the ork peasants have Dexterities of 10, which means their Combat Movement is 29 yards per round. That's closest to Step 5.

Maneuverability: The peasants' Physical Defense is a 6; thus, their Maneuverability is 9, as they are on flat ground with no special training.

Firepower: The 20-person units have a base Firepower of 20/20 but their Attack Value is multiplied by 0.5 since they are Poor, basically untrained. Their damage is done with slings, giving it a similarly Poor multiplier. Their final Firepower is 10/10.

Melee: Again, the base is 20/20. Basically untrained, they are Poor (0.5) in attack, but the orks are pretty strong for average Name-Givers, and damage with their spears and scythes is Fair. Thus, their Melee is 10/15.

Armor: With only some makeshift footman's shields and padded cloth, they have Armor of 5.

Damage: They have a base Trashed rating of (20×3) 60 and Retreat of (20×2) 40. Though they have a little edge in Toughness because they're orks, they are untrained and so are only Fair, bringing the Trashed rating to $(60 - 10)$ 50 and Retreat to $(40 - 5)$ 35. Their Loss Threshold is one-fifth of 50, a 10.

Combat Options

Most combat options such as Aggressive Attack or Full Defense can be applied to a unit, but only if their overall competence level is Average or better. In such a case, Aggressive Attack adds its 3 steps to attack and damage as usual, and reduces Maneuverability for that round by 3, as well as applying 1 point of damage. Full Defense adds 3 to Maneuverability for the purpose of Physical Defense, while subtracting 3 from any attack step. These options can only be used in a primarily melee attack.

Generally, the expenditure of Karma is figured into the advantage adepts have over non-adepts in the above statistics; sometimes the only real difference between a non-adept soldier and a first-Circle soldier is that the adept can spend Karma. If the gamemaster wants to reflect the group running out of Karma, he should lower the multiplier by one category (e.g. Good to Average for Firepower).

Rallying

Like most medieval battles, the combatants in this system usually withdraw long before their forces are completely decimated. A typical defeated unit probably takes only one to three real deaths (5-15% casualties) before they back up and try again. Those who stay to fight alone usually get swamped and crushed easily (try making up a unit of two individuals and see how high the steps are).

The survivors need a commander to rally, and three combat rounds. When a re-grouped unit takes the field again, treat it as undamaged, but recalculate the Firepower, Melee, and Damage attributes based on the new group size, subtracting any dead individuals from the total.

Flanking and Penetrating

Generally speaking, big battles are fought with warriors in rows. When someone comes around the side or behind those rows, the line is "flanked." It is much harder to

fight sideways or turn masses of troops instantly, so flanking the end of a line can "roll up" the entire line. Troops (un)fortunate enough to be at the ends of the line usually try to flank. If both ends of one army successfully flank, they have the enemy surrounded.

To pull this off, both units make a Maneuverability test with a Difficulty of the opponent's Speed. Any Losses subtract directly from the Maneuverability step for this test. Whoever has a higher die result flanks the other. This advantage adds 2 to the Attack and Damage steps for that round on an Average success: a Good, 3, an Excellent, 4, and Extraordinary adds 5.

When a soft unit flanks a hard unit, they typically are trying to get away from the firepower the hard unit can dish out. Instead of adding to Attack and Damage steps, a successful flank reduces the opponent's Attack and Damage steps by the amounts given above.

In the middle of a battle line, one of the objectives is to penetrate and punch a hole, thereby creating a flank to either side. Whenever a unit retreats, the friendly forces to either side of it now can be flanked. This is why many commanders send in reserves behind the main battle line; they have them wait and fill in the gap.

SAMPLE UNITS

THERAN EIGHTH LEGION SWORDMASTERS

Unit Size: 20

Speed: 8

Maneuverability: 15

Firepower: NA

Armor: 10

Melee: 24/20

Damage:

Loss Threshold: 14

Retreat: 45

Trashed: 70

These are the elven Second Circle swordmasters from p. 17 of *Vivane Province*; wearing chain mail and footman's shields and packing broadswords.

THERAN EIGHTH LEGION HEAVY INFANTRY WARRIORS

Unit Size: 20

Speed: 6

Maneuverability: 11

Firepower: NA

Armor: 10

Melee: 24/20

Damage:

Loss Threshold: 16

Retreat: 50

Trashed: 80

These are the Second Circle ork warriors from p. 16 of *Vivane Province*, equipped as above.

ORK SCORCHER THUNDRA CAVALRY

Unit Size: 20

Speed: 8

Maneuverability: 11

Firepower: NA

Melee: 20/30 (24/30)

Damage:

Loss Threshold 14 (16)

Retreat: 45 (50)

Trashed: 70 (80)

These are First Circle cavalryman adepts on thundra beasts. Numbers in parentheses represent Second or Third Circle adepts.

THUNDERER HORSE *CERRI*

Unit Size:	6	12	18
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Speed:	10	10	10
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Maneuverability:	23	23	23
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Firepower:	NA		
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Armor:	12	12	12
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Melee:	8/9	15/18	23/27
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Damage:

Loss Threshold:	8	12	15
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Retreat:	22	34	46
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Trashed:	38	56	74
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These are Fourth Circle ork cavalryman adepts from the Thunderer tribe. They have Group Patterns, using the Threads to change their Physical Defenses from 8 to 10. They are on warhorses, with lances, chain mail, and knights' shields. Three sample unit sizes are given.

THE *TRIUMPH* BEHEMOTH'S GRIFFIN WING

Unit Size: 12

Speed: Land 5

Air 9

Maneuverability: Land 17

Air 20

Firepower: NA

Armor: 7

Melee: 18/18

Damage:

Loss Threshold: 11

Retreat: 34

Trashed: 56

These are cavalry capable of attacking an airship's crew. Though they are Fifth Circle cavalrymen mounted on griffins, packing forged broadswords, their small size cuts their effectiveness down a little. Their maneuverability is slightly lower than the *cerri*, even in the air, because they lack a Group Pattern.

WAR TOWER (HARD UNIT)

Speed: 4

Maneuverability: 4 (8)

Hull:

Armor: 7 for the wooden tower

8 if attacking the thundras pulling it

13 if hides are draped over the tower

20 if iron plates are attached to the tower

Cargo: 50

Ramming: N/A (though 25 if it falls on a unit)

Firepower: 25/20 for flame cannons

25/25 for firebolt ballistae

25/14 for normal ballistae

25/30 with longbows (soft damage)

Damage: Critical: 18

Derelict: 63

Destroyed: 70

War towers are 40 feet high, with six enormous wheels, eight ballistae or cannons, a drawbridge for boarding castle ramparts, and enough space to carry forty infantry. It is drawn or pushed by creatures whose Strength Steps total 66, such as six thundra or a dozen or so able humans. For each 11 points under, subtract 1 from the Speed step. Though its Maneuverability is only a 4 for Initiative and for those creatures drawing it, for purposes of flanking and damaging the crew or taking damage, it is an 8, because it can shoot in any direction. On anywhere but open ground, its Maneuverability ratings drop by 2 steps.

COVERED RAM (HARD UNIT)

Speed: 4

Maneuverability: 5 (8)

Firepower: NA

Hull:

Armor: 7 normally

13 draped with hides

20 covered with iron plates

Cargo: 0

Ramming: When carried by orks 15

Horses 18

Thundras 24

Dyres 28

Damage: Critical: 19

Derelict: 63

Destroyed: 75

A covered ram offers Name-Givers attacking a gate some protection from above and to the sides. It is little more than an armored shell on wheels, requiring Strength steps at least equal to the ramming step to move it and gain those advantages.

Two Examples of Mass Combat

SOFT VERSUS SOFT

The peasants from the above example find themselves left alone, without their adept protectors, as the Therans ride into town. Twenty of their best fighters, armed with spears and slings, head out to meet their attackers, leaving the others closer to the village in case it comes to a siege.

Using the Theran Eighth Legion Swordmasters, above, the GM says the two forces are evenly matched numbers-wise, and rules that neither group is surprised. Initiative is rolled using Maneuverability, step 15 (D20+D6) for the Therans, and step 9 (D8+D6) for the peasants. The peasants get a 7 and 3, giving them 10, while the Therans get a 20 and 1, then reroll the 20 to get a 6, giving them a total of 27. The Therans go first.

The Theran swordmasters have no missile weapons, so they close immediately, attacking with their Melee Attack step of 24 (D20+D12+D10). They roll 4, 7 and 5, giving them a total of 16, more than enough to get past the peasants' Maneuverability of 9. They then roll step 20 (D20+D10+D6) for damage, getting 19, 7 and 3, a total of 29 points, a slaughter. Even subtracting 5 for armor, 24 points of damage is more than twice the peasants' Loss Threshold, and the untrained mob loses heart and runs, many with wounds, two members dead.

The GM rolls 1D20 to see if the orks' leader bit the dust, and gets a 17, no one important. This means the peasants can try to Rally in three Combat Rounds. But in the meantime, the Therans press forward into the village itself.

SOFT VERSUS HARD

The other villagers, seeing the carnage on the battlefield, have gathered into the temple of Lochost, the only stone structure in town. Since the orks have spent most of the last week fortifying the building, the GM rules that it can be treated like an immobile war tower. Thus, the Therans' swords do half damage against it, while the orks gather at the windows with slings and burning pitch to try to drive them off.

For Initiative, the Therans roll step 15 (D20+D6) again, while the immovable building gets only Step 4 (D6). The Therans get a 14 and 4, going on 18, while the villagers sit back until 1. The Therans' Attack Step of 24 is unchanged, and they roll 15, 7 and 6, giving them 28, an Armor-Defeating hit to the building. Their Damage Step is halved, however, giving them only Step 10 (D10+D6). Rolling a 1 and 3, they do a total of 4 points of damage, hardly a scratch.

The sling-wielding villagers have a Firepower of 10/10, and roll a 7 and 6, then roll up for an additional 2, giving them a 15 on their attack, just enough to hit the milling Therans. However, they do only 8 points of damage, not enough to get through the Armor of 10.

Fortunately, by the beginning of the next round, the other orks have recovered and try to surprise the Therans by sneaking up from behind and Flanking them. For Initiative, the Therans get 17, the trapped villagers get 2, and the Rallied army gets 7. The Therans attack the building again with a 31, and do 19 points of Armor-Defeating damage, a Critical hit which knocks a hole in part of the wall and kills one of the orks inside. All its

Attributes go down by 1.

Since the Rallied orks are surprising the Therans, they make a Maneuverability test at their adjusted step of 7 (D12), getting a 9, enough to get around the Therans' Speed of 8. This gives them +2 to attack and damage, making up for the losses they took last time. Rolling Step 10 to attack, they get a 15, barely enough to tag the Therans, and do Step 15 (D20+D6) damage, a total of 20 points. Subtracting the Therans' armor of 10, they take 10 points of damage, less than their Loss Threshold, and are largely unaffected.

Although the orks' spirits lift at this small victory, they have little hope of winning in the long run. Looks like they need some heroes.

MASS COMBAT SOFT UNIT DESIGN WORKSHEET

UNIT NAME _____

Number of Individuals _____

Mounted Yes/No

Mount _____

Adepts Yes/No

Discipline _____ Circle _____

Race _____

Special Advantages/Disadvantages _____

STEP ONE: DETERMINE SPEED (no minimum)

Average Combat Movement (of mount) ____ X Multiplier (see chart) = _____

STEP TWO: DETERMINE MANEUVERABILITY (minimum of Step 1)

	Terrain/Communication Modifiers	Final Maneuverability
Cavalry	X 2 (Legendary) =	_____
Average physical defense of Mount ____ X 1.5 = ____	X 1.5 (Excellent) =	_____
	X 1.25 (Good) =	_____
Infantry	X 1 (Average) =	_____
Average physical defense of soldier ____ X 1.5 = ____	X .75 (Fair) =	_____
	X .5 (Poor) =	_____
	X .25 (Pitiful) =	_____

STEP THREE: DETERMINE FIREPOWER (no minimum)

Effectiveness Modifiers	Final Attack Step	Final Damage Step
Attack Step	X 2 (Legendary) =	_____
Number of Fighters in Unit ____	X 1.5 (Excellent) =	_____
	X 1.25 (Good) =	_____
Damage Step	X 1 (Average) =	_____
Number of Fighters in Unit ____	X .75 (Fair) =	_____
	X .5 (Poor) =	_____
	X .25 (Pitiful) =	_____

STEP FOUR: DETERMINE MELEE (minimum of Step 1)

	Effectiveness Modifiers	Final Attack Step	Final Damage Step
Attack Step	X 2 (Legendary) =	_____	_____
Number of Fighters in Unit ____	X 1.5 (Excellent) =	_____	_____
	X 1.25 (Good) =	_____	_____
Damage Step	X 1 (Average) =	_____	_____
Number of Fighters in Unit ____	X .75 (Fair) =	_____	_____
	X .5 (Poor) =	_____	_____
	X .25 (Pitiful) =	_____	_____

STEP FIVE: DETERMINE HULL/ARMOR
(no minimum)

Final Armor Rating

Average Personal Armor of Individual/Mount _____ = _____

STEP SIX: DETERMINE DAMAGE CAPACITY
(minimum of 1)

Retreat Rating	Toughness Modifiers	Final Retreat/Trashed Rating
Number of Fighters in Unit _____ X 2 _____	+15/+30 (Legendary) = _____/_____	
	+10/+20 (Excellent) = _____/_____	
	+5/+10 (Good) = _____/_____	
Trashed Rating	+/- 0 (Average) = _____/_____	
Number of Fighters in Unit _____ X 3 _____	-5/-10 (Fair) = _____/_____	
	-10/-20 (Poor) = _____/_____	
	-15/-30 (Pitiful) = _____/_____	

Final Loss Threshold

Loss Threshold _____

Final Trashed Rating _____ X .2 = _____

TABLE OF STEP MODIFICATION

Base Step	x.25	x.5	x.75	x1.25	x1.5	x2
10	3 (D4)	5 (D8)	8 (2D6)	13 (D12+D10)	15 (D20+D6)	20 (D20+D10+D6)
11	3 (D4)	6 (D10)	8 (2D6)	14 (D20+D4)	17 (D20+D10)	22 (D20+D10+D8)
12	3 (D4)	6 (D10)	9 (D8+D6)	15 (D20+D6)	18 (D20+D12)	24 (D20+D12+D10)
13	3 (D4)	7 (D12)	10 (D10+D6)	16 (D20+D8)	20 (D20+D10+D6)	26 (D20+D10+D8+D6)
14	4 (D6)	7 (D12)	11 (D10+D8)	18 (D20+D12)	21 (D20+D10+D6)	28 (D20+2D10+D8)
15	4 (D6)	8 (2D6)	11 (D10+D8)	19 (D20+2D6)	23 (D20+2D10)	30 (D20+D10+D8+2D6)
16	4 (D6)	8 (2D6)	12 (2D10)	20 (D20+D8+D6)	24 (D20+D12+D10)	32 (D20+2D10+D8+D6)
17	4 (D6)	9 (D8+D6)	13 (D12+D10)	21 (D20+D10+D6)	26 (D20+D10+D8+D6)	34 (D20+3D10+D8)
18	5 (D8)	9 (D8+D6)	14 (D20+D4)	23 (D20+2D10)	27 (D20+D10+2D8)	36 (2D20+D10+D8+D4)
19	5 (D8)	10 (D10+D6)	14 (D20+D4)	24 (D20+D12+D10)	29 (D20+D12+D10+D8)	38 (2D20+D10+2D8)
20	5 (D8)	10 (D10+D6)	15 (D20+D6)	25 (D20+D10+D8+D4)	30 (D20+D10+D8+2D6)	40 (2D20+D12+D10+D8)
21	5 (D8)	11 (D10+D8)	16 (D20+D8)	26 (D20+D10+D8+D6)	32 (D20+2D10+D8+D6)	42 (2D20+D10+2D8+D6)
22	6 (D10)	11 (D10+D8)	17 (D20+D10)	28 (D20+2D10+D8)	33 (D20+2D10+2D8)	44 (2D20+2D10+2D8)
23	6 (D10)	12 (2D10)	17 (D20+D10)	29 (D20+D12+D10+D8)	35 (D20+D12+2D10+D8)	46 (2D20+D12+2D10+D8)
24	6 (D10)	12 (2D10)	18 (D20+D12)	30 (D20+D10+D8+2D6)	36 (2D20+D10+D8+D4)	48 (2D20+2D10+2D8+D6)
25	6 (D10)	13 (D12+D10)	19 (D20+2D6)	31 (D20+D10+D8+2D6)	38 (2D20+D10+2D8)	50 (2D10+3D10+2D8)

FINAL UNIT STATISTICS

UNIT NAME _____

SPEED _____

ARMOR _____

MANEUVERABILITY _____

RETREAT RATING _____

FIREPOWER ATTACK _____

DAMAGE RATING _____

FIREPOWER DAMAGE _____

LOSS THRESHOLD _____

MELEE ATTACK _____

MELEE DAMAGE _____