

# CarolinaCon Regional MECCG® Newsletter

August 24, 1998

The Journey is the Destination

Issue 2

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Letters from the Guard House

## Letters from the Guard House

Hello again, fellow players! Welcome to the second issue of the CarolinaCon Regional MECCG Newsletter! My first issue was a great success thanks to you and your ideas, and hopefully I have taken enough of them to heart to make this an even better issue. As much as you all have indicated that you enjoyed the first issue, this one should be just as entertaining.

I was lucky enough to have attended Origins '98, and will do my best to fill you in on all the furious action and mayhem! I have also gathered inside information from ICE concerning some new ideas

coming forth about Middle Earth: The Balrog.

As of this writing, I have asked ICE to let me make this the official MECCG Newsletter, and so far they seem enthusiastic about the possibilities. Issue #3 will be the first official MECCG Newsletter. Look for its release at this year's US Nationals, October 1-4 (see page 21 for details.)

In order to keep this newsletter timely, I have decided to forego reproducing it in color. The original will be done in color, and all the reproductions in black and white. Believe me, it takes an inordi-

nate amount of time and expense to print in color as opposed to black and white. For now, that means that this newsletter will get to you sooner.

I am interested in eventually going to color full-time, as I think it makes for a more visually stimulating newsletter, however, it would definitely mean attaching a price to the newsletter, something I have tried to avoid thus far. I will keep color in mind as we go along, and will let you know as soon as I figure something out. I am currently shopping around for a decent price.

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## Focus On: Craig "Ichabod" O'Brien of ICE

*James Kight*

This issue's **Focus On** column zero's in on Craig "Ichabod" O'Brien of Iron Crown Enterprises. For most of you, Craig handles the rulings duties of MECCG, and I am sure we all know how complicated that can get! [Editor's Note: This interview was completed before the recent announcement that Craig is leaving ICE to do freelance work.]

**CRMN:** How did you get started with ICE?

**Craig:** When I got out of college, I wanted to teach at the college level, but I had some problems with my applications (like never getting most of them), and didn't get accepted to grad school. I figured I'd take a year off, work, and reapply. Unfortunately, I couldn't get a job, since no one wants a Mac

programmer. Right as I was about to figure out PCs, the local game store closed down. I opened up my own game store, planning to use the store to get contacts in the industry, and eventually a job. I did volunteer work online for Steve Jackson Games (INWO netrep on AOL) and ICE (keeper of the FAQ).

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## Letters From the Guard House (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

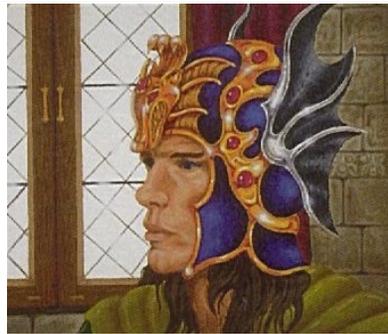
One of the reasons for the delay between issues 1 and 2 has been artist contacts. Most of the artists that I have in my mind to interview are very busy. Thankfully, Jason Hawkins (Assistant Art Director) of Iron Crown Enterprises has been kind enough to contact the artists for me and inform them of my interest in interviewing them. Hopefully this will get the schedule back on track.

As you read through this issue you will also notice some changes with the article structure as well as the content of the articles. One of the better suggestions I received was to give the tip articles sections for both beginner and expert players. Hopefully this issue will better explain the straightforwardness of some cards while also showing the experts the nuances of those same cards.

Among the articles in this issue you will find a few tournament reports from Origins, reformatted columns such as the Deck Tip and The Final Word, new miscellaneous columns that will come and go in various is-



Aiglos by Audrey Corman © 1996 ICE



Dragon Helm by Audrey Corman © 1996 ICE

sues, reworked columns like the Ponderances (now called Ruminations) and other surprises.

Concerning Origins, unfortunately, Orcs and Trolls was not displayed at Origins this year, as the only copy available was in French. Also, Elrond's House was also cancelled due to lack of a copy of the game. Even further, the interactive MECCG game (where everyone acts out a single character) was also cancelled due to a lack of manpower.

I was disappointed in these cancellations, but truthfully, not that surprised. As busy as the ICE crew seems to be, it stands to reason that the demos would be the first thing to get the axe.

Also inside you will find a new column, dedicated to the review of a non-MECCG product. Most of the products reviewed will in some way be related to Middle Earth, although I might feel the urge to review something totally unrelated. For example, this issue features a review of Fluxx, a great little game designed by Andrew Looney and distributed by Iron Crown Enterprises.

For those of you interested in attending the 1998 MECCG Nationals, the 1998 ranking season has been a hectic one, and has officially ended August 9th, coinciding with the end of Gencon '98. Start practicing for the US Nationals before it's too late!

Lastly, thanks again to Spencer Carney for contributing to the Newsletter. Spencer edits and produces quite a few newsletters as his 9-5 job, and his expertise and advice have definitely helped!

Next issue will feature many new writers who will give their own perspective to the MECCG Newsletter!

James Kight  
Crown's Guard NC

P.S. In late breaking news, Craig "Ichabod" O'Brien has announced his plans to leave the MECCG netrep position and ICE to work mostly freelance. We have all looked to Craig for our rulings questions, and rest assured, he will truly be missed. I wish Craig the best of luck in the future and hope that we will eventually see him again! Best of luck, Craig!



Great Shield of Rohan by Audrey Corman © 1995 ICE

## Design & Contact Information

For those of you who might be interested, this entire issue was designed and written using Microsoft Publisher 97 for Windows. Times New Roman is the main font.

Issue 2, Volume 1

This issue was written and printed the week of August 24, 1998.

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## Focus On: Craig "Iehabod" O'Brien (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

I eventually managed to get freelance writing work with ICE and InQuest. Three years after opening the store, I realized I could have the same income doing freelance writing and a part time job. I managed to get part time work with ICE, and after eight months turned it into a full time job at ICE.

**CRMN:** What are your job duties with ICE?

**Craig:** Mostly I work on the card game. I am responsible for answering rules questions online and over the phone, and keeping a file of the rulings that I've made (the CRF). I'm also responsible for editing the Player's Guide, helping design and playtest new expansions, and irritating the Silent Death series editor.

If I have time free I work on other projects as well. I was heavily involved in the playtesting of Elrond's House, I have done work on Rolemaster projects, and was in charge of Rules of Warfare II for Silent Death. Summed up, I'm responsible for helping Mike with the card game, and then helping the other editors with whatever they need when I have extra time.

**CRMN:** When you are approached with a question about a ruling or card effects, by what process do you reach your interpretation?

**Craig:** First I see if I have already ruled on the question. Many of the questions are from people who missed the ruling the first time, people who are looking for a confirma-

tion, or a question that hasn't been answered in a month or more.

If there is no ruling, I read the cards, rules, and ruling files. Often the players just haven't read the cards, are reading something extra into them, or missed one of the many obscure points of the rules. If I can't logically deduce the ruling from the text, I make a new ruling. This usually happens when there is ambiguous card text, and I need to pick the correct interpretation. Making a new ruling involves several factors: simulation, mechanical balance, and rules consistency.

I try to make the rules consistent first, as the game is complicated enough. The next priority is making sure the game is still balanced, and that a particular strategy or combination doesn't have excessive power compared to its playability. Finally comes simulation. Some might want this higher in the prioritization, but I feel that if the game sucks, then no one will play it no matter how good a simulation it is. And the priorities aren't hard and fast either. I sometimes make a simulation decision because I feel it is more important than rules consistency.

All of this is what happens in a perfect world. Sometimes I think I know the card text, and I'm wrong. Sometimes I just shoot from the hip without thinking. But by the next digest either I catch myself or someone else catches me, and a correction is made.

**CRMN:** Are you the final word, or do other employees have their say?

**Craig:** What I say is official, but is not necessarily the final word. All of the new rulings I make I copy to Mike Reynolds for review. And when a new edition of the CRF comes out both Mike Reynolds and Coleman Charlton review it. If either of them disagrees there is a discussion. Usually it is Mike, as Coleman is not that concerned about the minutiae of the rules. About half the time Mike overrules me, and about half the time I remember to bring a knife to the discussion, and he lets me have my way.

I would like to ask that everyone not go over my head to Mike when they disagree with one of my rulings. He's going to see any new rulings I make anyway, and when there is a large outcry on the net about anything, I make sure to let him know.

**CRMN:** Give us a basic example of how a card goes through the errata process, and by what standards a card is eligible for errata...

**Craig:** These days the process is pretty simple. First a card is brought to our attention as being too powerful. This is usually done by players, although sometimes we notice it ourselves. In the case of Muster, players pointed out to Mike Reynolds that the card was just too powerful. In the case of Rebuild the Town, it became apparent from the questions we were being asked that players were using the card in an unintended, and much more powerful way, than we ever intended. The next step is to figure

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## Focus On: Craig "Ishabod" O'Brien (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

out what exactly the problem is and how to fix it. In the case of Rebuild the Town the problem was people were playing it before the automatic-attack, so we made it playable only in the site phase. The final step is to sit back and take the heat for it.

The only reason (besides fixing typos) for issuing errata these days is to fix mechanical problems in the game. We don't issue errata for simulation problems, because there is too much errata as it is. Not only is it hard for players to deal with it during the game, its hard for us to get the information to every player. So we have to limit the errata.

If we were to errata only simulation problems, the games death would be more certain and imminent. If the game doesn't play well, the simulation quality is a moot point. No one will bother playing the game to find that simulation quality. So we concentrate our efforts on simulation quality in the design of the expansions.

**CRMN:** Are there cards that don't have errata that you think should? How would you (theoretically) fix them?

**Craig:** Under the current way we do errata, I don't think there are any cards that need errata at the moment. If we could get around the problems limiting errata, I'd love to go back and errata some of the simulation problems in the game. I think Frodo should be able to Muster the Hobbits (although there

is a card coming out to fix that). There are probably others I can't think of at the moment, although I don't think there is any need to "fix" the Sam/Shelob situation.

What I would like to fix is the rules. I would like to change the format to something closer to the Challenge Deck format, to make it easier for players to start playing their first game, and to make the rules clearer. There are also changes I think should be made to the rules that would reduce the confusion and number of rulings.

I would like to take the automatic-attack out of the site phase, and perhaps make changes to the way attacks are faced to make the different kinds of attack more consistent. I would also like to consider changes to the timing rules, but I am not sure I would want to change anything in them.

**CRMN:** Since you are knee-deep in rulings most of the day, how often do you get to play MECCG?

**Craig:** Not a lot. Almost all of the playing I do is playtesting. Sometimes when I'm bored at night I play solitaire. Occasionally when I'm at conventions I get to lose a few games against real players.

**CRMN:** Which set is your favorite?

**Craig:** The Dragons. It's straightforward, simple, and cool.

**CRMN:** Which cards have you designed if any?

**Craig:** The Balrog was the first expansion where I was involved with the design from the very beginning.

The main card I designed for the set was Beorning Skin-changers, which is a creature/short-event. As a creature, it is an Animal, Man, and Bear playable against minions. As a short-event it returns hero companies to their site of origin unless they have an untapped warrior of prowess >5, or Beorn.

The reason I pushed for it was that I collect bear cards. I have a binder with 818 bears from Magic, including 24 different versions of the basic bear cards. I rarely play Magic anymore, so I wanted a Middle-earth bear to collect.

**CRMN:** Do you prefer to play minion, hero or fallen-wizard? Why?

**Craig:** I prefer hero. I've only played a few games as a minion, but I never really had fun doing it. Maybe because it was all playtesting the Adunaphel challenge deck.

I am really interested in playing a Fallen-wizard deck, either Radagast or Gandalf, but I never seem to get around to opening my White Hand cards. The Fallen-wizards just have so many cool cards and possibilities, I wish I played more just so I'd have a chance to try them out.

**CRMN:** Do you think the current tournament formatting needs some improvement?

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Focus On: *Craig "Lehabod" O'Brien (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

**Craig:** I certainly have my problems with the current tournament format, but the decisions on that format are not mine alone to make, and my opinions are not shared by everyone at ICE. I dislike the tie-breaker system. In my honest opinion, the swiss system is designed to measure a player's skill against the field, not against particular players. That makes head-to-head counter to the design.

In a related problem, swiss system works best when run for one or two more rounds than a single elimination. However, time constraints limit us to running the same number of rounds as single elimination. We don't have a big enough player base to fill two-day tournaments, as is frequently done in chess tournaments.

What this means to tie-breakers is that number of wins basically drops the tournament to a single elimination in many cases, and if time is of the essence you might as well just run single elimination. I feel that sum of opponents scores and cumulative score are much better suited to the swiss system format.

I also dislike the rating system. I think it benefits playing in multiple tournaments too much, and does too little to take into account the quality of opponents. I would prefer a chess style rating system, but there are other considerations that keep ICE from implementing such a system.

**CRMN:** Of all the questions about

rulings and errata, which one is asked the most?

**Craig:** It varies from time to time. For a while "What does the white hand on the Fallen-wizard mean?" was the big one. But overall it would have to be "Can I get Twilight from the discard pile as if it was a resource?" The answer is no, by the way.

**CRMN:** Of particular interest is why the dragon-hoard ruling was changed after so long. Why the sudden change?

**Craig:** I'm not really sure. I came in one day, and we had a bunch of new errata to issue. Mike asked me to issue erratum to change the status of Dragon hoards. He said that Coleman was consistently bringing up changing it. Mike's only worry was that I might lose face on the mailing list. I figured I have no face left around there, so I just issued the erratum.

**CRMN:** Does ICE have a 2nd Edition planned for the future? (The impetus being that the errata cards are already set for reprinting)

**Craig:** It's nothing we've really made any plans for. It's certainly something we think about, but nothing we've sat down in a meeting and made plans about. There are questions to be answered, preconditions that need to happen, and problems to solve. Do we just issue all the errata, totally revamp the rules, or even go so far as to rewrite the weaker cards in the game?

We would certainly need to sell out of the unlimited [edition] that we have, and if we were to include Dragons and Dark Minions cards we would probably want to have very low inventories of those also, since sales would undoubtedly drop. Also, to make a second edition we would have to commit significant editing and design resources. That would mean that there would be a significant delay between expansions. The second edition sales might be enough to support the game during the delay, but that is not clear.

I'm not saying we'll never do it, I'm just trying to point out that the second edition issue is a bit more complicated than it might seem on the surface.

**CRMN:** What is the best thing about your job?

**Craig:** I get paid to play games. What could be better? I mean, I am a hard core gamer. In college one semester, I literally played games 12 hours a day five days a week. On one hand, its much like any other job. Parts of it bore me to tears. I have personality conflicts with some of my coworkers. But I'd get that anywhere. At least at ICE, I have the opportunity to work on things I really enjoy. I count myself lucky to have that opportunity.

**CRMN:** What happens when a Stay Her Appetite is played on a Noble Hound? Does he continuously chase his tail? Does time

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## Focus On: *Craig "Ichabod" O'Brien*

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stop? Will Beavis ever score?

**Craig:** Despite the fact that I'm a cat person, and not a dog person, I will answer this question to the best of my ability. I would say that during the attack the ally ceases to be an ally controlled by that character. Otherwise, you could tap the ally to give the character +1 prowess to the character against the ally's attack. Therefore, the strike just gets assigned to the character.

**CRMN:** What is your favorite book or author?

**Craig:** That depends. My favorite entertaining book, that I just read for fun, is *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, by Heinlein. My favorite artistic book, that I read for the beauty of the writing, is *As I Lay Dying*, by Faulkner. My favorite author is Lois McMaster Bujold. For extra credit, my favorite play is Hamlet, and my two favorite movies are A Clockwork Orange and The Maltese Falcon.

**CRMN:** Who is your favorite artist and why?

**Craig:** Lichtenstein. No real reason, I just like looking at his stuff. I am also a big fan of Will Eisner and

Frank Miller. Their ability to tell a story through images, words, and layouts is a pure joy to watch unfold.

**CRMN:** How did you get the nickname "Ichabod"?

**Craig:** It's my pledge name. The frat brothers who came up with it originally wanted it to be "Ichabob," which is the name of a candle they thought I looked like. During the confusion of the ceremony, it turned into Ichabod, probably because most of the brothers thought I looked like Ichabod Crane. (For non-Americans, Ichabod Crane is a tall skinny school teacher in the American folktale *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, who is cursed by the Headless Horseman.)

As it turns out, that is not the origin of the name Ichabod. I was in Theory of Religion class, and my professor was shocked that I wanted to be called Ichabod. Knowing he was a biblical scholar, I looked in my Bible's index. Turns out that Phineas led the Israelites into battle with the Philistines, with the Ark of the Covenant at the head of the army. The Philistines won, stole the Ark of the Covenant, and killed Phineas. When Phineas' wife learned of this, she went into labor

and died in childbirth on the spot. They held the baby up, calling him Ichabod (which means "no glory"), saying all glory has left Israel.

Apparently, the more contemporary translation of Ichabod in Hebrew is "disrespect." Despite all of that, I think that Ichabod, with all of its connotations, describes me as well, if not better, than my given name of Craig.

That's it for this edition of Focus On. Thanks as always to Craig "Ichabod" O'Brien for taking the time to answer my questions. I hope you learned as much as I did, and are looking forward to next issue, when I interview Nathan Bruinooge, one of the top 4 finalists for the US Championship and a competitor in last season's World Championship in Barcelona, Spain. In my experience Nathan is one of the better players I have had the opportunity to play. Stay tuned!



A Little Gold Ring by Audrey Corman ©1997 ICE



Helms of Iron by Audrey Corman ©1996 ICE



Dwarven Ring of Durin's Tribe by Audrey Corman ©1997 ICE

## Card Review: *Flatter a Foe vs Riddling Talk*

James Kight

### Flatter a Foe

Hero Resource Short-Event

**Flattery attempt.** *Playable on a character whose company is facing an attack of the type listed below.* Character makes an influence check (modified by his unused direct influence and +2 if a diplomat). If successful, the attack is cancelled and the hazard limit for the character's company is decreased by two. This influence check is successful if the result is greater than: 10 against a Dragon; 11 against Men or Drakes; 12 against Trolls, Orcs, Elves and Giants.

### Riddling Talk

Hero Resource Short-Event

**Riddling Attempt.** *Playable on a character whose company is facing an attack of the type listed below.* Character makes a roll (or draw a #) modified by: +2 for each sage and +1 for each Hobbit in his company. If the result is greater than: 8 against Dragons and Drakes, 10 against Men and Giants, 12 against Slayers, Awakened Plants, Orcs, Spiders, and Trolls; then name a card and opponent must reveal his hand. If the named card is in opponent's hand, the creature's card is discarded (all of its attacks are cancelled) and the hazard limit against the character's company is decreased by three.



Well, isn't that a mouthful? Of all the cancellation cards I see, these two are by far the most underrated. Most people do not play with these cards because there is no guarantee that the

actual attack will be cancelled. Concealment on the other hand is automatic (unless your opponent cancels your cancel card, like with Many Sorrows Befall).

Is a guarantee absolutely necessary? With these cards, perhaps not. Considering the number of creatures that these cards can cancel, it might be worth your while to consider putting them in your deck. Let's take a look first of all at Flatter a Foe.

Flatter a Foe does not require a particular character, but you will obviously get your best results with a diplomat who has a few points of direct influence available. Your wizard is a PRIME candidate for this card. If he has anything over 5 DI, this card can play pretty much like Vanishment, but without the annoying corruption check. As an added bonus, it reduces the hazard limit by two.

Example: Pallando is travelling with Gimli and Legolas to the Iron Hill Dwarf Hold from Lorien. Legolas is under Pallando, giving Pallando 4 points of free direct influence. Your opponent decides to pound you with a Cave Worm. Yikes! We'll play Flatter a Foe and see what happens. You decide to target Pallando with Flatter a Foe, and figure that his bonuses from direct

influence and being a diplomat is a total of +6. So to cancel the Cave Worm, Pallando needs to roll greater than 5. You roll a 7, and the Cave Worm trots off to your opponent's discard pile feeling much better about his ego. Meanwhile, Pallando is still untapped, and your hazard limit has now been reduced from 3 to 1, which also means that your opponent cannot play any more hazards on Pallando's company. Wasn't that fun?

The ability to do two things with one card is very hard to discount. Efficiency like that can help speed up your deck and allow you room for other cards. What people might be afraid of with cards like Flatter a Foe is the chance of failing the dice roll. Since Flatter a Foe is an influence attempt, cards like A Friend or Three or Gifts Given of Old can be used to help this roll.

Riddling Talk, on the other hand, works in a much different way. With Riddling Talk, the help comes from your party make-up, not any one character's skills. The premise is the same, but this time you are depending on all the sages and Hobbits in your company to help you spin the riddling yarns that will (hopefully) confuse your enemy. Like Flatter a Foe, Riddling Talk does not require a particular character, but you won't get far without any sages or Hobbits.

Neither of these cards specifically require any particular skill or character type. Anyone can play them. No scouts like Concealment, no rangers

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## Card Review: *Flatter a Foe vs Riddling Talk (cont.)*

(Continued from page 7)

like Crept Along Cleverly, but a reminder: neither of these cards automatically cancel an attack.

Continuing with our look at Riddling Talk, we see that the numbers needed to cancel the attack have wider ranges than Flatter a Foe. The idea being that the greater the ego, the easier it is to fool the creature with riddling talk. Sounds sort of like a politician, right?

Another difference with Riddling Talk is that even if you successfully roll the right number, you then need to name a card in your opponent's hand in order to cancel the attack. Since this is a hero card, my suggestion would be to start playing either Secret News or Rolled Down to the Sea, or any of the other peek-a-boo cards. If you then name a card in your opponent's hand, the creature's card is discarded and all of its attacks are cancelled. However, Riddling Talk does not specify that the attack cannot be cancelled if it is an automatic attack, so one would assume that all of the attacks against such an automatic attack would also be cancelled. Currently, there is no errata for Riddling Talk. (Using common sense, each Riddling Talk would only affect 1 automatic attack.) In addition, to the attacks being cancelled, the hazard limit is reduced by three, not just two. Let's go through another example:

You currently have a company with Celeborn, Frodo, Gandalf, and Beorn. Once again you are headed to the great white north, but this time you are trying to make it to Gold Hill. Along the way, Itangast takes offense and decides to convince you that a visit would be a bad idea. To which you say..."That reminds me of a story.." You play Riddling Talk. Gandalf decides to try his luck with Itangast, and counts his bonuses first.

Celeborn and Gandalf are both sages, and Frodo is a Hobbit, for a total of +5. Gandalf only needs a 4 or better to successfully confuse Itangast. Gandalf rolls a lucky 7. "But wait, oh powerful worm," says Gandalf, "if you are attacking us, who is guarding your hoard?" The powerful worm isn't so easily dismissed and demands further proof. "If you're so sure that my hoard is unprotected," asks the scaled one, "who or what is foolish enough to try to grab my hoard while I am away?"

Now comes the tricky part. Gandalf pulls the secret envelope from his pocket and breaks the seal that reads "For Your Eyes Only." Inside he sees a crude sketch of a Cave-worm, and turns the paper around so that Itangast can see for himself. (You, the player, have guessed that your opponent is playing a Dragon/Drake strategy, and try your luck guessing that he is holding a Cave-worm.)

Realizing his error, Itangast bellows a tremendous 'DOH!' and goes flying to the discard pile to protect his precious hoard. (What do you know, he was holding a Cave-worm!) Meanwhile, the party travels the rest of the way to Gold Hill unmolested since the hazard limit is now reduced by three, thereby eliminating the chance for any more hazards from your opponent.

A particularly witty sage or Hobbit or diplomat can nimbly talk his way out of most hazards with either of these cards. However, there are creatures that these cards do not affect.

Flatter a Foe does not affect: Undead, Awakened Plants, Hobbits, Dunedan, Maia, Spiders, Wolves, Animals, Pukel-anything, Slayers or a Balrog.

Riddling Talk does not affect: Undead, Hobbits, Dunedan, Elves, Maia, Wolves, Pukel-anything, Animals or a

Balrog (that makes sense...try to convince a Balrog that his shoes are untied).

The inclusion of these cards will in some way dictate which characters you include in your starting company. Cirdan and Dain II are prime examples for Flatter a Foe. For Riddling Talk, Bilbo remains a main candidate. After all, the card does represent his riddling with Gollum and Smaug. As long as you are including Bilbo, a good support group would include Thranduil, Sam, Glorfindel or perhaps some other scout/sage (which would justify the play of other scout cancellation cards).

If you think that these cards are not quite powerful enough on their own, consider this: no one has to tap to play either of these cards. My favorite support for any resource strategy I play is an untapping strategy. I play cards like And Forth He Hastened, Hundreds of Butterflies, Cram, Jewel of Beleriand, etc. Flatter a Foe and Riddling Talk would both allow me to cancel an attack without tapping. Also, with Riddling Talk, if you don't manage to guess a card correctly the first time, you at least get a good look at your opponent's hand for the next time that you play Riddling Talk. The metagaming aspect of these cards is definitely a factor. Why would your opponent waste a creature if he knew that you were going to flatter it? It will at least give your opponent pause.

Still, any help for either of these cards would be nice if your characters don't quite have the skills you need. If you need a boost for your Riddling Talk, you might consider playing Wit, which modifies one riddling roll by +3, and can be played on your opponent's turn if such is needed (such as when your opponent might play The

(Continued on page 9)

## Card Review: *Flatter a Foe vs Riddling Talk (cont.)*

(Continued from page 8)  
Riddle Game on his turn).

One of the things to think about when using these cards in conjunction with other resources is all of the other cancellation cards that are available. Concealment, Trickery, Dark Quarrels, Dragon's Hunger...the list goes on and on. Obviously, you aren't going to use every one of these, but you do have a choice.

For the expert player, another area to discuss concerning these cards is hazard etiquette when playing against a deck that is using Flatter a Foe and Riddling Talk. How do you avoid the reduction of the hazard limit?

There are a few things to remember, among them: try playing your creature hazards later in the movement/hazard phase. Play your non-cancelable cards first, such as corruption, permanent events, short-events,

etc. Then, play your creature cards. Regardless of what you play, cancellation of the creature is a distinct possibility. This way, if they do cancel your creature, at least you still could consider it a decent hazard turn.

Keep in mind which creatures are and which creatures are not affected by Flatter a Foe and Riddling Talk (see page 8 for an example listing). As convenient as both of these cards are, especially against the more common of the hazard strategies, they are sitting ducks if you play creatures that your opponent cannot affect. Learn to time your hazard play around cards like these. Expect your opponent to want to play these cards first in order to reduce the remaining hazard limit. Gates of Morning/Many Turns and Doublings is another combo to watch for when timing your hazards effectively.

Even if you are playing creatures that

these cards can cancel, there are ways around the reduction of the hazard limit. How about Two or Three Tribes Present? If he is canceling your men hazards, dump them out of your hand with this card and run him out of cancelers. And when he does run out, you can keep playing men (or spiders, or trolls, or whatever you declare with Two or Three Tribes Present).

Well, I hope you have learned as much about these cards as I have in the past few weeks. Having seen first hand how these cards can shut down a hazard strategy, my respect for them has increased tenfold.

Next issue, we will be reviewing Twilight, a much-maligned card, but a pivotal one. Twilight is the only card that can be played at any time, during any player's turn. Stay with us!

## Survey Question: Responses and This Issue's Question

*James Kight*

I have the responses to last issue's survey question: "What is the Worst Card Ever Printed?"

Some people voted for most abusive card, some people voted for worst playable card, and some people voted for the worst card art. I was really asking for worst playable card, but was intrigued with the responses I received. There are probably some cards on this list that you did not consider. There were for me anyway.

I did not show how many people voted for a particular card. I should really disqualify region cards, but since people voted for them, I will include them.

The cards are:

CARD	REASON
Lost in Borderlands	Not enough borderlands
Which Might be Lies	Hoses stored info
Region Cards	'nuff said
Orc-Mounts	Too obscure
Foul-Smelling Paste	Worst Art
Fell Turtle	Too useless
Wizard's Fire	-4 cc for only one strike
Morannon	Too useless
Lidless Eye	Too powerful
Anduin River	Too useless
Words of Power & Terror	Too useless
Elf-Lord Revealed in Wrath	Too powerful
Washed and Refreshed	Generally useless
Huorn	Useless (no enhancers)
Gift of Comprehension	Useless ability
Lure of Nature	Too powerful
Mouth of Sauron	Too powerful
Horses	Generally sucks

As you can see, there are as many answers as there are possibilities. Feel free to argue or discuss why your card is worse than any others printed here.

This issue's question is just as subjective.

What card do you think should have errata (that currently does not), why do you think it needs errata, and how would you fix it?

Send any responses to me either by email or by snail mail.

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Survey Question  
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## Featured Artist - Audrey Corman

*James Kight*

This issue's featured artist is Audrey Corman. Audrey has done such fantastic work for Middle Earth such as Thor's Map, Aiglos, Orcrist, Glamdring, Black Mace, Bow of Alatar, The Lidless Eye, The Iron Crown (minion version), and many, many others. I spoke with her recently and asked if she would be interested in an interview. She was extremely pleasant and surprised by the interview request. Believe it or not, this is her first interview, but as you will see, she did just fine.

**CRMN:** Give us a brief look into your background...(bio, school, etc...)

**Audrey:** I was born and raised in the Bronx, New York, and after entering Lehman College as an art major at age fifteen, I eventually graduated with a chemistry degree. Not only did my parents eventually convince me that being an artist is a very difficult way to make a living, but the art faculty was doing its best to convince me that realistic/fantasy paintings were somehow not art. After moving to Connecticut to work as a research chemist, I began attending night classes at the Rhode Island School of Design and gradually picked up where I left off.

**CRMN:** How did you get started as an artist?

**Audrey:** Serendipity. I was taking private airbrushing lessons when ICE asked my instructor for leads to new

artists for their first Middle Earth Card Game. Knowing I was interested, he recommended me and a few others. Although I didn't have much of a portfolio at the time, Jason Hawkins, the assistant art director for the project, was willing to give me a chance. He gave me two test pieces and my career took off from there!

**CRMN:** What other things do you do besides art?

**Audrey:** I'm still a research chemist, but in my (ha, ha) spare time, I practice kung fu and fencing. I'm also in the Society for Creative Anachronism (mostly as a fighter, cook and brewer) and last, but not least, I enjoy gaming. Both my husband and I are avid readers.

**CRMN:** Many readers and players have said that your artwork has quite a sense of realism to it. How do you manage to bring that forward with your art?

**Audrey:** I think it's my preoccupation with details (the same thing that got me in trouble during my original art school years!)

**CRMN:** Which artists (if any) inspired you to begin art for yourself?

**Audrey:** I would have to say the cover artists for Dragon Magazine, which

eventually led me to drooling over the art of Boris Vallejo, the Hildebrandts, and Michael Whelan from fantasy novel covers.

**CRMN:** If you had to pick a favorite piece of your own work, which would it be? (doesn't have to be anything related to Middle Earth)

**Audrey:** I know everybody expects me to say Thor's Map, but as I keep creating new pieces and get better at my work, I find new favorites. Right now, I would have to say the Bow of Alatar from Middle Earth: the White Hand.

**CRMN:** Are there any current artists whose work you enjoy?

**Audrey:** There are so many fantasy artists out there now with so many different styles that I find it hard to pick just a few. If you press me, I'd have to say Donato [Giancola], Keith Parkinson, Quinton Hoover, and Omar Rayyan to name

a few.

**CRMN:** Go through an example piece of art from conception to completion...

**Audrey:** Here we go in stepwise fashion:

1. Sit on the couch until an idea comes to me. If an idea doesn't come, go to kung fu class and beat on somebody.

2. Set up a still life for perspective and shadow, or begin searching through my vast collection of reference material. Start sketching. Keep sketching. Sketch more. Throw away sketches. Pick one - move on.

(Continued on page 11)



The Iron Crown by Audrey Corman © 1997 ICE



Bow of Alatar by Audrey Corman © 1997 ICE



The Lidless Eye by Audrey Corman © 1997 ICE

Featured Artist: *Audrey Corman (cont.)*

(Continued from page 10)

3. Transfer final (ha!) sketch to illustration board.

4. Start filling in basic colors working from background to foreground.

5. Start working in form, shadows, and finally details.

6. Voile. Done. Sleep.

**CRMN:** For a Middle Earth piece, how much leeway are you given to put your own inspiration into the art?

**Audrey:** For the Middle Earth card sets, it can vary from piece to piece. Sometimes the art directors have something very specific in mind, and sometimes I just get a title and a quote from the books. Generally, I will do a sketch, sometimes two, and send it to them for approval. Usually only a few minor changes will be required, though occasionally I will have to throw away a sketch and start over from square one.

**CRMN:** What is your favorite medium for art: sketches, airbrush, oil? (etc.)

**Audrey:** I would love to be able to do all my work in oils. It's a medium that easily lends itself to blending and shading particularly for flesh tones, still allowing for details. Unfortunately, even when using driers, the



The Ithil-Stone by Audrey Corman © 1997 ICE

time required to complete a piece is more than I usually have. For the most part, I do my work in acrylic gouache because of its opacity, matte finish, and of course fast-drying time. I supplement this with airbrushing, particularly when the deadline is very close.

**CRMN:** What is your favorite fantasy



Cram by Audrey Corman © 1996 ICE

character?

**Audrey:** My favorite character would have to be Elric of Melnibone from Michael Moorcock's novels.

**CRMN:** Which would you rather have: Luck or Talent?

**Audrey:** I would much prefer talent. Good luck can occasionally get you in the door, but it's your talent that sustains you and has people coming back for more. Of course, a large slice of both wouldn't be unwelcome.

My thanks to Audrey Corman for taking time out from her busy schedule to give me this interview. I must say that she was extremely pleasant to speak with and very talented to boot!

Next issue will feature my interview with Liz Danforth. Liz has quite a bit to say, as you will see if you stay with us for the next issue!

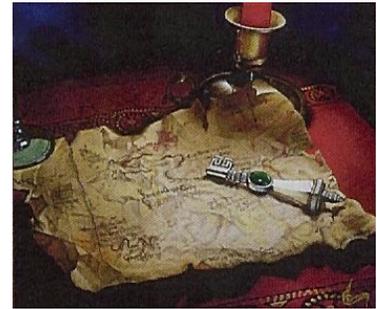


Glandring by Audrey Corman © 1995 ICE

Feel free to peruse the rest of the issue and examine some of Audrey's other works. As you can see, she has brought to us some of the more realistic art in the game! It's easy to see why she is one of the most recognizable artists for MECCG.



Orcrest by Audrey Corman © 1996 ICE



Thor's Map by Audrey Corman © 1996 ICE

## Deck Tip: *Fallen-Radagast*

*James Kight*

This issue we focus our attention to one of the Istari, and one of the 4 who went their own way to follow their own destiny instead of help the peoples of Middle Earth. One of the more popular wizards to play in MECCG, Radagast truly hits his stride when he concentrates on his own agenda. Having played Radagast for a number of years, I see in Middle Earth: The White Hand his potential somewhat expanded. Radagast has always been a lover of birds and beasts, and has fought hard to protect them from the evils of Sauron. With MEWH he now has the tools to bring his plans to fruition.

To begin with, Radagast himself has changed. His GI when in play is 22, and his direct influence is reduced to 5. He no longer gets a corruption check bonus of +1, but he does retain his card-drawing ability. Being a fallen wizard, all points unless modified are worth 1. Radagast's hero allies are worth full points, and they have no movement restrictions. His unique factions that are neither Man, Dwarf, Dunadan, Hobbit, Orc nor Troll are worth 2 points. The factions that come to mind are Ents of Fangorn, Elves of Lindon, Wood-Elves, The Great Eagles, Wargs of the Forochel, Misty Mountain Wargs, White Mountain Wolves, any Dragon faction and any Wose faction.

Most Fallen-Wizard decks require some set-up, taking anywhere from 5 to 10 turns to get the ball rolling, although admittedly, if they stick around this long, they are usually rolling pretty good. Fallen-Radagast is one of those exceptions to the rule. A good Fallen-Radagast deck rarely requires that much set-up. Most of the points that a player would be concerned with (allies and factions) have

been dealt with on Fallen-Radagast himself. Items aren't that much of a concern to a Fallen-Radagast deck, and kill points are rarely an issue.

Radagast starts with his own protected Wizardhaven, something the other wizards need to spend some time to set up. This automatically allows you to play certain stage resources that require a protected Wizardhaven without the worry of including the set-up cards in your deck. Plain and simple, Radagast is an ally-puking madman. His ability to bring in allies is second to none. With cards like Friend of Secret Things, An Untimely Brood and Glove of Radagast, you are bound to get at least one ally a turn.

The main card for Radagast in the scheme of things is the Girdle of Radagast. This card represents his domination over the animal kingdom and his ability to swing nature to his cause. With a protected Wizardhaven, 12 stage points, and 6 allies and/or unique factions in play, this card gives you 5 bonus points for being so successful, and turns the Wizardhaven's region and all adjacent regions into wilderness. That's good for card drawing, eh? You betcha.

Another thing going for Fallen-Radagast is his shapeshifter cards. Depending on the situation at hand, Radagast and his shapeshifter cards should be able to put you in good shape to handle the situation. When moving Radagast, prepare him with Master of Shapes. Radagast becomes a 9/10, and his skills are Warrior/Ranger. In addition, he only suffers a -1 prowess penalty when not tapping to face a strike. His GI rises to 25, and his DI lowers to 1. If you are stranded somewhere and need to get to the "other side of the map", play Winged Change-Master and fly there. Radagast becomes a 3/9 and has the skills of

Scout/Diplomat. While in this form Radagast can move to a new site with no region maximum, he has no site path, **and** he is considered to move through no regions. His DI is lowered to 19, and his GI raised to 8. If you don't plan to move your wizard, play Shifter of Hues. Radagast becomes a 6/10, has the skills of Warrior/Diplomat, and can hold an extra card in his hand. In addition, he can tap to give +2 to the corruption checks of the characters in one company through your next organization phase if they are moving with at least one wilderness in their site path. With all the shapeshifter cards, Radagast can bear, but may not use, items.

Another card affecting Radagast's ally-playing ability, Glove of Radagast allows you to continue to play non-unique 1 mind allies at his current site. The allies that are affected include: Noble Hound, War-Warg, War-Wolf, Great Bats, Regiment of Black Crows and Noble Steed. Who says you can't go around with a bunch of pets? This card also allows you to pull this ally from your discard pile as well. There are times when you have to discard such an ally when you aren't quite ready to play it, and it otherwise would clog your hand. This card lets you use your discard pile as another hand that holds your smaller allies until you need or wish to play them.

Pocketed Robes allows Radagast to dig into the discard pile to retrieve either a Crept Along Cleverly (a fantastic cancellation card), Wizard's River Horses (for those annoying attacks and Nazgul permanent events), or Herb-Lore (a Radagast-specific resource that lets you heal AND untap all characters in his company during the org-phase if he taps when this is in play).

*(Continued on page 13)*

## Deck Tip: *Fallen Radagast (cont.)*

*(Continued from page 12)*

A perfect ally for Radagast, Radagast's Black Bird can protect himself in just about all situations, and is an influencer besides. With his 3 DI and his ability to influence factions, this Black Bird can bring in factions if Radagast is tapped, and leave him free to play other things if he isn't. Much more conveniently, he can cancel any strike directed at him, tapping afterwards, if not already. This also means that he can continue to cancel such strikes even when tapped. One of the frustrating things about allies is when their controller leaves play, they leave play too. Not so with the Black Bird. He can return to your hand if this happens and save you the trouble of having to recycle your deck to get him back out.

The important thing to keep track of when playing a Fallen-Radagast deck, or any Fallen-Wizard deck, is turn management. Since most Fallen-Wiz decks require some set-up, you need to build your deck around the basic theory of playability. Don't build a deck that moves too slow, or by the time the game ends, you won't have half the cards you need in play. This goes for hazard construction too (see Issue #1 for hazard construction tips). A deck that continuously plays cards each turn is an efficient deck and will do much to get you the win. Getting in huge points occasionally isn't as effective as constantly bringing in lesser points each turn. With Radagast, this is entirely possible, even when he is by himself.

One card that my decks rarely go without is And Forth He Hastened. This can get you unbelievable turn management. If you are moving to a site, and have to tap to face a creature, all is not lost with this card. Most people like to jump the gun with this card and untap as soon as possible, but

in my opinion, that is wasting a good card. You could be opening yourself up to another hazard that might tap you, or if you are in the site phase, you will have to face that attack untapped (if at such a site). Better to only take a -1 to prowess when facing such an automatic-attack and untap afterwards.

The ranger skill is a defensive one to be sure, and can often keep those tapping cards at bay. River can stop any company without a ranger. How about Enchanted Stream? How about Enchanted Stream followed up with River? Yuck. Two Rivers? Hideous. Hundreds of Butterflies and And Forth He Hastened can keep Radagast lean and mean.

If you happen to make it to the site phase without being tapped, And Forth He Hastened can let you do multiple things each turn which translates into effective turn management. Since Radagast can use Friend of Secret Things, you can feel free to bring in a faction and an ally each turn or even two allies. The sites that such would be possible are Dol Amroth, Wellinghall, Eagles Eyrie, Bree, Bag End, Minas Tirith, Old Forest, etc.

For the expert player, there are a number of deck strategies that would allow you to take full advantage of Radagast's abilities and cards. It depends upon the angle you are most comfortable with and what opponent you are playing.

Against a hero player, you will most likely see the most popular allies, which may include Tom Bombadil, Goldberry, Gollum, Quickbeam and maybe Shadowfax. With Radagast's ability to bring in allies must faster than usual, you may want to attempt to get your allies first, and then move around to get your other points. Being able to move even your movement re-

stricted allies anywhere that Radagast goes should allow you the freedom to decide for yourself how you go about your points instead of having to wait until the last round to get your allies because of the potential to get stuck.

There are quite a number of allies that some players in my experience have forgotten in recent play, or have overlooked because of their movement restriction. Gwaihir, Skinbark, Shadowfax, Leaflock, Mistress Lobelia, and Nenselde the Wingild. There are quite a number of other allies, but these are the ones that come to mind.

Because of Radagast's ability to move his allies around, Mistress Lobelia can become one of the more powerful cards in the game for him, allowing her to dig up any card playable at her current site. The trick is to keep her untapped in order to do so. As I have stated before, this is where Hundreds of Butterflies and And Forth He Hastened can come in so handy. Mistress Lobelia can allow you to keep some of your resources in your sideboard, and when Radagast comes out, to begin to cycle those into your discard pile. Then when Mistress Lobelia is available, she can dig them out and allow them to be played whenever you are at the relevant site.

On the other hand, if your main goal is to get Girdle of Radagast out, you may want to concentrate on the areas around his Wizardhaven (Rhosgobel). Many of the factions playable in this area that Radagast would be interested in are some of the more popular ones, so be careful when you pull them in to stay aware and keep track of your general influence. Thankfully, Radagast's natural general influence can help there too. Even considering all his shapeshifter cards, his general influence never drops below 19. His

*(Continued on page 14)*

Deck Tip: *Fallen-Radagast (cont.)*

(Continued from page 13)

natural GI is 25, so for the most part you should be safe.

When playing against a Fallen-Radagast, it is important to remember the weaknesses inherent in this type of deck. Radagast is more susceptible to corruption, his allies can be discarded with cards like Reluctant Final Parting, and he has a tendency to wander around by himself, making him even more susceptible to cards like Lure of Nature.

This can be devastating if you can play cards like Assassin, or any of the

various drakes or dragons when he is unprepared. A Fallen-Wizard deck shuts down almost to a grinding halt when their wizard is no longer in the game. All of the cards that require the wizard to have any effect are now useless baggage in such a deck.

If you are playing against a Fallen-Wizard deck, your target should become the wizard. The sooner you can take the wizard out of play, the slower their deck will become. One of the more annoying things about Fallen-Wiz decks is their need to recycle and the dependency on the sidebar. Put

out a Bane of the Ithil-Stone and watch them squirm.

Overall, I think that this new version of Radagast turns an already-keen wizard into a virtual powerhouse. For what reason you may ask? Speed and the ability to adapt. Plain and simple, Radagast's combo of card draw and shapeshifting put him head and shoulders above the other Wizards in my opinion.

Next Issue: The Sidebar!

MECCG Quiz: How well do you know the MECCG cards?

Spencer Carney

Try this small quiz to test your MECCG Knowledge. More questions forthcoming in the next issue! Answers on page 19.

- Which one of the following two-character companies has all five skills?  
A. Elrond-Gandalf  
B. Aragorn-Arwen  
C. Thorin-Thrain  
D. Cirdan-Annalena
- Which one of the following is a 5 point faction?  
A. hero Easterlings  
B. Ice Orcs  
C. Leucaruth Roused  
D. hero Nurniags
- Which of the following sites is not adjacent to an under-deeps site?  
A. Cirith Ungol  
B. Dunharrow  
C. Cirith Gorgor  
D. Mount Gram
- Assuming he is untapped and carrying no weapons, what is Elrond's prowess/body when Vilya resolves?  
A. 10/9  
B. 11/9  
C. 10/11  
D. 11/11
- How many hero characters were released in the Middle Earth: Dark Minions expansion?  
A. none  
B. one  
C. eight  
D. more than ten
- Which of the following hero sites does not have a detainment auto attack?

- Nurniag Camp  
B. Raider Hold  
C. Gobel Mirlond  
D. Worthy Hills
- Which of the following conditions will not increase your hand size?  
A. revealing Pallando  
B. having a character bear the Emerald of Doriath  
C. having Cirdan at the Grey Havens  
D. having a sage tap the Book of Mazarbul
- Which of the following corruption cards requires the highest roll to remove?  
A. Alone and Unadvised  
B. Lure of Nature  
C. Dispair of the Heart  
D. Lure of Expedience
- Which of the following creatures has the highest prowess?  
A. Ren the Unclean  
B. Uvatha the Horseman  
C. Ice Drake  
D. Cave Worm
- Which orc is the only sage?  
A. Euog  
B. Doeth  
C. Shagrat  
D. Lieutenant of Dol Guldur
- Which of the following can be turned into an ally with Ready to His Will?  
A. Elf Lord  
B. Ent in Search of the Entwives  
C. Lord of the Carrock  
D. Lord of the Haven
- Which of the following is the only non-unique hero Greater-item?  
A. Durin's Axe  
B. Valiant Sword  
C. Wizard's Staff

- Wizard's Ring
- Which of the following are not hero and minion equivalents?  
A. Lucky Search and Catch an Elusive Scent  
B. Crooked Promptings and New Friendship  
C. Far Sight and All Thought Bent Upon It  
D. Morgul-Knife and Morgul-Blade
- Which of the following hero sites does not have an orc auto attack?  
A. Carn-Dum  
B. Cirith Ungol  
C. Dimrill Dale  
D. Minas Morgul
- Which of the following regions contains no sites?  
A. Mouths of the Anduin  
B. Nurn  
C. Bay of Belfalas  
D. Heart of Mirkwood
- Which of the following allies has more than one skill?  
A. Gollum  
B. Lindion the Oronin  
C. Tom Bombadil  
D. Radagast's Black Bird

Good luck! And no peeking!  
If you get stuck, the answers are on Page 19.

## Ruminations: *Errata This!*

*James Kight*

As long as I am interviewing the gentleman who issues errata for MECCG, I might as well put down my thoughts about errata. I have different thoughts concerning errata and the reasoning behind what should or should not be fixed. For the most part, I believe as most everyone else does (that I have spoken to), that errata should be issued very sparingly.

If you haven't already been subjected to the CRF or Collected Rulings File, you are in for a treat. Printed directly from the official CRF web page, it tops in at about 62 pages single-sided. How do you think a new player plans on taking all of that in before their first game? They aren't. It's almost like introducing your body to a poison so that you will eventually become immune; first you take in the tiniest amount, and gradually up your dosage until you become immune. The same goes for the rules for MECCG; you introduce them a little at a time and eventually you get to the CRF and say "Well, you know all that stuff we just went over about the game? Here are all the exceptions and changes...see you in two weeks."

Granted, when first designing a game, there is no way that the designers can take into account the resourcefulness of the player. No matter how deep you think the rules are, someone somewhere is going to find a hole. As time goes on, hopefully such experience will give the designers the insight to understand their players and what areas to consider when designing each set. Is that always going to happen? Not really, but it's nice to think it's on the mind of those who design the game. It probably is, but they are only a limited number...it's the playtesters whose job it is to purposefully try to break the cards or find the loopholes.

I always wondered what playtesters were like...overactive imaginations, sadistic little monkeys going for the kill with each card...but hey, they are just like us. The good thing about playtesters is just that, testing the cards and mechanics before they are released to find any bugs that can be fixed beforehand. The bad thing about playtesters is that they are for the most part gamers just like us...they get excited about cards just like we do, and sometimes the excitement of playing a particularly powerful card can hinder the objective view that might say "This card might just be too powerful," or "This card's mechanics complicates the rest of the rules." Playtesters are supposed to have the killer instinct and unabashedness that would allow them to thrash otherwise weak or overpowerful cards.

Hey, if I saw Vilya for the first time, I would be excited too. And everyone was when it came out, believe me. Vilya was played to death. Eventually ICE recognized that its abilities (especially as compared to the other elven rings) was a bit out of hand. So how does a company like ICE implement playtesting to find such kinks and still manage to get the product out on time? That's a good question. And I would imagine that it is a matter of give and take. Not every kink is going to be found, and that's where errata comes in (supposedly).

Those kinks that escape the playtesters come under even more scrutiny when we as players get our hand on the product. Sometimes these kinks don't rear their heads until a heavy amount of play ferrets them out. Sometimes they never come about. Most of the time though we find them in short order. Examples that I can think of that were mentioned by Ichabod as well as some others: Rebuild the Town, Vilya, Twilight, Veils Flung

Away, etc. Occasionally, errata will be issued because of an oversight or a clerical error (like Huorn or Wolves). This to me isn't as earth shattering, and can be handled much easier.

Rarer still is the errata that is issued to address a simulation imbalance. The most infamous is the dragon-hoard ruling. For months, it was decided that a hoard disappeared as soon as manifestation of the dragon connected with that site was killed. This prevented the play of hoard items during the site phase when a player happened to kill the dragon whose site they were headed to. Errata has been issued recently that reverses this ruling and dictates that a hoard site retains its hoard status to the end of any turn in which the site retained its automatic-attack. (Killing a dragon removes the auto-attack from the related site.)

Eventually, all this errata has to be cleaned up by either reprinting the cards in question (another shameless plug for MECCG 2nd edition) or changing the rules inherent in the game. Either way, it's a daunting task. Once you start issuing errata, it's a hard road to leave. Personally, I think that most of this errata can fix itself eventually with adjustments in play by the players. Once they see a potential crack in the system, they usually try to plug it up themselves, and only if it gets out of hand do they petition the game designers for any sort of respite..

In my opinion, the best way to fix all of this errata is to address the issue before the sets are released. Take the playtesters to task and keep them focused on the reason they are playtesting. Think of ways that cards can become problems when they are designed. Not every aspect of Tolkien's

*(Continued on page 16)*

## Ruminations: *Errata This! (cont.)*

(Continued from page 15)

world needs a card. Sometimes this creates problems with mechanics.

Most recently, the agent rulings have become, quite frankly, a fiasco. To this day, agents remain the single most difficult aspect of playing MECCG even for experienced players. The more expansions are released, the more havoc they can cause. After going through all the trouble of explaining how agents work, how they can attack, and how they can influence, we now have the most recent ruling that agents attacking minions are considered detainment in all cases. I personally don't think this will have too much of an effect on the game, but I also think that this ruling could have been avoided...or at least delayed for some time.

As far as I can tell, only two or three agents were effectively damaging to minions: Anarin, Golodhros, and the Grimburgoth. The latter two could attack minion companies moving to Minas Morgul and Dul Guldur respectively. Now, I don't play minions that much, but it wouldn't appear to have that much of an impact on the game as a whole. From what I understand, most of these agent strategies came about as a result of the success of the minion "squatter decks" that sat in Mordor to gather their points and restricted the play of effective hazards. Believe me from experience, these decks are beyond annoying; effective, but annoying. I personally don't fault anyone for playing such a deck, as the cards and rules allow such combinations, but I don't think that the recent ruling should be issued in order to hamper those smart enough to figure out an effective countermeasure to those squatter decks. On the surface, it appears as though the players had found their own antidote for a hard-to-play deck style.

A good analogy to this style of point and counter-point is the number of rulings and anti-One Ring cards that are on the scene today. Admittedly, I played The One Ring deck for almost two solid years until it was just a matter of watching each set just to see which cards I would add to my already tough deck. Sooner or later, the anti-ring cards would have to appear in order to bring about more balance. I was a little put out at first, but then I realized that it really was too easy to dunk the ring, especially in the emerging 2-deck style prevalent at the 1997 US Nationals.

In this case, there was more than enough time given for players to try to work out an effective counter-measure to the One Ring deck style, and as it turned out, only the anti-ring cards (The Ring Will Have But One Master, Short Legs Are Slow, Rolled Down to the Sea, etc.) and the Gorgoroth ruling had any noticeable effect on the play of One Ring Decks. I stopped playing them cold. Only occasionally do you see them in tournaments, and their success probably owes more to opponent's inexperience vs Ring decks than to anything inherent in the deck itself.

The point is, if there is going to be errata, there should be enough time first to allow players to attempt their own solutions to the problems before reactionary errata or rulings are issued, which I feel is the case with the current Agent rulings. Honestly, I have just gotten used to agents in the first place.

I suppose that this is the best example of how difficult it is to design a game where every possible angle is covered. It just isn't going to happen. I just hope that the designers and playtesters are doing their best to catch some of these kinks to begin with, and if not, that they allow the players a chance to

fix them on their own before they change gears and go a completely different direction. It's hard enough these days to keep up with each and every new card and rule that comes out and its effect on the game as a whole. Without a 2nd Edition, I don't see how this is going to get any easier for the new players.

**Article Update:** I've just recently spoken with Mike Reynolds of ICE and have gotten the word that they are officially contemplating a Revised MECCG game sometime in the next year. Of the ideas being discussed, rules simplification was foremost. They seem to be very interested in eliminating most of the rules complications. Basically, if it is an unnecessary rule or card, it will be eliminated. They realize that the learning curve is very often a negative selling point in bringing new players into the game, and their goal is just that, to bring more players into the game.

There was also mention of reprinting the commonly used cards such as Marvels Told, Smoke Rings, and others. No details were given, but it was made clear to me that ICE is not stopping design and production of MECCG, and that this recent turmoil is a conglomeration of factors that has made them restructure the way they approach marketing, production and distribution. I guess sometimes even our favorite game companies have to roll with the punches.

I for one hope that good things continue for ICE and MECCG.

See you next issue.

## Game Review: Fluxx

*James Kight*

For those of you who haven't heard, the world has been invaded by the coolest little card game in the world (aside from Middle Earth), Fluxx!

Fluxx is a game of one rule. Or many. It depends on when you ask! Fluxx consists of rules, keepers, goals, and actions. Rules are cards that dictate how cards and hands are played, drawn, revealed, kept, and discarded. Keepers are cards that represent items or ideas that serve to fulfill a goal. Goals are cards that give everyone a way to win the game. Actions are cards that allow you to perform a special action in the game.

For example, there is a goal called *Milk and Cookies* (my personal favorite). If a player has both the Milk and Cookies keepers on his side, he wins! Simple. However, the rules may change at any time. The basic rule is: Draw one card, play one card. At the beginning of your turn, you draw one card. Before the end of your turn you must play one and only one card, unless the card you play changes one of the basic rules, in which case you now follow that rule instead.

There are rules that allow you to draw more than one card a turn, and rules that allow you to play more than one card a turn. If any rule played contradicts another rule, the most recently-played rule takes effect and the old rule is discarded.

Let's go through an example turn. When the game begins, each player starts with three cards. Bob and Mike begin play and they decide that Mike is to go first. Mike follows the basic rule and draws one card. He now has to follow the other rule and play one of his cards. He plays the *Draw 2* card. Mike must comply with this rule immediately. Since he has already

drawn one for the turn, Mike draws one more card and ends his turn. On Bob's turn, Bob draws two cards and decides which of the cards in his hand he will play. Bob decides to play the *Play 2* card. Bob must comply with this rule immediately, but since he has already played one for the turn, he simply chooses one more of his hand to play. Bob plays *War* (a keeper) in front of him, and the turn goes to Mike. Mike draws two on his turn, and plays both the *Television* keeper and the card *Steal a Keeper*. This allows Mike to take Bob's keeper (*War*). This ends his turn. Bob draws two cards and plays the goal *Love is All You Need*, and plays the *Toaster* keeper. If either player gets the *Love* keeper and has no other keeper, they will fulfill the *Love is All You Need* goal and they would win.

Any goal played immediately replaces the old one. There are a number of goals that do not depend on specific keepers to be in play. Goals like *10 Cards in Hand* and *5 Keepers in Play*. Certain goals require that other keepers not be in play. *Peace No War* lets a player win if he has *Peace* and *War* is not out on the table for anyone.

Aside from a number of goals, there are a number of rules that don't specifically affect the cards drawn or played. *Tax Bonus*, *Money Bonus* and *Time Bonus* all allow a player to benefit in certain ways if you have either *Taxes*, *Money*, or *Time*, whether being able to keep an extra card in your hand or drawing an extra card to even being able to keep an extra Keeper in play (if a limit rule is out.).

Having played Fluxx a few times, I can already see the potential for a game to go anywhere from a single turn to an entire hour, depending on how the cards are played. You never know if the next card will end the game or not. One of the cards I can think of that

changes the whole format of the game when it is played is the *Play All* rule card. As you can guess, it requires each player to play each and every card in their hand unless one of the cards subsequently played dictates otherwise. More games have ended shortly after this card was played than any others I can think of.

There really is some degree of strategy involved, especially when you get the cards in your hand that you need to win the game. You just hope that when your turn comes around that you are able to play the cards to win. One of the more heinous cards are the Hand Limit rules. As the inactive player, you immediately have to comply with the hand limit rule, which sometimes can spell doom to your winning plan, particularly when your opponent gets your recently discarded card out of the discard pile to win the game for himself.

Oddly enough, as my friends and I were playing this game, we began to see some similarities between some of the cards in Fluxx and some of the cards in *Magic: The Gathering*<sup>®</sup>. *Pilfer the Trash* allows a player to get one of the last three cards played out of the discard pile and place it in your hand, or as we say, "I'll Regrow that." *Take Another Turn* is just like *Time Walk*. It's fun to see some of the similarities between the games currently in rotation (and sad to realize how much time we spend playing those games).

Overall, Fluxx is a neat little beer-and-pretzels game that can give you a needed break from all the heavy thinking you find in Middle Earth. The rules are simple, the game play is fast, and best of all, it's not a collectable card game, which means that you get the entire game in one deck. (Remember poker?)

## Tournament Report: *Origins '98*

*James Kight*

This year's Origins '98 promised to be even better than last year's, which I was, unfortunately, not able to attend. I did get to hear all of the stories, so I was eager to have a good time.

Four straight days of gaming and mayhem is enough to wear anyone down, but I had been through a few long conventions before, and made sure to pack plenty of extra underwear.

To begin with, attendance was down a little, and most of the focus was on the card games, whether people were playing Magic: The Gathering<sup>®</sup> or Middle Earth or Star Wars or whatever. There were plenty of exhibits and board games and whatnot, including the Iron Crown Enterprises booth. I was finally able to meet and re-meet some of the people I had been dealing with for some time, including Bob Mohney, Craig O'Brien, Monica Wilson and others.

The main reason I was there was to play Middle Earth. I had my deck ready and my wits about me, and looked forward to mixing it up with some of the other good players that I had not yet met or played against. I was also bringing my brand new copy of the MECCG Newsletter (Issue 1) for everyone to read and critique.

There were quite a few new faces for me to take in, some players from Canada and Michigan and Missouri to name a few states, and after a day or so relaxing and enjoying the surroundings, the competition began with a Challenge Deck tournament.

I managed to get the Hoarmurath deck, and at first glance I thought to myself "Oh, great, another squatter deck." (not one of my favorite deck

styles, I assure you). After getting used to the style of play, I began to appreciate it a little more, and actually did fairly well considering my relative inexperience with minion squatter decks.

I placed mid-field, which wasn't too bad. My only memorable moment with that tournament involved my opponent playing the Pallando Dwarf deck. Well, lucky me, I had the minion Arkenstone in my deck, and I hoped that somewhere in the game I would be able to use it.

Nearer to the end of the game, I managed to get 7 characters at Moria, and 4 allies (Great Lord of Goblin-Gate, Stinker, and 2 War-Wolves). My opponent then moved to Moria, and I wondered to myself why he was moving there. His company consisted of Celeborn with Quickbeam, and Gloin (I think) with Durin's Axe. I was not able to tap anyone, though, and began my turn in earnest. During the course of my site phase, I played a Black Mace, Records Unread (discarded immediately to untap the site), The Arkenstone, Records Unread (second copy, again, discarded to untap the site), and attempted to bring in the Orcs of Moria, but failed. I then discarded the Arkenstone to force the discard of Gloin with Durin's Axe, then attacked his company with my hoard. His two untapped characters chose to face my war-wolves, so I chose to assign a -9 modifier to Celeborn, and succeeded in wounding, but not killing him.

The next tournament for me was the Mondo Sealed Deck Qualifier. We received a METW sealed deck and 2 boosters each of METW, METD and MEDM. That meant plenty of dragon cards and agents. I was lucky and pulled both a Mouth of Sauron and an Itangast. With Doors of Night in play, it spelled doom for many a player who

made the mistake of traveling into Dragon Country. One particular game I was playing Michael Rice (a stupendous player, I might add) and he decided to go to Dale. Before he moved, the game was fairly tight in his favor, and there weren't many turns remaining. He moved with Beorn, Bard, Anborn, and one other big character I can't remember. On the way to Dale, I played: Itangast, Mouth of Sauron, Itangast. When the barrage of ugly was done, he was left with only a wounded Beorn, easily swinging the game to my favor, 6-0.

My main back-up was Smaug Ahunt, Foolish Words and two Times are Evil. I even managed to get all three influence-affecting cards on one of my opponents to make his wizard effectively a 0 for direct influence. Believe me, I got lucky with my packs, and used every card I could to slow my opponent down.

I was able to take the deck I got to the top, after facing some fierce competition. 1st place out of 41 opponents can mean big ranking points. Second place went to the only player to beat me, Alex Bonneville. During the final round, I had already defeated my opponent, and was eagerly awaiting Alex's results to see if I had won the entire tournament or not. Alex had to win 4-2 or better to tie me, and then win by virtue of a head-to-head tie breaker with me. Alex was playing Keywood Cheeves from Virginia, and going into the final turn it was neck and neck. Keywood was attempting for an item, I believe, and ended up wounding a few characters who managed to stay alive after a few low rolls from Alex. Going into the Council of Lorien Alex had the win by a few points, and the only thing that remained was the corruption checks. Keywood went first, and successfully passed all of his

*(Continued on page 19)*

## Tournament Report: *Origins '98 (cont.)*

(Continued from page 18)

checks. Alex began his rolls, and as a result of what I would call nervous eagerness to finish too quickly an already apparent win, neglected to tap in support of one character who was wielding multiple items. The dice failed him, and he lost enough points to put him behind Keyword and give me the win for the tournament. A close call. Alex did retain enough tournament points to keep second place, and get the qualifying spot as I had already qualified earlier in the year. Keyword Cheeves received a preliminary round bid to the US Nationals for finishing third. They gave me a complete set of Limited METW for my efforts, and enough ranking points to put me squarely in the number one spot in the US, although I know how quickly that can change.

The next tournament was the 2-deck General Opponent Double Qualifier. I was playing a fun deck, with Elrond and Galadriel eventually going to Barad-Dur for both the Fate of the Ithil-Stone and the actual Ithil Stone itself. It worked fairly well, but was just too slow to be that competitive. A lot of people thought I was playing influence. Most important to me was seeing what decks were being played.

The only hitch in the tournament was my unfortunate match with one opponent (who will remain unnamed).

Before our match began, he asked me if I was playing hero or minion, to which I replied "Hero." "So am I," he responded, and our match got underway. My hazard strategy was an attempt at hero detainment, and was made up of mostly detaining men, elves and dunedan. After seeing some of my hazards, he said, "I'm glad I didn't play my minion deck." I simply took that to mean that he decided not to bring his minion deck to the tournament.

After our game (in which he soundly beat me) I was discussing my unfortunate luck with another competitor, who then informed me that he too had played the same gentleman, but that he was then playing a minion deck. I immediately went to Ichabod to bring this to his attention. He spoke to the gentleman, and it was discovered that he did indeed bring two decks, both of different alignments, which is not allowed in the Council of Lorien tournament guidelines.

After much discussion and heated debate, Ichabod ruled that the match loss for me would stand, and that the gentleman would be ejected from the tournament. I wasn't happy with this ruling at first, but as I look back, it was the only ruling he could have logically made. Such a situation had never come up before for Ichabod, and he simply went with what he thought was

the best logical choice in order to keep the tournament scoring changes to a minimum (there weren't any).

By the end of the tournament we had all heard about Joe Bisz dunking the One Ring 4 times out of 5. I got a chance to look at his deck, and it was a fairly standard One Ring deck using the Master of Esgaroth trick. He had to face some fierce obstacles on his way to his victories, the most heinous coming from the repeated play of Rolled Down to the Sea. More often than not he had an extra ring to discard. He earned every victory and won the tournament handily.

The only other tournament that was run was a 1-deck Wizards-Only qualifier that I did not attend because of a previous demo engagement.

Aside from the tournaments themselves, ICE had originally scheduled to hold demos for Orcs and Trolls, Elrond's House, and to hold their famous live action MECCG tournament. Elrond's House was cancelled due to a lack of product, Orcs and Trolls was cancelled due to a lack of product in English, and the live action event was cancelled because of a lack of manpower. A small disappointment to an otherwise great weekend.

Next issue, a review of BeachCon '98 from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina!

## Answers to the MECCG Quiz on Page 14

- Which of the following two-character companies has all five skills? A. Thorin - Thrain
- Which one of the following is a 5 point faction? D. hero Nurniags
- Which of the following sites is not adjacent to an under-deeps site? A. Cirith Ungol
- Assuming he is untapped and carrying no weapons, what is Elrond's prowess/body when Vilya resolves? D. 11/11
- How many hero characters were released in the Middle Earth: Dark Minions expansion? B. one (Folco Boffin)
- Which of the following hero sites does not have a detainment auto-attack? A. Nurniag Camp
- Which of the following conditions will not increase your hand size? B. having a character bear the Emerald of Doriath
- Which of the following corruption cards requires the highest roll to remove? A. Alone and Unadvised
- Which of the following creatures has the highest prowess? D. Cave Worm
- Which orc is the only sage? B. Doeth
- Which of the following can be turned into an ally with Ready to His Will? C. Lord of the Carrock
- Which of the following is the only non-unique hero greater item? C. Wizard's Staff
- Which of the following are not hero and minion equivalents? D. Morgul-Knife and Morgul-Blade
- Which of the following does not have an Orc automatic-attack? D. Minas Morgul
- Which of the following regions contains no sites? C. Bay of Belfalas
- Which of the following allies has more than one skill? D. Radagast's Black Bird

## Regional & National Tournament Information

### Thursday, September 3

#### **ME Demo**

Middle-earth Demo  
The Source, (612) 645-0386  
Carl Hotchkiss, (612) 664-3442,  
crhotch@uswest.com.

### Friday, September 4

#### **Gateway Con**

3 Council of Lorien Tournaments  
Los Angeles California  
Jeff Stolt, (562) 926-7832  
jstolt@wallace.com

#### **Con Quest**

##### **Two-deck constructed and Challenge Deck**

Clarion Hotel, 401 E. Millbrae Ave  
Millbrae, CA, (650) 692-6373  
www.con-quest.com,  
mtoggweiler@compuserve.com  
The tournaments will be held either on the 4th or the 5th. For the Challenge Deck tournaments, decks will be randomly assigned before each round. No player can have the same deck twice.

### Saturday, September 5

#### **Game HQ Tournament**

Constructed one-deck  
Game HQ, 1620 SW 89th,  
Oklahoma City, OK, (405) 691-0509  
Seth Anderson, (405) 348-0357,  
oddball@telepath.com

#### **Spectrum**

Sealed deck, one-deck hero constructed, Lidless  
Eye sealed deck, one-deck dark constructed  
(Fallen-wizard, Ringwraith, or Sauron only).  
Sheraton Meadowlands Hotel,  
E. Rutherford, NJ  
Vinny Salzillo, (718) 881-4575,  
salvius@panix.com  
The convention will run from the 5th through the 7th. There will also be a 10 person Challenge Deck tournament, and demos of MECCG, Fluxx, and Pyramids.

### Wednesday, September 9

#### **JCTS Monthly Feature**

Constructed one-deck,  
Wizard only.  
Warrensburg Community Building, MO  
Keith Kuhlman, (660) 747-5942

### Saturday, September 12

#### **Booster Draft 3**

Booster Draft  
UNB Student Union Bldg,  
Fredericton, NB  
Tom Henderson, tomah@gov.nb.ca  
\$15 entry fee for random fixed pack, four  
Wizards boosters, two Dragons boosters, 2 Dark  
Minions boosters. Players may  
bring their own cards.

#### **Greenville Comic Con**

Sealed deck.  
Ramada Inn, 1001 S. Church St.,  
Greenville, SC, (864) 232-7666  
Van Norton, (864) 322-7043,  
vannorton@compuserve.com  
Two-deck game length, players may bring 1  
sealed deck and 3 sealed boosters. Entry fee \$2.

### Sunday, September 13

#### **Hot Comics ME Tournament**

Constructed one-deck  
Hot Comics, New Hope, MN,  
(612) 664-3442  
Carl Hotchkiss, (612) 664-3442,  
crhotch@uswest.com.

### Sunday, September 20

#### **Nanocon**

Constructed one-deck.  
Mirkwood Coffee, Richfield, MN,  
(612) 313-1387  
Carl Hotchkiss (612) 664-3442,  
crhotch@uswest.com

### Saturday, September 26

#### **EnbiCon 4**

Constructed Deck  
Colonial Inn, Fredericton, NB  
Tom Henderson, tomah@gov.nb.ca  
**Exit 13 Tournament**  
Constructed one-deck  
Exit 13, 421 Freepoint St.,  
New Kensington, PA  
Edison Mohny Jr.,  
(724) 335-3609

### Saturday, September 6

#### **EnbiCon 4**

2-deck Constructed  
Colonial Inn, Fredericton, NB  
tomah@gov.nb.ca

### Saturday, October 3

#### **Mirkwood Middle-earth Tournament**

Constructed one-deck.  
Mirkwood Coffee, Richfield, MN,  
(612) 313-1387  
Carl Hotchkiss (612) 664-3442,  
crhotch@uswest.com

### Sunday, October 4

#### **Wizard's Realm Gen. Opponent #3**

Constructed two-deck.  
The Wizard's Realm, 1900 N. Hamilton, Spokane  
WA,  
(509) 489-2418  
Randall Kintner, (509) 335-3004,

kintner@mail.wsu.edu

### Saturday, October 10

#### **InConsequential**

Constructed Deck  
Lord Beaubrook Hotel, Fredericton, NB  
Tom Henderson, tomah@gov.nb.ca

### Sunday, October 11

#### **Hot Comics ME Tournament**

One-deck Constructed  
Hot Comics, New Hope, MN,  
(612) 593-1223  
Carl Hotchkiss, (612) 664-3442,  
crhotch@uswest.com.

### Saturday, October 17

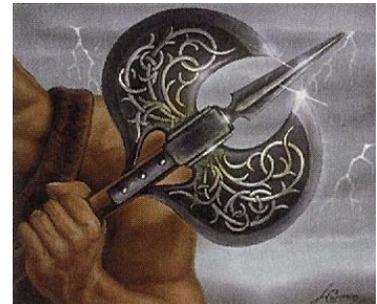
#### **October Harvest**

Constructed one-deck.  
Hyperborea, 362 Sherbrooke West,  
Montreal, Quebec,  
(514) 849-5696  
Francois Perirclerc, francois@sygraf.com,  
home (514) 765-8739,  
work (514) 846-9786

**If you have information concerning any of these or any other MECCG tournaments that you would like to post here, please send it to me via one of the following channels:**

James Kight  
CarolinaCon Newsletter  
Tournament Information  
240 Longwood Drive  
Winston-Salem, NC 27104  
jameskight@mindspring.com  
(336) 765-9028

Good Luck in your tournament play!



Ancient Black Axe by Audrey Corman © 1997 ICE

MECCG Council of Lórien® Championship Information & National Rankings

**Council of Lórien  
Championship Information**

Here is all of the information we have at the moment concerning the 1998 Middle-earth Collectible Card Game Council of Lórien Championships:

**1998 MECCG Season  
Council of Lórien Championship  
at AndCon '98  
Toledo, OH  
Oct. 1-4, 1998**

For information on attending AndCon:

WEB site: [www.andonunlimited.com](http://www.andonunlimited.com)  
e-mail: [Andon@aol.com](mailto:Andon@aol.com)  
telephone: (614) 856-3976

The sooner you reserve your space, the better. ICE cannot guarantee any hotel or convention space, though these should not be in short supply.

The top 2 finishers from the 1998 MECCG Council of Lórien (CoL) Championship receive a travel/lodging expenses paid berth to the 1998 MECCG World Championships as representatives of the Council of Lórien. If no Canadian or no American received a berth, then the top player of this country plus the next highest overall finisher receive a runners-up berth. Otherwise, the next 2 overall finishers receive a runners-up berth. A runners-up berth is an invitation to the World Championships, but you must provide your own overseas travel. The World Championships are planned for the winter of 1999 in Paris, France. The CoL Champion wins the Dwarven Ring of Durin's Tribe. The World Champion wins The One Ring.

At AndCon, there will be the following tournaments:

**Open Tournament:** The final qualifier of the season. Anyone can play (unless otherwise invited). The top 2 finishers advance to the semi-final round.

**Preliminary Round:** Participation by invitation only. Invitations go to the runners-up of qualifier tournaments who are not otherwise invited to the semi-final round. Invitations then go to the 24 highest ranked players not otherwise invited to this or the semi-final round. The top 6 finishers advance to the semi-final round.

**Semi-final Round:** Participation by invitation only. Invitations go to last year's Championship finalists. Invitations then go to qualifier winners or highest finishers not yet invited to this round. Invitations then go to the 24 highest ranked players not otherwise invited to this round. The top 2 open tournament finishers and the top 6 preliminary round finishers round out the semi-final field. The top 8 finishers advance to the championship finals.

**Championship Finals:** Participation by invitation only. The top 8 semi-final round finishers play for the Council of Lórien Championship. Finishers not receiving a berth to the Worlds are alternates.

Information on the exact formats and times of these

tournaments is forthcoming.

**MECCG Rankings**

These rankings are thru July 1998 tournaments, and cover the 1998 Council of Lórien season (beginning Sep. 1, 1997 and ending Aug. 9, 1998). The next update is expected soon.

For more information on get an MECCG tournament sanctioned, contact [events@ironcrown.com](mailto:events@ironcrown.com).

Players gain or lose points based solely on where they place in sanctioned tournaments. Players start this season with 500 points plus 20% of their points over 500 from last season. A player must play in a sanctioned MECCG tournament after Aug. 31, 1997 to be ranked this season. The season ends Aug. 9, 1998. Thereafter, tournaments apply to next season's rankings.

See Council of Lórien Championship for information on how rankings apply to participation in this event.

Rank	Name	Location	Pts.
1	*Kight, James	Winston-Salem NC	660.5
2	Brooks, Steve	Warrensburg MO	631.5
3	*Brown, Steve	Fairfax VA	616
4	*Kuhlman, Keith	Warrensburg MO	614.5
5	*Silverman, Eric	Cockeysville MD	612
6	Twitchell, Mike	Greenville SC	610.5
7	*Cable, Chris	Pittsburgh PA	596
7	*Bruinooge, Nathan	Silver Spring MD	596
9	*Bonnevill, Alex	Rochester Hills MI	593
10	Hollowell, Steven	Independence MO	576
11	Coble, John	Huntersville NC	571
12	Rice, David	Ortonville MI	569
12	Rice, Michael	Owosso MI	569
14	Thompson, Phil	Warrensburg MO	565
15	Umphlett, Randy	New Hope MN	561
16	*Rae, Dan	Hanwell	560
17	*Wong, Brian	Whistler BC	558
18	*Kenyon, William	Brooklyn NY	555
19	*Bisz, Joseph	Binghampton NY	553
20	Williamson, Sean	Greenville SC	551
20	*Grace, Joshua	Duluth MN	551
22	Feth, Gary	Pittsburgh PA	550
23	*Sokolowski, Matt	Knob Noster MO	548
24	Robinson, Michael	Sedalia MO	547
24	Lancaster, Forrest	Balfast ME	547
26	Jones, Ken	Rusagonis NB	545
27	Langlais, Scott	Dallas TX	543
28	Norton, Van	Taylor SC	542
29	*Satterley, Brian	Statesville NC	541.5
30	Bryan, Jason	Glen Ellyn IL	541
30	Sanders, Bill	Oklahoma City OK	541
32	Comer, Isaac	Warrensburg MO	540.5
33	Franklin, Skip	Grand Rapids MI	535
34	Meyers, Joel	Yukon OK	533
34	*Cox, Jeff	Greenville SC	533
34	Finley, Chris	Spokane WA	533
37	Cook, David	Brossard QC	531
38	Carney, Spencer	High Point NC	529
39	Wuller, Steve	Fort Worth TX	528
39	Machen, Jimmie	New Kensington PA	528
41	Margolese, Eli	Chapel Hill NC	526
41	Miller, Andrew	Mississauga ON	526
43	Bialota, Joshua	Belfast ME	525.5
44	Pittek, Michael	Pittsburgh PA	525
44	McDuffee, Jason	Lombard IL	525
44	Shallue, Andrew	Blaine MN	525
47	Sanders, Jason	Oklahoma City OK	524
48	Hayes, Kris	Pittsburgh PA	522
49	Klank, Jason	Taylor SC	521
50	Bock, George	Dayton OH	520
50	Hirt, Shawn	Ham Lake MN	520
50	Jarvis, Newell	Texas	520
53	Mortell, Max	Ellicott City MD	519
53	LeClair, Ken	Riverview NB	519
53	Bryan, Joe	Glen Ellyn Il	519
56	Wilson, Paul	Spokane WA	517
56	Keneffick, Bill	Tampa FL	517
56	Sutherland, Tony	Ann Arbor MI	517
56	Denman, Eric	Round Rock TX	517
60	Coyle, Ryan	Vancouver BC	516
60	Templeton, Jeff	Fountain Inn SC	516
60	Wilkinson, Kelly	Raytown MO	516
60	Robb, John	Lower Kingsclear NB	516
60	Medrano, Andrés	Austin TX	516
65	Escott, James	St. John's NF	515

65	Heiss, Nathan	Pittsburgh PA	515
65	Flynn, Rich	Wayne NJ	515
65	Heim, Billy	Spokane WA	515
69	Weeks, Matthias	Chicago IL	514
69	Hughes, Matt	Pittsburgh PA	514
69	Rose, Jeremy	Moncton NB	514
69	Averett, Edward	Chapel Hill NC	514
69	Spinner, Jon	KC MO	514
69	McBride, Chris	Oklahoma City OK	514
69	Chick, Kevin	New Brunswick	514
69	Oxford, Larry	Belgrade MT	514
69	Pecchioli, Joel	Lakewood NJ	514
78	Hicks, James	Warrensburg MO	513.5
79	*Lemanski, Demetrius	East Lansing MI	513
79	Gorski, Gary	Pittsburgh PA	513
79	Berry, Gene	Union City CA	513
79	Lund, Douglas	Ham Lake MN	513
79	Walker, Joe	Piscataway NJ	513
79	*Lanphear, Tom	Phoenix AZ	513
85	Gardner, Chris	Raleigh NC	512
85	Derderson, Vaughn	Southfield MI	512
85	Fink, Adam	Selden NY	512
88	Perry, Darren	St. John's NF	511
88	Caron, Kris	Frederickton NB	511
88	Bryant, Alexander	Chehalis WA	511
88	Lyons, Bryan	Iowa Park TX	511
88	Mineman, Ed	Houston TX	511
88	Burke, Chris	Littleton NC	511
88	Griego, Robert	Live Oak TX	511
88	Riegner, Nicholas	Pittsburgh PA	511
88	Wark, Stephen	Montreal QC	511
88	Brooks, Carl	Nyack NY	511
88	Senden, Mayk	Eindhoven Netherlands	511
99	Gerhardt, Stephen	Thomasville NC	510.5
100	Bishop, King	Belfast ME	510
100	Radeshak, Jim	New Kensington PA	510
100	Trépanier, Félix	Longueuil QC	510
100	Popkou, Mikmail	Lavac QC	510
100	Allum, Bob	Bozeman MT	510
100	Vailancourt, Bobby	Hastings-on-Hudson NJ	510
100	Dougher, Joseph	Saylorsburg PA	510
100	Guilbault, Michel	Quebec QC	510
100	Pratt, Gardner	Cincinnati OH	510
100	Lehrman, Charles	Winston-Salem NC	510

\* player has already qualified for the semi-final round at the 1997/98 season Council of Lórien Championship

Qualified Players

**SEMI-FINAL ROUND QUALIFIED PLAYERS**

Qualified from 1997 Council of Lórien Championship

Andrew Potter (NY)  
Cliff Yahnke (IL)  
Nathan Bruinooge (MD)  
Brian Satterley (NC)  
Keith Busbee (FL)  
Brian Wong (BC)  
Matt Sokolowski (MO)  
Ris Misner (OH)  
Demetrius Lemanski (MI)

Qualified from Qualifiers

Steven Brown (VA)  
Keith Kuhlman (MO)  
James Kight (NC)  
Jeff Cox (SC)  
Tom Lanphear (AZ)

**PRELIMINARY-FINAL ROUND QUALIFIED PLAYERS**

Eric Silverman (VA)  
Stephen Brooks (MO)  
Chris Burke (NC)  
Sean Williamson (SC)  
Scott Palmer (CO)

To get the latest rankings and updates, visit the following site:  
<http://www.cstone.net/~ichabod>

## Moon Letters



Test of Lore by Donato Giancola © 1995 Tolkien Enterprises

**Wow! Look at all the letters! The winning title for the Letter's Page is Moon Letters, submitted by Spencer Carney. Complete with ready-to-go logo! Spence will receive a few extra rares I have and the recognition of being the namer of the Letter's Page. Here is what your fellow readers had to say:**

James,

I really liked the interviews. Both were interesting and informative. I'd suggest a little less wooden approach to the artists. Try to get them on a subject they'll speak about for a longer time.

For the letters page, I have a couple of ideas, but my favorite so far is: From the Pits of Angband.

Sincerely,  
Joshua B. Grace

*Joshua, thanks for the suggestion. The interview with Quinton was my very first, and hopefully with this issue and further ones, I will learn more as I go along. Quinton and I have been writing back and forth since that interview and he always has something nice to say!*

James,

I just read your received and read your first newsletter. Great work!! I hope you do become the official newsletter, as it is obvious you put a lot of effort into it. Don't worry about color, just good content. I look forward to the next issue.

Thanks,  
Carl Hotchkiss

*Carl, as it stands now, it looks like I will be the official MECCG newsletter beginning with issue #3. Thanks for the letter!*

"Dear James".... sounds like a dear Abby kind of thing !

Anyways: I liked the interview with the guy from ICE.... I don't remember his name. It gives me an idea of where the people come from and the background they have.

As for a name for the letters page, how about "News and letters from the Free People !"

Gary Devouges

*Thanks, Gary. The guy from ICE was Mike Reynolds. Hopefully you learned even more from Ichabod this issue!*

Dear James,

I liked the tone of the newsletter. Of course, it is quintessential you; so others might not get your reflective tone and probably missed some of the wry levity.

Recommended:

- 1) add the URL for the online place for your newsletters to each newsletter. Once there, keep the addressing scheme consistent and predictable. <http://www.mysticalgames.com/>
- 2) don't promise more than you can feasibly deliver; i.e., weekly newsletter versus monthly to bi-weekly (i.e., twice per month).
- 3) Comment and review the NetMECCG scene. History, who's who, summer league, tips. I would be happy to help out on this.
- 4) Include in an issue the rune tables so that folk can use that issue as a cheat sheet. Anglo-saxon (futhork), Tenwar, Cirth, etc.
- 5) Beat the bushes for contributions: articles, commentary, esoterica, etc. Don't have it any more "one voice" than necessary. Target west coast activities to include in your tournament reports. Check with Randall Kintner for the Pacific Northwest, Martin Toggweiler for SF Bay Area, Jeff Stolt for the Greater Los Angeles basin.
- 6) Include, if you can, reports from the various cons, as many of us would love to go but cannot for one reason or another. Who's there, what's being showcased by ICE (if anything), tournament reports, humor.
- 7) Continue with the artist interviews. That was one of the things the earlier editions of the Duelist had going for it.
- 8) Continue the strategy and tips articles.
- 9) Obtain the inside scoop on what the current availability of METW, METD, MEDM, MEAS, MEWH and MELE is around the world. Should we go out and buy up boxes to hoard, in case MECCG/METW 2nd Edition is delayed beyond belief?
- 10) Interview Bob Mohney or whomever about in what all languages MEC[C]G is currently available, and what is scheduled next as far as languages.
- 11) Get some reports from the European scene (UK, Finland, Netherlands, Spain, etc.)

Well, that is all I can come up with for the moment. Best of luck!

Yours,  
Charles E. Bouldin, Esq.

*Good grief! Lots of great suggestions! I have always had the idea to get input from everyone who has something to say. Just to reiterate; if anyone has any suggestions or articles of their own that they would like to submit, please don't hesitate to send them my way. I will give you my deadline and guidelines. The NetMECCG scene is one that I was involved with earlier on, but time constraints keep me from competing on a regular basis. Perhaps I can set aside a space or two for the NetMECCG League. Keep watch for future issues to see some of these great ideas!*

Hey James!

I loved your newsletter. The interviews were great! I like to have news like that, right from the source. Good job all around! Oh, and you should call your letters column...um.... The Records Room.

Corina Stark

*Corina, thanks for the words of encouragement. Being the official newsletter is going to allow me to get the straight dope right from the source without having to guess or wait.*

Greetings James,

I got your newsletter over the weekend and let me just say it was better than I expected. Great job. Please keep them coming to me!

Kenneth Switzer

*Thanks Kenneth! Will do!*

Dear James,

As promised, here's a note to share with you my thoughts about the first issue of your MECCG Newsletter. Overall, I found it to be well done, informative and an enjoyable read. I especially liked the Quinton Hoover art samples peppered throughout, even if they were monochrome. One of my favorite artists from the earlier sets was Angus McBride. You didn't mention him anywhere in the issue but I'm hoping that you might add him to your list of artists to be featured in future issues.

Focus On: Mike Reynolds was very good. You were able to share some information there that may prove useful, particularly the bit about how to submit a card idea to ICE. I don't think anyone would mind giving up their rights to such an idea if they could someday say, "Hey! That was my idea!" But who's going to believe you without

## Moon Letters (cont.)

(Continued from page 22)

some proof? My only suggestion to ICE would be to provide some sort of byline or perhaps a letter of gratitude, with a sample of the card from the first printing, suitable for framing. I'd really like to see an interview with Craig O'Brien here at some point. We all get a lot of interaction with this guy but he remains a mystery man, at least to me. I'd like to know more about what makes Ichabod tick.

The Ponderance of the Week might be interesting; however, you really didn't bring anything up that hadn't already been thoroughly aired on the 'net. I wouldn't drop it though. This is a good place to summarize the issue and introduce some fresh thoughts. By the way, you might find a better word for "ponderance" such as "rumination" or maybe "bebotherment" (I'm being just a bit facetious). "Ponderance" just sounds a bit heavy.

I liked the Card Review and Deck Tip articles. While there weren't a wealth of new ideas there (at least to me) I found them refreshing and thought provoking. It doesn't hurt to cover old ground again. You never know what new thing might present itself. I would certainly share this advice with a less experienced player.

Thanks for the Council of Lorien Championship Information. Even though I'm not on the list (not enough tournaments that I could attend) it's fun to see several people that I'm personally acquainted with in the running. I can be proud to say that I've been thrashed by some of the best.

Finally, though it seems that the "Balrog issue" has probably been resolved since you wrote The Final Word, I agree that the red carpet should be saved for a 2nd Edition of MECCG. I don't expect to see such a thing for a long time, if at all. I expect The Balrog expansion to add quite a bit of fun to the game, though I don't think that it's going to be a (middle-) earth shaker. I'm looking forward most to the upcoming Lord of the Rings CCG, hoping that it will prove more interesting to my kids (the MECCG rules are a bit too much for them), and the Elf Lords and Dwarf Lords expansions. The latter two I expect to be more quake-inducing than The Balrog.

Meanwhile, I'll be looking forward to the next issue (you have my address) and will happily send whatever thoughts it (and subsequent issues) provokes your way. And should I get a flash of inspiration (or at least exasperation), I won't hesitate to submit an article for you.

Thanks for your efforts! Keep up the good work.

Bob Moss

*Well Bob, hopefully the interview this issue from Craig has whetted your appetite. There were quite a few interesting things to say from Ichabod, and just like you, I learned a few things. Angus McBride is indeed on my list of*

*artists to interview, as he is the quintessential MECCG artist. However, he appears to be out of contact for some time. I have contacted ICE about getting in touch with Angus, and so far, no luck. But don't worry, lots of great artists are coming your way! Incidentally, a few of the articles have changed in format, in particular the Ponderances. Tell me what you think!*

Dear James,

I read the first issue and thought it was great. I especially liked the fact that you included nudity in the first copy, so that parents of kids playing the game might immediately question their child's involvement and the game's content. Bravo! Will the next issue feature drug use or merely wanton violence? Can't wait to see!

Your Pal,  
John

*Well John, you do indeed bring up what could be a sore point, but my only response is I felt the piece represented Quinton's art well, and it was the only sketch piece I had at the time. Whether people like it or not, artists do occasionally do adult themes in their pieces.*

*The comic books of today demonstrate that much better than I could. Most of them are not much more than scantily clothed women showing off. While there are a few good titles, the trend these days is to portray women superheroes in as little clothing as possible, and to go for the splashy art rather than the story.*

*This newsletter is primarily meant for players of MECCG, and I am going to leave it to the parents in question to teach their children the difference between nudity and pornography. As a publisher, I refuse to censor a piece simply because it contains nudity. Nudity doesn't necessarily mean pornography.*

*This doesn't mean that I plan on printing a nude piece every issue. I will, however, do my best to feature an artist's work with a wide range of material that best demonstrates their talent.*

Hi James,

Sorry this isn't typed but someone played *Great Secrets Buried There* on my typewriter and I'm not going down there to get it back! Let me start by giving a big South Park sheriff's thumbs up to you and your efforts with the newsletter, it's an enjoyment to read. Thanks for the hazard building tips especially!

For the letter's page contest, I submit "The Quick Post" as it is "a social service much in demand among hobbits." [Tolkien Companion, pg 385]

Also, (and here come a few more Dwarves now) I would like to name my Never Should Have Been Printed Card as Huorn because I have never seen it used in a game or a deck, there seems to be no news of an Awakened Plants modifier, and Awakened Plants were so much more dangerous in the stories, more notably so when stirred up.

Thanks again for the newsletter. Hope this gets to you in time for consideration.

Mike Tootil

p.s. If Butterbur forgets to send this....well...you know.

*Ha! I got it after all! It looks like Butterbur has learned his lesson. Thanks for your kind words.*

James,

One point I would like to make is that the newsletter that is generating all the response is a first issue. Rarely is there a periodical that gets everything right the first time. I think the first issue of your MECCG newsletter is great. It has a HUGE amount of information, great variety, and it proved to be a very entertaining read. I expect that as you fine-tune the content to please yourself and your readers, it will get even better.

Good Luck, James!

Spence Carney

P.S. My submission for your letters column is "Moon Letters." You could include the picture for Test of Lore.

*That about says it all! Thanks everyone!*

# CarolinaCon Regional MECCG Newsletter

## CREDITS

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CarolinaCon Regional MECCG Newsletter

## THE FINAL WORD

*James Kight*

Hello again! Time for another trip into my thoughts (Ooooh, scary!). After a long year, the Nationals are just ahead. I sat down a few days ago to think about everything that has happened in the last year concerning MECCG, and all the different things we have learned along the way.

Since last year's nationals, many rules and card effects have changed the way we play the game. For one thing, losing your Wizard or Ringwraith does not end the game. In my opinion this is one of the best rules to come out in a long time. This rule took effect on January 1, 1998, and singlehandedly brought back the popularity of wizards to the game. I was playing a wizard-less deck at last year's US Na-

tionals for the simple reason that I did not want to lose my wizard and end the game. Of all the games I have played and tournaments I have attended, more 6-0 wins were because of wizard-kills than any other reason.

Another ruling that we saw change was the dragon-hoard ruling (see page 15 for a more detailed run-down). Personally I didn't think that rule would ever change.

Minions have become more popular than ever, going from 1 player playing minions at last year's US nationals to a projected almost half this year. The Sauron cards have put playing the bad guy into the limelight. Who ever thought being evil would be this much fun?

I have really enjoyed most of the past year, and have learned quite a bit compared to where I was as a player last year. The difference seems to be a better understanding of the rules (as often as they change) and a better grasp of how other players play their game.

The change in format for the release of the next few expansions has also thrown a major curveball to collectors, especially those who still retain a large number of pre-MEBA rares. Since getting a set requires no more than \$40, what do we do with the extra rares?

The Final Word for this issue: The only constant in this world is Change!

Viva Variety! See you next issue!