Thorin rallies the dwarves of Erebor against Azog at the Dimrill Gate of Moria!
Welcome to Issue 2 of SBG. Wow - what an incredible seven months it has been! When we wrote the Editorial for Issue 1, we had no idea how people would react to the magazine, let alone whether or not there would ever be an Issue 2. We’re delighted to say that the response from the community has been incredible and we are so grateful to everyone who has supported what we are trying to achieve. We’ve done our very best to take all of your feedback on board and incorporate it into this new Dimrill Dale themed issue so hopefully you’ll enjoy this one even more than the last!

One of the most commonly requested features was an enlarged hobby section and we have tried to deliver! In addition to another brilliant Painting Masterclass from Kev Lawrence, we have a fantastic terrain tutorial from Rick Fryer and an article looking at how our stunning Azog miniature was converted by Dave Fredericks and subsequently painted by James Baldwin. These outstanding contributions mean that Issue 2 contains some genuinely exclusive and exciting content that we think you will love.

Of course, there’s far more to the issue than just the hobby section. Kieran Street has penned a wonderfully evocative article about the importance of themed armies that should inspire generals to think twice before building a filthy list. In addition, Sam Page has drawn on all the experience he’s gained over the last few years to write an insightful Tactica about Azog’s Hunters, before later putting his skills to the test in this issue’s Battle Report.

Simply put, this issue would not have been possible without the incredible hard work of all of our contributors and we would just like to say a huge thank-you for making Issue 2 so much better than we could have imagined.

We also want to say a special word of thanks to Jim Muller whose photographs grace almost every page of the magazine. We spent an entire weekend at Jim’s house taking hundreds of pictures and we’re sure you’ll agree that his photographs really raise the quality of the magazine. We’d also like to thank Patricia O’Byrne for proofreading 22,000 words of what must have seemed like unintelligible gibberish. Finally, thanks to Lily and Emma for always being so understanding and accommodating whilst we’re locked away working on our little project.

And so we reach the end of another Editorial and we’ve only scratched the surface of what an incredible experience working on SBG has been over the last year. We’re now committed to the project for the foreseeable future and we’re pleased to announce that both Issue 3 and Issue 4 are already in production. The road goes ever on and on...

Enjoy the issue,
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Tom Harrison is a regular on the UK tournament scene, winning two events on his way to finishing 2nd in the Great British Hobbit League in 2013. After investigating the most under-costed Warriors in the game in Issue 1, Tom now turns his attention to the great Heroes of Middle-Earth and uncovers the best bargains available to The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game generals.

In the Tom’s Top 10 - Under-costed Warriors article in the last issue of SBG, I discussed how the point values for Warriors can be determined. Whilst The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game seems to use a very simple system for determining the point value assigned to each model, some profiles do not follow this system and are, in effect, under-costed relative to other profiles.

In this issue, I’ll be turning my attention to the Heroes of Middle-Earth (excluding spellcasters and Monsters, as their point values do not seem to have been determined in the same manner as for other Heroes). One can use a generic Captain of Men profile, such as a Captain of Minas Tirith, as a benchmark to then determine how much every Hero ‘should’ cost. Using the metric shown on the right, I have calculated the most under-costed Heroes in the game.

You’ll notice that no Heroes possessing at least 3 Attacks and 3 Wounds are listed in the Top 10 which, at first glance, might imply that you get more for your

<table>
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<td>1 King’s Champion</td>
<td>80 points too cheap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Erkenbrand, Captain of Rohan</td>
<td>50 points too cheap</td>
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<tr>
<td>= Elladan &amp; Elrohir*</td>
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<td>= Haldir, Defender of Helm’s Deep</td>
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<td>= Rivendell Knight Captain</td>
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<td>= Erestor</td>
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<tr>
<td>*25 points too cheap each</td>
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Tom’s Top 10 - Under-costed Heroes: Part I

points by avoiding these high-end Heroes. However, there is actually more to these Heroes than meets the eye, so much so that there just isn’t enough space to talk about them in Part I of this article! But don’t worry - I’m going to look at the top echelon of Middle-Earth’s Heroes in far greater detail in the next issue of SBG - just watch out for Tom’s Top 10 - Under-costed Heroes Part II.

In addition to the lack of 3 Attack, 3 Wound Heroes, and equally as noticeable, there are no Evil models in my Top 10! Some relatively cheap Evil Heroes such as Fimbul and Narzug from the Azog’s Hunters army list [Ed - see page 18 for some in-depth analysis] and Vrasku and Mauhùr from the Isengard army list came close, but just fell short. In addition, I’m sure that the named Nazgûl on Fell Beasts would perform very strongly if I included them but, as mentioned earlier, I have ignored spell-casters and Monsters which rules them out on two counts!

Players might also be surprised by some of the Good Heroes, such as Rúmil, who are perhaps conspicuous by their absence; Dwalin didn’t even get close to the Top 10 despite the fact that his two-handed weapon and Burly Special Rule are arguably as good as Andúril which costs 75 points! This omission is because the synergy between Dwalin’s stats, wargear; and Special Rules are not taken into consideration in my simple metric. I discussed this inter-profile synergy in detail with respect to Warriors in Issue 1 of SBG and it applies to Heroes too. In fact, Heroes generally tend to benefit more from certain wargear relative to Warriors. For example, a banner or a war horn is ‘more valuable’ when on a Hero as they are harder to kill than Warriors,

**“There is far more to a Hero’s worth on the battlefield than simply being cheap”**

1 King’s Champion

The King’s Champion is a fierce warrior, having a Fight value of 6 coupled with 3 axe-wielding Attacks at Strength 5. He is always accompanied by two Heralds when in battle and this is where he really proves his worth. Bringing two banner-bearers (with Fate at that!) is a huge advantage, especially when coupled with the Heralds’ The Herald’s Duty and The Life Guard Special Rules. Having these companions makes the King’s Champion the undisputed winner of this Top 10 article!

2 Erkenbrand

Perhaps Erkenbrand’s most valuable asset is the Horn of the Hammerhand, which grants +2 Courage to the rest of his army – a huge boon. As if that isn’t enough, Erkenbrand gives Rohan players the option to upgrade Riders of Rohan to Westfold Redshields, providing them with access to that all important Fight value of 4. All of this, along with his 3 Might and cheap point cost, makes Erkenbrand an exceptional choice as a support Hero for armies of Rohan.

3 Elladan & Elrohir

The twin sons of Elrond and Celebrían are fearsome opponents. Their Twin Elven Blades Special Rule makes them as equally dangerous on foot as when they are mounted. However, beware: should one of the twins die, the Unbreakable Bond between the two of them will drive the other mad with grief, which can result in you losing control of the remaining twin! However, you won’t be worrying about this too much as they’re both so devastating in combat!
Who would have thought that a plucky young hobbit would make it into the Top 10? Merry’s 2 Attacks and 2 Wounds are a welcome bonus relative to his Fellowship profile and he also carries the \textit{Horn of the Riddermark} which he can use to inspire nearby hobbits.

The only unnamed Hero to make the Top 10, the Rivendell Knight Captain can carry an elf bow, an elven blade, a lance, heavy armour, and a shield making him extremely versatile when mounted; he is just as good skirmishing as he is in the thick of the action!

Unsurprisingly, there is far more to a Hero’s worth on the battlefield than simply being cheap. Elladan and Elrohir, whilst high up in my Top 10, have the disadvantage of having to go in the same warband; this often forces you to pick another Hero which reduces your force’s numbers and makes it easier for your opponent to outnumber and trap your Warriors. Perhaps we should consider Elladan and Elrohir’s total point value to include some of the cost of this ‘extra’ Hero? Complexities such as these are not factored into my basic calculations, for the simple reason that it would be so hard to assess their impact quantitatively!

It is almost certainly the effectiveness of a Hero’s Special Rules that is the most critical factor when it comes to the perception of whether or not they are under-costed. It may surprise some to see that Legolas does not make the Top 10, given that he is often thought of as one of the most cost-effective Heroes in the game. This widely-held consensus is based on the fact that Legolas’ \textit{Expert Shot} Special Rule is so effective, yet, in my simple metric, it is only ‘worth’ 5 points; clearly some Special Rules \textit{should} cost more than the 5 points that I have assigned to them in this exercise.

However, there does not seem to be much consistency; some Heroes do seem to pay a premium (i.e. more than 5 points) for their Special Rules (such as Groblog for his \textit{Mithril Crown} and Taskmasters for their \textit{Whip of the Masters}), whilst some Heroes in

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**Tom’s Top 10 - Under-costed Heroes: Part 1**

**Rivendell Knight Captain**

The only unnamed Hero to make the Top 10, the Rivendell Knight Captain can carry an elf bow, an elven blade, a lance, heavy armour, and a shield making him extremely versatile when mounted; he is just as good skirmishing as he is in the thick of the action!

**Meriadoc, Captain of the Shire**

Who would have thought that a plucky young hobbit would make it into the Top 10? Merry’s 2 Attacks and 2 Wounds are a welcome bonus relative to his Fellowship profile and he also carries the \textit{Horn of the Riddermark} which he can use to inspire nearby hobbits.

**Honourable Mention**

Beregond and Damrod have the \textit{Bodyguard} and \textit{Woodland Creature} Special Rules respectively. What makes them truly great choices is the fact that they are so cheap, as this allows you to field either more Warriors, more expensive Heroes (such as Boromir of the White Tower), or thematic allies like Gandalf the White.

**Dishonourable Mention**

These two devious characters can be worth their weight in gold! Alfrid can use his \textit{Dubious Council} Special Rule to give Might to Heroes and is often seen skulking behind the ranks of Good armies because he is so effective yet so cheap. Gríma is nearly as cheap and can be even more infuriating thanks to his \textit{Wormtongue} Special Rule!
A recent all-Hero Arena of Death showed that, whilst some Heroes may be better for their points than others, this does not necessitate that they are the best when it comes down to a showdown!

**Tom's Top 10 - Under-costed Heroes: Part 1**

Let Tom know your thoughts and opinions by writing to us at:

SBGmagazine@gmail.com

It is the effectiveness of a Hero’s Special Rules that is arguably the most critical factor when it comes to the perception of whether or not they are under-costed.

The fact that some Heroes can enhance friendly Warriors adds an extra level of complexity to this already confounding problem. For example, how does one go about assessing Arvedui, Last King of Arnor’s *The King in the North* Special Rule which grants him a Stand Fast! of 12”? This can be worth a great deal to an army with low Courage Warriors but is worth far less to an army that includes lots of elves or Warriors with the Bodyguard Special Rule.

Special Rules involving Might are often the hardest to quantify in terms of their worth – examples include Eorl the Young’s Legendary Hero and the aforementioned Whip of the Masters. These Special Rules can be incredibly effective yet this can vary depending on the game in question, making it incredibly difficult to assign them a ‘fair’ point cost.

To make things even more complicated, some Special Rules only affect specific types of Warriors, such as Faramir granting Osgiliath Veterans a higher Fight value. Consequently, some Heroes are ‘better’ for their point value when they are taken alongside specific troops. Suffice to say, there are many more examples - I’m not even going to start trying to assess the value of the Goblin Scribe’s Always More From Where They Came From! Special Rules such as these are fiendishly difficult to assign a point value, not to mention highly subjective, making them all but impossible to incorporate into a Hero’s point cost.

So, to conclude, lots of the points that I made in the Warrior-focused article in Issue 1 of SBG still apply to Heroes. However, the added intricacies that Heroes bring with their profile, such as their ability to make nearby troops more effective, makes it far more difficult to accurately discern their ideal point cost. The Top 10 presented in this article is based on a method that is far from infallible and I’d be really intrigued to hear who would make it into your Top 10 under-costed Heroes. It would be interesting to see how my logical, yet fundamentally flawed, list would differ to a list based purely on your own gut-feeling.

Let Tom know your thoughts and opinions by writing to us at:

SBGmagazine@gmail.com
Dr Grant is a wargaming enigma, a mysterious scoundrel known to haunt The One Ring forums with an unhealthy passion for Feral Uruk-hai and dinosaurs. In this article, he examines the fast friendships that develop between wargamers of all ages and ponders if all is as it seems.

It was October 2013, I was 30 years-old and lying on an air bed; a few metres to my right, Sam Page, 21, was snoring peacefully on another. As I lay gazing ahead, I was attempting to work out how many times Sam and I had met each other. I ultimately decided that I’d met him on four or five separate occasions in total and it occurred to me how strange it was that I was spending the night with a guy 10 years younger than me who, by any normal standard, I’d barely met. Stranger still, we were sleeping in Tom Harrison’s parents’ house, this of course was fine as Tom (who was 22) and I went way back, having met just over a year before…

Whilst it was somewhat bizarre for me, I think perhaps the situation would have been even stranger for Tom’s parents, I can just imagine the conversation:

“Hi Mum, I’ve got a couple of friends coming to stay.”

“Oh right, are they friends from university?”

“No, one’s a 21 year-old I’ve barely met and the other’s a 30 year-old married man.”

“Right…”

My first The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game tournament was in June 2012. As I rocked up to the table for my second game, an event happened that was to forever change the course of my wargaming career: a fresh-faced, charming young man reached across the table and introduced himself, “Hi, I’m Tom”.

We had a great game, had lunch together, formed a pub quiz team and kept each other updated on how our games were going throughout the rest of the tournament. Just as everyone was saying their goodbyes, I made my move. I noticed Tom was on his own by the miniature cabinets and so I snuck over, palms sweating, heart racing and asked Tom if he was on Facebook (I couldn’t ask him for his mobile number, we weren’t there yet).

It had been a long time since I’d asked anyone out and the silence seemed to hang in the air for an eternity before he answered in an uncertain voice: “Yes”. We swapped details, said our goodbyes and then I rushed out of the room to see if he’d sent Sam and I play regularly and often travel to tournaments together, but how much do we really know about each other?
me a Friend Request. Thankfully, very soon he did, and in the weeks following the tournament we spent a lot of time sending each other very long messages over Facebook. Whenever I sent such a message, I would then immediately start to worry, “Would that put him off? Have I said too much?” and almost all of our early messages tended to finish with something like, “Sorry for writing such a long essay again!” Of course neither of us would ever mind as it was another chunk of hobby content to sink our teeth into, but there’s no denying that the start of this relationship felt quite strange and more than a little like dating…

Still, I didn’t care, it was amazing - I suddenly had someone who understood the game and hobby on the same level as me! This might not seem like a big deal to many gamers, so allow me to explain...

Since I’d got back into the hobby in 2011 I’d been gaming with my existing friends, they were all big fans of The Lord of the Rings but they weren’t hobbyists or painters; whilst they enjoyed playing the game, they didn’t own any models or have any intention of getting any. Finally meeting someone like Tom who was into the whole hobby was a great feeling for me, so I gleefully threw myself into this new relationship. Throughout the first few months of knowing each other, it had never occurred to me to ask Tom’s age and (being almost 30 at the time) I must admit I was given pause for thought when I discovered that he had just turned 22; I didn’t have many friends that were 8 years younger than me and this felt a little strange.

The concept of what constitutes a friend in the modern world is an interesting one; for the first sixteen years of our lives we meet the majority of our friends at school, meaning that, more often than not, they’re the same age as us. Upon entering the world of work this begins to change, we’re suddenly thrown into businesses with a range of people with a range of ages; as we slowly form bonds with them we develop friendships with people in a situation where age is utterly irrelevant. Indeed, I work with a group of people who I would consider to be friends but, if I’m honest, I don’t have a clue how old most of them are. Taking a bit of a punt, I would say that the group of friends I have lunch with varies from 22-42 years-old.

Clearly then, once you reach adulthood, there’s nothing wrong with being friends with people who are 10 or even 20 years younger than you and as there’s only 8 years difference between Tom and I, there’s no problem there. However, the difference is that the group I have lunch with didn’t all meet on one day, it was an organic process that has developed slowly over the last 8 years; I have to admit that somehow throwing myself into such a full-on relationship with someone 8 years younger who I barely knew felt a little…weird.

Still, fast forward to today and a fair few of the readers will know what happened next; despite the age gap, Tom and I have spent a lot of time together and it’s safe to say that we’re now very good friends. This was certainly an unexpected bonus of getting back into the hobby which I had primarily done to play some games with my existing friends and start painting again. I certainly hadn’t conceived that, just as it had done back in my teens, the hobby would actually create

“...There’s no denying that the start of this relationship felt a little like dating...”
new friends. It would seem that wargaming, and perhaps *The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game* in particular, can generate firm and fast friendships far quicker than normal day-to-day life.

Little did I know that things were about to get even stranger as I started to delve deeper into the independent tournament scene. Tournaments are a great way to meet people and almost every event includes a few handshakes with the new faces as our community continues to grow. Nothing strange here of course, meeting new people is all part of life, but then *Facebook* came along and complicated everything...

It’s now become commonplace to return from a tournament and find myself with one or two *Facebook* Friend Requests and, I must admit, initially I found this slightly odd. I’m slightly older than the average wargamer on the tournament scene and I think I have traditionally used *Facebook* in a different way to younger players. I joined *Facebook* when I was 25, I didn’t grow up with it at school and I think that this makes a difference. Most people my age were using *Facebook* as a way to connect with their existing friends, not as a way of making new ones. All of my ‘Friends’ on *Facebook* were friends in the traditional sense, people I’d known for a long time and with whom I had existing relationships. Suddenly being presented with requests for friendship from people I barely knew was something with which I initially struggled; this is particularly ironic given that these days I use *Facebook* almost exclusively for communicating with my wargaming friends!

What I find even stranger is that I now talk (and by talk I do of course mean type) to my wargaming friends far more than I talk to my ‘real’ friends. I’m typing this on a Sunday evening and, scrolling through my *Facebook* messages, I see that I have been chatting on thirteen different chat threads this weekend all of which were to my wargaming friends. Conversely, I can go weeks without communicating with my ‘real’ friends in any form whatsoever, a fact that certainly gives me pause for thought.

It’s hard to explain why but many people my age, certainly my friendship group, have dramatically decreased the amount they use *Facebook* over the last few years. However, despite this, I check *Facebook* every day without fail and interact with countless people on a variety of different topics thanks to *The Great British Hobbit League Facebook* group. Inevitably, these discussions lead to instant chat threads and before too long I find myself carrying on long-running conversations with many people that I’ve never met!

Staggeringly, as I scroll through my *Facebook* Messages inbox, the first twenty threads I have are all with people that I have met through wargaming and, incredibly, only three of the first fifty threads are with people I knew before wargaming. I find this genuinely surprising and it makes me realise how much *Facebook* has become an almost exclusively wargaming forum for me.

“It hadn’t conceived that, just as it had done back in my teens, the hobby would actually create new friends”
to my house for the first time, I was explaining who he was to my wife. After telling Emma what good mates we were, she asked, “What does he do for a living?” I didn’t know. “Where does he live?” I didn’t know. “Well how old is he?” I didn’t know. I could tell Em where Sam was in the League, what armies he regularly used and what he was currently painting, but I knew relatively little of the information that most people would consider absolutely basic for any friendship.

I think that criteria would apply to significantly fewer people than the vast number of wargamers with whom I’ve shared a beer. Anthropologist Robin Dunbar argued that “within primates there is a natural grouping of 150. This is the number of people you can have a relationship with; there’s some personal history, not just names and faces”. So, given that perhaps we’re only biologically capable of having 150 friends at the very most, how does my tally stack up?

When I got married, I remember thinking that planning a wedding was a really great way of working out how many friends you have! Everyone I wanted to be at the wedding got an invite and we had 110 guests, that’s roughly 55 each for my wife and I. I think I had about 25 family members there so it follows that at that point in my life I had about 30 friends (certainly far less than my 500+ Facebook Friends tally suggests).

An interesting question then is that if I were to get married again today (a turn of events that Emma would no doubt want to discuss), would any of my wargaming friends get invited to the wedding? The answer is absolutely yes, maybe not as many as I’d go to the pub with but the “White Council” would certainly have a presence. I find it incredibly strange to think that I hold some of these people so close that I would put them in the same class as the friends I have had for nearly twenty years. It’s wonderful indeed to see that this hobby can create such meaningful friendships between people, particularly as this clearly refutes the arguments of some detractors that this is an isolated and lonely hobby.

Ultimately, perhaps it’s no surprise that we form such close bonds given the incredibly niche subject matter for which we all share a fervent passion. In my everyday life I don’t get much chance to chat about my favourite pastime (that’s Tolkien and wargaming if you weren’t following), so it makes sense that, when we do all get together at tournaments, we form quick bonds and perhaps accelerate the process of creating new friendships in our efforts to capitalise on this common ground. Are these wargamers ‘friends’ in the traditional sense? Perhaps not, but maybe that doesn’t matter in the slightest, I just feel incredibly lucky that what is already a wonderfully rewarding hobby has allowed me to meet some truly wonderful people who I feel lucky to call my friends.

Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m off to petition the OED to change the meaning of ‘friend’ to: ‘An acquaintance who knows that it is appropriate, nay necessary, to spontaneously join you in screaming ‘DU BEKÅR!’ when things go well’.

The Dr’s Corner

Perhaps it’s no surprise that we form such close bonds given the incredibly niche subject matter for which we all share a fervent passion.

It was an eye-opening experience which leads me to the question: ‘when does a wargaming friend become a ‘real’ friend?’ The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines a ‘friend’ as ‘a person with whom one has developed a close relationship of mutual trust and intimacy’ - this definition would certainly apply to a lot of my wargaming peers and so maybe I’m ‘real’ friends with lots of them. However, I fear that perhaps our tournaments may give a misleading sense of how close we all are; we’re thrown together playing a game we love and socialising for a weekend, surely we’re guaranteed to get along?

Personally, to consider someone a true friend, I think I would have to be willing to spend an evening with them in the pub with no reference to elves or Might points, thus demonstrating that our relationship existed beyond wargaming. If I were being truly honest with myself,
Kieran Street is a familiar face on the UK tournament scene and has developed a reputation for placing the theme and character of his armies above all else. Here he explains why...

Games Workshop’s take on battles in Middle-Earth has always had a special place in my heart, primarily due to the love that I have for the works of Tolkien and the thrilling tale of the War of the Ring. There is something uniquely immersive about leading a host of valiant elves, or sending forth legions of fell orcs, that I have never been able to replicate in any other gaming system. Ever since my first game I have loved battling my way through the enchanting world of Tolkien and The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game is without a doubt my favourite wargame of all time.

Over the years, I seem to have gained a reputation for being the ‘theme guy’, or for using fluffy forces, so the SBG team thought it apt that I pen my thoughts on the subject. In this article, I am going to talk about what is meant by fielding a fluffy army and why I think it is both an important and rewarding aspect of The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game.

So, what is a fluffy army?

A fluffy, or thematic, army is one that holds a key concept of Tolkien’s world at its heart - a concept that its controlling player then tries to bring to life upon the table-top. These armies tend to be full of character and restrict themselves to using only Heroes and Warriors that fought together (or at the very least who would have had a chance of fighting together), during the many battles that took place throughout the rich history of Middle-Earth. To recreate many of the epic moments from Tolkien’s stories. Such examples might include the High Elves and the men of Númenor forming The Last Alliance and fighting together...

One of the great things about building an army in The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game is the freedom of choice available to players. As long as they are similarly Good or Evil, every faction in the game can ally with any other, allowing players to recreate many of the epic moments from Tolkien’s stories. Such examples might include the High Elves and the men of Númenor forming The Last Alliance and fighting together...

Some of the fluffiest armies are those inspired by moments in the films, such as when Uglúk’s uruk-hai met up with Grishnákh’s orcs!

“Dice rolls are transformed from arbitrary game mechanics into visions of heroic and desperate deeds”
on the plains of Dagorlad, or the Rohirrim riding to the aid of Gondor in its hour of need at the Battle of the Pelennor Fields. The armies I find the most inspiring are those that look like they’ve marched straight out of the pages of *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit* and onto the table-top.

**What is it about themed forces that I find so appealing?**

*The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game* has always lent itself to inspiring, narrative-driven games in which epic tales can be written of the heroes (and villains) of Middle-Earth. Whether it is a Captain of Rohan defending his homestead, an uruk-hai commander smashing down all before him, or Samwise Gamgee desperately defending Mr. Frodo from foul orcs, *The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game* gives players the chance to write heroic tales of their own.

When playing with or against a thematic army, I find that an extra layer of enjoyment is added to the game. The results of every dice roll are transformed from an arbitrary game mechanic into visions of heroic and desperate deeds. Will that lone Warrior of Rohan triumph in combat for the third time in a row and fight his way to Théoden? Will the Knight of the White Tower single-handedly slay the enemy Troll Chieftain in a dazzling display of swordsmanship, or will the brutal beast crush him underfoot? For me, these epic moments are what make this fantastic game worth playing. Regardless of the outcome, a new story will unfold as you play: the emphasis is not just on winning or losing, but in creating an evocative tale that will make for an enjoyable and exciting game for both players.

Can a thematic army be competitive?

The in-game effectiveness of your army should never be the primary focus when creating a thematic force; instead you should concentrate on replicating the magic of Tolkien on the table-top. However, it is perfectly possible to build a nicely themed army capable of notching up a few victories. Most of the factions within the game have all of the tools that they need to contest the top tables at tournaments and a good number of themed lists can be honed to have a competitive edge without compromising the integrity of their chosen theme.
Of Fluff and Fury

WHAT IF?

An interesting spin on the discussion of theme is a ‘what if?’ scenario, where players take the events of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* and give them a twist to explore a new concept or idea. Forces created in this way are rarely constructed from a desire to win games but rather to experiment with something that deviates from the established works of Tolkien.

The ‘what if?’ subject can be contentious but, if done for the right reasons, can also produce some interesting and exciting results. Consider the fun that could be had with such quirky ‘what if’ situations as:

What if Saruman the White had stayed loyal throughout the War of the Ring?

What if the Fellowship of the Ring had set out with Faramir instead of Boromir, Glorfindel instead of Legolas, or Radagast instead of Gandalf?

What if Bilbo Baggins had never joined Thorin Oakenshield on his quest, would the dwarves have been squashed into jelly by trolls, run down by wargs or killed by spiders?

What if Sauron had personally led his army at the Black Gate and duelled with Aragorn?

What if the eagles had always turned up half an hour late...

Taking the unnamed Ringwraiths on horseback conjures up fond memories of *The Fellowship of the Ring*; however, whether or not they are competitive on the table-top is another matter entirely...

I once turned up to a tournament with a Paths of the Dead themed army (written at 2am the night before!) consisting of Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, and as many Grey Company rangers and Warriors of the Dead as I could find!

The following morning, upon seeing my force, SBG’s Tom Harrison’s first words were: "You’re going to get annihilated!" While Tom did manage to beat my army (incidentally whilst using a nicely themed Defenders of Helm’s Deep force), I did manage to conjure up an impressive (and unexpected) victory against an incredibly tough Isengard list controlled by the other half of SBG, Damian O’Byrne.

Later in the year, whilst using a similarly fun and fluffy force, I also defeated Ed Ball’s dreaded Fell Beasts, no easy task given that Ed has won several tournaments using this infamous army. It seems that, no matter what kind of list you’re using, the more games you play with a particular army, the better you will become at using it. You may have to work harder with a themed army but there is certainly something satisfying in triumphing with theme over ‘filth’. That’s not to say that Damian or Ed necessarily use filth, they are simply tournament-optimised forces; the Nazgûl are actually a great example of a fluffy force - I just wish Ed would make one concession and, when fielded, use the Witch King as his Leader!

However, the concept of theme is, of course, an entirely subjective one and can quickly become contentious! One player might...
Moria armies can be highly competitive in the hands of an experienced general. However, this army, stripped of shamans and elites and burdened by such infamous ‘point sinks’ as the Balrog and Moria Goblin Drum, will struggle against most forces. But should that matter enough to make you change it? I think it is a cool and themed idea to ally Lothlórien with Rivendell as the factions have common kinship, whereas another might view this alliance as an easy way to cover the weaknesses in each faction by adding variety to the available troop-types.

The other side of the coin

The fact that I love playing with theme doesn’t mean that there is anything wrong with playing to win-at-all-costs. It has taken me a long time to accept the previous sentence and to understand that some people don’t care about the story, or the heroics, or if their army has a mismatch of Heroes such as Aragorn, Elendil, Alfrid and Tom Bombadil, as long as it is capable of winning a tournament. Furthermore, a win-at-all-costs army won’t necessarily be unenjoyable to play against or be incapable of generating the odd epic moment, it is just that the focus becomes more about winning a game through the mechanics provided by the rules. Whilst there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, I find it sad that the magical world of Tolkien simply becomes another wargame with different kinds of toys, the characters just model tokens with a variety of arbitrary abilities.

“There emphasis is not just on winning, but on creating an evocative tale that will make for an enjoyable game for both players”

There and back again

When all is said and done, this is a hobby to be played for enjoyment and I now appreciate that different people find that enjoyment in different ways. For me it is all about the story and playing as well as possible (within the spirit of my army’s narrative) with the thematic armies that I want to use. For others it is about winning as many games as possible with the hardest, most ‘broken’ lists they can conceive; there is certainly a balance to be struck between the two and each player needs to find where that balance lies for themselves. If you want to use a thematic force, then do so. If you want to take an ultra-competitive, win-at-all-costs list, then do so - just be honest about it.

Above all, remember that the game should be enjoyed by both you and your opponent and that playing in a fun and sporting manner is far more important than the contents of your army list. Ultimately, the decision of fluff or fury is yours to make; the actions of other players are not for us to decide, all we have to decide is what to do with the theme that is given to us…
The Battle of Azanulbizar

In this new scenario, SBG’s Damian O’Byrne recreates the epic battle outside the Dimrill Gate of Moria where Azog’s feud with the dwarves began and Thorin became a legend.

After the sacking of Erebor by Smaug, the Dwarf King Thror led his people to reclaim their ancient kingdom of Moria in the year 2799 of the Third Age. Little did he know that the dwarven halls had already been overrun by Azog and his vile Gundabad orcs. On the slopes of the Misty Mountains, the two forces fought in a vicious battle, the ramifications of which would echo through the ages.
**Scenario - The Battle of Azanulbizar**

**Participants**

**Good models**
- Thror, Last King Under the Mountain; Thrain, Son of Thror; Thorin Oakenshield with the Oakenshield; Dwalin; Young Balin
- 12 Warriors of Erebor with spear and shield
- 6 Warriors of Erebor with shield
- 6 Grim Hammers

**Evil models**
- Azog; Bolg; Golb, Gundabad Orc
- General; Gundabad Orc Captain with shield
- 12 Gundabad Orc Warriors with shield
- 12 Gundabad Orc Warriors with spear

**Objectives**

The Evil side is attempting to wipe out the line of Durin. The Evil side wins if Thorin, Thrain and Thror are all slain.

The Good side is attempting to reclaim the realm of Moria and rout the orcs from their ancient halls. The Good side must achieve the following objectives before Thror, Thrain and Thorin are slain:

- Kill Azog
- Reduce the Evil force to 10 models or fewer
- Move 5 dwarves off the northern table edge through the Dimrill Gate (when a dwarf model moves through the gate it may not re-enter play)

If any of Thror, Thorin and/or Thrain survive but the Evil force is wiped out before the Good player moves 5 models through the Dimrill Gate then the game is a draw.

**Special rules**

**Deadly Duel:** When the game starts, Azog and Thror must move as fast as possible towards each other (they do not have to call Heroic Actions to do so). They will not charge any other model and no other model will charge them or support them in a Duel. These rules apply until either Azog or Thror has been killed. If Thror is killed then this rule changes to affect Azog and Thorin.

**DU BEKÂR!**
- Every turn, Thorin may call a Heroic Strike without depleting his Might store. In addition, Azog’s I am the Master Special Rule does not affect Thorin so Azog must roll To Wound against him as normal. Finally, if Thorin kills Azog, every Good Warrior on the board gains +1 Strength for the rest of the game.

**Blood Feud:** Thrain’s Blood Feud Special Rule only comes into effect if Thror is killed. In addition to this, if Thror is killed, Thrain will be driven mad by grief and will gain a +1 bonus to his Fight and Strength characteristics but will suffer a -2 penalty to his Defence. Also, for the rest of the battle Thrain must charge if possible and will always attempt to charge multiple enemies. If Thrain cannot charge he must move as fast as possible towards the nearest enemy model (although he does not have to call Heroic Actions to do so).

**Layout**

This battle takes place on a 4’x4’ board representing the rocky terrain outside the Dimrill Gate of Moria on the slopes of the Misty Mountains. There should be a large rocky hill in the centre of the board (the bigger the better) and several smaller rocky outcrops and hills scattered around the board. In addition, the Dimrill Gate (roughly 3” wide) should be placed in the centre of the northern table edge.

**Starting Positions**

The game begins with the battle raging and the battle-lines having long since broken up. Place Azog on the central hill, 20” away from the northern table edge. Next, place Thror on the central hill, 20” away from the southern table edge (he should be 8” away from Azog). Then, starting with the Good player, both players take it in turns to deploy one model each. Both players may not deploy any model within 6” of another friendly model or within 1” of an enemy model and no Good model may be deployed within 12” of the northern table edge. Both players alternate in this manner until all of their models have been deployed. Thorin and Thrain must be deployed on the central hill.

The Evil side has Priority in the first turn. In addition, the Good player may not call any Heroic Moves in the first turn.

Neither side can be Broken in this scenario.

*Brand new profiles for some of these Heroes can be found on the next two pages*
On this spread you’ll find four brand new profiles that we have created for some of the Heroes that feature in our Battle of Azanulbizar scenario. Golb fills the sorely-needed role of a mid-level Hero in the Azog’s Hunters army list and, more importantly, finally gives the stunning Gundabad Orc General model a profile. The profile for Young Balin is included to represent his age at the Battle of Azanulbizar, offering players a more powerful, yet more expensive, alternative to his Thorin’s Company profile. Finally, we have provided profiles for Thror, Last King Under the Mountain and Thrain, Son of Thror. Despite their beautiful miniatures, these iconic characters from the films rarely grace the table-top because their point values are too high when compared to Thorin Oakenshield, and as such players often dismiss them. These new profiles have been costed relative to Thorin and we hope that they provide generals with a less obvious choice when selecting their Heroes so that Thror and Thrain soon retake their rightful place at the front of Army of Thror armies!

It goes without saying that these profiles are entirely unofficial and will not be accepted at tournaments. However, if you wish to use these profiles in friendly games then Thror, Thrain and Young Balin can be taken as part of an Army of Thror army whilst Golb can be taken as part of an Azog’s Hunters army.

**Thror, Last King Under the Mountain (dwarf)...........110 points**

After Erebor was lost, Thror led his people in an ill-fated quest to reclaim the ancient realm of Moria. He led his forces from the front, completely unaware of the horror that was about to befall the line of Durin.

**Wargear:** Dwarf heavy armour, sword and shield

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**Special Rules**

**Arkenstone:** The Arkenstone is the pinnacle of the great treasure hoard of Thror, a symbol of his kingship which he values above all else. The bearer of the Arkenstone passes Fate rolls on the score of a 3+. In addition, when taking a Fate roll, if the roll is a 4 or better, there is no need to expend the Fate point at all; it is free.

**Ring of Thror:** Thror bears the last of the seven dwarven rings. While he possesses it, Thror is Fearless. In addition and in an exception to the normal rules, Thror can use the Shielding rule in combat despite being Fearless.

**Thrain, Son of Thror (dwarf)............................125 points**

Thrain fought valiantly alongside his father and son at the Battle of Azanulbizar. When Thror was killed by Azog, Thrain, mad with grief, led a charge on the Dimrill Gate and was never seen again.

**Wargear:** Dwarf heavy armour and two-handed hammer

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Young Balin (dwarf).................................................................70 points

Balin was only 36 when he fought in the Battle of Azanulbizar but quickly gained a reputation as a brave warrior and a wise counsellor. He soon became a brother-in-arms to Thorin and a voice of reason to the young Dwarf Prince.

Wargear: Dwarf armour and Sword-mace

Golb was once Azog’s most trusted lieutenant, guarding the dungeons of Dol Guldur. However, Bolg has recently usurped Golb as Azog’s second in command, fuelling a bitter hatred between Bolg and Golb.

Special Rules

Burly, Ancient Enemies (see The Desolation of Smaug supplement p60).

Disgraced General: Golb has been supplanted by Bolg as Azog’s second in command and will do whatever it takes to impress his master. If Golb is within 12” of Azog he counts as being in range of a banner. In addition, Golb receives the Bodyguard (Azog) Special Rule.

Bitter Rivalry: Golb will never participate in any Heroic Action called by Bolg (Heroic Move, Heroic March, Heroic Combat etc.).

Options

Two-handed axe..................................................5 points

Gorblin, Gundabad Orc General (orc).................................95 points

Golb was once Azog’s most trusted lieutenant, guarding the dungeons of Dol Guldur. However, Bolg has recently usurped Golb as Azog’s second in command, fuelling a bitter hatred between Bolg and Golb.

Wargear: Heavy armour and two-handed pick

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Balin was only 36 when he fought in the Battle of Azanulbizar but quickly gained a reputation as a brave warrior and a wise counsellor. He soon became a brother-in-arms to Thorin and a voice of reason to the young Dwarf Prince.

Wargear: Dwarf armour and Sword-mace

M | F | S | D | A | W | C | M | W | F
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5 | 5/4+ | 4 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 2

We were lucky enough to have Rick Fryer build us a stunning custom-made Dimrill Dale battlefield for this issue’s Battle Report. Obviously, not everyone has access to this kind of incredible terrain but fear not, the scenario is easy to replicate with some standard wargaming scenery.

The picture to the left was taken whilst Rick was still building the board and shows Damian and Tom play-testing the scenario with a few normal sized hills, the Citadel Modular Hill, and even a Lego gate!
Sam Page is a veteran of *The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game* and is always willing to offer a helping hand to new players. He is prolific when it comes to creating armies of newly-released models and is often the first on the UK tournament scene to field a new army list. Here, Sam takes us through the tactics for one of his favourite armies - Azog’s Hunters.

**AZOG’S HUNTERS**

I have been using an Azog’s Hunters army ever since the first wave of *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* models was released in 2012. I was primarily drawn to the army because it offered some effective troops in the form of Hunter Orcs which I could use to supplement the cheaper Mordor Orcs in my existing Mordor army. However, as time went on, the Mordor contingent was slowly replaced by more and more Hunter Orcs as I started to fall in love with the miniatures as my collection grew.

Throughout 2014, I was keen to expand my Azog’s Hunters army as it was not an army that was commonly used by my fellow players and I really enjoyed using an army that people hadn’t really seen before. Based on my experiences of using Azog’s Hunters over the course of many games, I have developed some tactics that have allowed me to get the best out of the army, which the SBG team have asked me to share...

**Hunter Orcs**

Hunter Orcs are deadlier than their Mordor cousins thanks to their *Many Blades* Special Rule, which grants them an extra Attack when fighting on foot. Coupled with their Strength of 4, this makes Hunter Orcs excellent combat troops and your main priority should be to get these guys into the fray as soon as possible so that they can do what they do best.

The ability to mount Hunter Orcs on Fell Wargs is an added bonus, as it grants them faster movement and the usual cavalry benefits; it also allows them to charge into enemy models to which they don’t have Line of Sight thanks to the *Fell Sight* Special Rule.

The ability to charge without Line of Sight can be particularly helpful when facing a shield-wall. Try to keep your mounted Hunter Orcs behind your main line until the

**SBG’s Top Tip**

Fell Wargs can be taken on their own or can carry your Hunter Orcs into battle. Use their *Fell Sight* Special Rule to pick out targets that are hidden from view, such as these Dúnedain who are cowering behind the building!
armies clash; you can then use their extra movement to sweep around the flanks to engage any enemy spearmen even if they can’t see them.

Hunter Orcs are the only variety of orc with the option to equip a Warrior with a war horn, a useful bonus given their poor Courage and the fact that they don’t have access to a shaman without resorting to allies. On the subject of wargear, I would also always recommend putting a banner in any Hunter Orc force as the re-roll (effectively giving them 3 Attacks!) makes them even more deadly.

Gundabad Orc Warriors

Gundabad Orc Warriors are more heavily armoured than their Hunter Orc counterparts; they have a Defence of 6 when equipped with a shield which adds a welcome Defence boost to the army list. They also have access to spears - another useful boost (originally these were considered to be pikes; however this was altered by the official Games Workshop FAQ).

The main downside to the Gundabad Orc Warriors is that they are (relatively) expensive, being the same point value as an Uruk-hai Warrior despite having a lower Fight value. This increased cost is thanks to their Ancient Enemies Special Rule which can be useful if you’re fighting elves and/or dwarves but is wasted when facing other opponents. However, since Gundabad Orc Warriors are gorgeous miniatures (some of my favourite models in the entire The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game range) I include them regardless!

"Hunter Orcs are excellent combat troops and your main priority should be to get these guys into the fray as soon as possible"

SBG’s Top Tip

Use terrain to your advantage against superior opposition. Here, the Gundabad Orc Warriors have blocked the pass, preventing the dwarves from creating an effective formation. Even with the dwarves’ higher Fight value and impressive Defence of 7, the two combined Attacks of the Gundabad shield-wall, along with the Ancient Enemies Special Rule, should be enough to win the day!

SBG’s Top Tip

Hunter Orcs are relatively cheap in points, meaning that you will often outnumber your opponent. Use this to your advantage by lapping around the side of enemy formations to attack any spear-armed models. Once fighting one-on-one, the 2 Attacks of the Hunter Orcs, combined with the benefits of Feinting, should prove decisive!
The Heroes

Whilst Azog and Bolg are incredibly powerful, I believe that the best thing about Azog’s Hunters’ Heroes is the inclusion of relatively cheap 3 Might Heroes: Fimbul, Narzug and Yazneg whom I nickname the “Three Hunters” (Orcs).

Fimbul

Fimbul is, hands down, my favourite Evil Hero in The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game range. He has an impressive Fight value of 5 which puts him on a par with most Heroes of Men and, whilst he comes armed with an orc bow, he’s at his most effective in combat. Fimbul’s biggest asset is his Hunt Master Special Rule, which allows him to charge through difficult terrain without suffering any of the penalties that normal cavalry suffer. If you only have enough points to give one of the Three Hunters a Fell Warg, give it to Fimbul!

Narzug

Narzug’s main strength lies in his shooting ability. Whilst a 4+ Shoot value doesn’t sound too promising, his Lethal Aim Special Rule can be incredibly effective as it allows him to spend a free point of Might when making a shooting attack. If you mount Narzug on a Fell Warg [Copy Ed - note that you’ll have to convert this model!], he can move 5” per turn and still shoot, which is handy when trying to line up a clear shot. He isn’t a slouch in combat either, so don’t be afraid to throw him in when needed!

Yazneg

When mounted on a Fell Warg and equipped with a lance, Yazneg is a combat beast. The +1 To Wound is invaluable when fighting against enemy Heroes, especially those pesky dwarves! Yazneg’s main downside is his Fight value of 4 so, more often than not, you’ll need to Heroic Strike. Try to team Yazneg up with another Hero with a higher Fight value (like Fimbul) to prevent him from wasting his Might on Heroic Strikes against normal Warriors.

“Every Hero in the Azog’s Hunters army list has their own ‘flavour’ thanks to some evocative Special Rules”

SBG’s Top Tip

Take advantage of Narzug’s free Might point when shooting by targeting key enemy models such as banner bearers or lightly armed Heroes. If you convert your Narzug to ride a Fell Warg (as Sam has done above), he becomes all the more deadly.

SBG’s Top Tip

Fimbul is fantastic when charging enemies hiding in woodland terrain as, unlike most cavalry models, he can move without penalty. Even these partially obscured Mirkwood Rangers, who think that they’re safe thanks to their elven cloaks, cannot hide from the Fell Sight of Fimbul’s mount!
Hunter Orc Captain

A Hunter Orc Captain is a good choice for small games. Unlike the Three Hunters, Hunter Orc Captains have the Many Blades Special Rule which means they have 3 Attacks when fighting on foot. Use them to take out troops or try to force enemy Heroes to burn their Might by charging in and Heroic Striking against them.

Gundabad Orc Captain

Even with a lowly Fight value of 4, Gundabad Orc Captains can still be very effective in combat with their Strength 5 and Defence 7. Use them to call Heroic Moves so that your named Heroes can use their Might in combat.

The Gundabad Orc Captain profile can also be used to represent the Gundabad Orc General miniature (known to many as the original Bolg), as there is no official Games Workshop profile available for this fantastic model [Ed - alternatively, you can check out our unofficial profile on page 17].

Bolg

Bolg, Castellan of Mount Gundabad has a mightily impressive profile: he has a 3 for all of the ‘important’ stats (Might, Will, Fate, Attacks and Wounds) and a Defence of 7, making him a fantastic Leader. However, Bolg’s true strength lies in his killing potential; his Strength of 5 and formidable Fight value of 7, combined with his two-handed pick and Burly Special Rule is a terrifying proposition for any opponent. Consequently, Bolg will always gain +1 To Wound without any penalty which, in addition to a potential Strength of 8 if he Piercing Strikes, means that even the toughest Warriors will be wounded on at least a 4+.

Whilst Bolg’s biggest drawback is that he is extremely expensive, he can still make his points back using his Bringer of Death Special Rule. This Special Rule allows Bolg to ‘power-up’ as he kills more enemies: two kills gives him Terror, five kills gives him Harbinger of Evil and ten kills allows Bolg to spend one free Might point per turn!

Just keep Bolg clear of Heroes (especially those with pointy ears wielding magical elven blades) as they have the potential to stop your murderous rampage. In Bolg’s original profile, reaching ten kills was challenging because he could not take a mount; however, in his new Castellan of Mount Gundabad form, Bolg is the ultimate killing machine as he can now ride a Fell Warg into battle.

Despite this, I wouldn’t take Bolg in armies under 500 points as he severely limits your numbers. However, in armies over 700pts he is an excellent choice, a choice made difficult only because of his father…

SBG’s Top Tip

Yazneg’s The Price of Failure Special Rule relies on having Azog in your army. Using Yazneg’s Might points early on in the game before killing him off with Azog will not only help your army by increasing the effectiveness of Azog’s Stand Fast! but is also incredibly cinematic!

SBG’s Top Tip

Bolg is an effective fighter but will often struggle to get the most of his Bringer of Death Special Rule when on foot. Fortunately, the new Castellan of Mount Gundabad profile allows you to mount Bolg on a Fell Warg, making him far more effective. Aim Bolg at the nearest cluster of enemy Warriors and, with his ferocious attacking ability plus cavalry bonuses, he should notch up enough kills in no time at all.
Azog

Azog, as his moniker ‘The Defiler’ suggests, is a ferocious opponent. His stats are mostly the same as Bolg, the noticeable difference is that he is only Defence 5 (hardly ideal for such an expensive model). Whilst this vulnerability is slightly negated in his new Lieutenant of Sauron profile which has two extra Fate points, you should always keep Azog protected from shooting attacks until you can get him into combat. In addition, try to keep friendly models on either side of Azog to prevent him from being trapped, as one bad Duel roll can really hurt given his low Defence.

Azog’s main strength is his Hero-killing ability. His I am the Master Special Rule allows him to wound any Hero on a 3+, regardless of their Defence - even Smaug! Whilst you want Bolg to avoid Heroes where possible, Azog should start Hero-hunting straight away as few Heroes can survive a charge from the Pale Orc when mounted. Azog’s White Warg is the mother of all wargs, boasting an impressive 3 Might and, more importantly, both mount and rider can share their Might, Will and Fate, effectively giving Azog the best Might-Will-Fate combination in the game!

Ride them down!

Azog’s Hunters is certainly a fun army list to play with and looks great on the table-top; there is a good deal of variety in the troop-types and every Hero has their own ‘flavour’ thanks to some evocative Special Rules. It can be a competitive army when used wisely, although it does have its weaknesses. Low Courage can be catastrophic when the army is Broken (if Azog isn’t around) and Terror is your worst enemy! In mid-range point value games (500-700pts), you miss a durable Hero to act as your Leader in the absence of Azog and Bolg who are very expensive. To summarise:

Positives:
• Cheap 2 Attack skirmish-troops (Hunter Orcs)
• Fell Warg mounts bring the advantages of Fell Sight in addition to cavalry bonuses
• The Three Hunters are incredibly good value, especially when mounted
• Bolg and Azog can wreak havoc if used effectively

Negatives:
• Warriors have a low Fight value and low Courage
• Gundabad Orcs are relatively expensive, as are the top-tier Heroes (Azog and Bolg)

I hope that this Tactica article inspires some of you to take on the challenge of fighting battles in the name of the Pale Orc!

Sam’s Azog’s Hunters army in all its glory; he still has plans to add another warband each of Gundabad Orc Warriors and Hunter Orcs to complete this awesome force, which now totals well over 1000 points

SBG’s Top Tip

Azog, the Lieutenant of Sauron’s General of the North Special Rule grants him a Stand Fast! of 12”, which even affects friendly Heroes! Position your Heroes carefully when you are Broken so that their Stand Fast! rolls cover as much of the battlefield as possible.
Now that you’ve seen our new scenario on page 14, it’s time to put it through its paces in a battle report! Azog’s Hunters fan Sam Page was an obvious choice to lead the orcs, whilst SBG’s own Damian O’Byrne was keen to try out his recently finished Army of Thror force. Who would emerge victorious? Tom Harrison was there to find out.

**The Battle of Azanulbizar**

**Damian:** Having recently completed my Army of Thror force, I jumped at the chance to put it to the test in a battle report and attempt to reclaim Moria! I knew that Sam was an experienced Azog’s Hunters general (not only did he write this issue’s Tactica article, but he also helped us to play-test this scenario!) so I knew that he would be using every devious trick in the book to scupper my chances of victory - this would be no walkover!

So, to my tactics: firstly, I knew that Thror was going to die; it would take a ridiculous turn of events for Thror to kill Azog and I certainly wasn’t banking on that! My hope was that Thror would be able to drain Azog’s Might by Heroic Striking, as this would make it easier for Thorin to take down the Pale Orc later in the battle. Of course, if Thror managed to win a Duel against Azog and inflict a wound or two then so much the better!

With Thror, Thrain and Thorin based on the central hill, I will deploy Dwalin and Balin to lead my assault on the Dimrill Gate. Dwalin is a combat beast and should be able to go toe-to-toe with Golb or possibly even Bolg, whilst Young Balin [Copy Ed - whose profile can be found on page 17] should be great for cutting through the Gundabad Orc Warriors!

Of course, the Dimrill Gate is the key objective and I will need to keep in mind that five models have to escape into Moria to win the game – it’s easy to lose sight of the objective in the heat of battle! During play-testing, many a dwarf player got lost in the red-mist and either wiped out the Evil force before moving five models through the Dimrill Gate (resulting in a draw), or were so desperate to kill the vile orcs that the number of dwarves dropped too low to achieve that objective!

Finally, despite both Thror and Thorin having shields, I have already decided that neither of them will use the option of Shielding for the duration of the game; we will not hide behind shields whilst others fight our battles for us, we are sons of Durin - it is not in our blood! DU BEKÂR!

**Sam:** After asking me to write the Azog’s Hunters Tactica article for this issue, Damian and Tom were keen to put my skills to the test in a battle report and I was more than up for the challenge. I have one simple goal: to wipe out the line of Durin forever - Thror, Thrain and Thorin must all fall before the Dimrill Gate. The ancient dwarven city of Moria is now ruled by Azog and there’s no way that I’m going to let it go without putting up a real fight.
In Azog and Bolg, I have two very powerful Heroes capable of taking down all who oppose them. It will be crucial for Azog to dispose of Thror without the use of too much Might. If I can manage this, then Azog should still be able to deal with Thorin even with his free Heroic Strike [Ed - see the scenario Special Rules on page 15] and with any luck I’ll be able to prevent this dwarf runt from ever becoming king. I will use Bolg aggressively, first to kill some dwarfen Warriors to power up his Bringer of Death Special Rule, before moving onto butchering the enemy Heroes. Having Bolg cause Terror will reduce the chances of him being surrounded, which could prove important should he roll badly!

Golb is a new profile found in this issue of SBG [Ed – see Page 17]. This sort of mid-level Hero profile is exactly what the Azog’s Hunter army list has been missing. I’ll need to deploy Golb close to Azog in order to make the most of his Disgraced General Special Rule; I think that the re-rolls will certainly come in handy, especially when fighting enemy Heroes like Balin and Dwalin. With an impressive Defence of 7 and 3 Wounds, Golb should be hard to kill and when he wins a Duel, he should make short work of anyone he fights thanks to his Burly Special Rule. It will be important to keep some of my army by the Dimrill Gate in order to block any dwarven scum trying to enter; I will use the Gundabad Orc Captain to slaughter any dwarves who get too close - after all, this is their objective!

One thing in my favour is the Gundabad Orc Warriors’ Ancient Enemies Special Rule, meaning they will be able to re-roll 1s when rolling To Wound. This could prove vital in my efforts to pierce the thick armour worn by the dwarves.

So with all this in mind, I think I am ready to defeat my enemy! Nargiz khobdi Rani Khozdil!
Turn 1

With Priority going to Evil automatically in Turn 1, Azog set the tone for the battle by barrelling straight into Thror. Inspired by their leader, Sam’s orcs charged forward into their dwarven adversaries. Thrain and Thorin were set upon by a single Gundabad Orc Warrior each, whilst Balin was ambushed by two. It was looking worse for his brother though, as Golb and another Gundabad Orc Warrior hurled themselves into the path of Dwalin!

At the start of the Fight phase, Thror and Azog both called a Heroic Strike in a bid to gain the advantage in their bitter duel, whilst Golb and Dwalin did the same. In the combats that ensued, Thrain killed the Gundabad Orc Warrior he was fighting, as did Thorin (three times over!) – seeing his grandfather up against Azog had clearly riled the Dwarf Prince! Unexpectedly, Balin lost to the two orcs he faced and suffered a wound – a terrible start for the young dwarf! Bolg destroyed the Grim Hammer he was facing; meanwhile, perhaps distracted by Bolg’s success, Golb rolled poorly for his Heroic Strike, allowing Dwalin to win the Fight with ease. Incredibly, and much to Damian’s annoyance, Dwalin proceeded to fluff his strikes against the fearsome orc despite only needing a 4+ To Wound!

In the main event of the turn, Azog managed to reach Fight 10 with his Heroic Strike, whilst Thror could only manage to reach Fight 9. Azog promptly rolled a 6 to win the Fight and inflicted two wounds on the King under the Mountain! Damian rolled for Thror’s Arkenstone and was dismayed when it landed upon a 2 - unless he expended the last two points of Thror’s Might, Thror would be out of Fate and have just 1 Wound remaining at the end of Turn 1! Damian did not seem to appreciate having such a predicament so early on in the game, but after much deliberation he decided not to use the Might, leaving Thror on the brink of death after just one round of combat with the Defiler!

Whilst the Heroes were busy fighting each other, dwarves and orcs were locked in combat across the battlefield and three dwarves and four orcs fell following some ferocious fighting.

Deployment - Thror stares down Azog at the top of the hill, with Thrain and Thorin fighting nearby. Meanwhile, at the hill’s base, Dwalin and Balin face off against Bolg and Golb in the assault on Moria!

Thror answers Azog’s challenge and duels with the Pale Orc upon the crest of the hill
In the combats that followed, Thorin killed the orc he was facing but Balin rolled poorly once again and Damian chose to expend a point of Might to win the Fight (as there was a possibility that Balin could have died had he lost!) and Balin notched up his first kill.

In the Heroic face-offs, Dwalin again bested Golb after another weak Heroic Strike from the hulking orc; however (again), Dwalin failed to take full advantage, as he only managed to score one wound. Bolg and Thrain both increased their Fight value to 10 after their Heroic Strike rolls, but in the Duel Thrain rolled a 6, whilst Bolg could only manage a 5 highest. Sam decided not to use a Might point to tie the Duel and was relieved when Bolg escaped unharmed after Thrain’s hammer missed its mark.

In the centre of the hill, Thror managed to Heroic Strike up to Fight 10 and this time Azog only managed to reach Fight 9! A despondent Azog could only manage a 2 highest in the Duel, so Thror easily won the Fight and managed to score a wound on the Pale Orc - the King Under the Mountain was not going down without a fight! Buoyed on by their King, the dwarves started to gain the upper hand in the rest of the fighting as three more orcs fell at the cost of just a single Warrior of Erebor.

Turn 2

Sam retained Priority on the roll of a 6 and charged Bolg straight into Thrain! Thorin and Balin both faced off against a single Gundabad Orc Warrior, whilst Golb and Dwalin continued their Duel. Three of the dwarves who had killed an orc in Turn 1 now found their path clear and started running towards the Dimrill Gate.

In the Fight phase, Thror and Azog both called a Heroic Strike (leaving them both with just one Might point remaining), whilst Golb and Dwalin both used their last Might point to also call a Heroic Strike. Not wanting to miss out on the burning of Might, Bolg and Thrain also called Heroic Strikes!

Outside Opinion

Tom: Damian decided not to use Thror’s Might following his poor roll for the Arkenstone. This was a sensible decision – whilst Thror can potentially survive indefinitely with the use of his precious heirloom, this is by no means a guarantee and keeping the Might would help him to weaken Azog’s Might store – a more important factor in the grand scheme of this scenario.
**Turn 3**

The dwarves took Priority for this first time as they looked to press their advantage. Balin led a charge towards the Dimrill Gate, whilst the Hero match-ups of Turn 2 were repeated.

In the Fight Phase, Azog, Bolg, Thror and Thrain all called a Heroic Strike – this left Azog and Thror completely out of Might! The Gundabad Orc Captain, who was fighting alongside an orc, called a Heroic Combat against a Warrior of Erebor. The dwarf Shielded bravely and forced the Gundabad Orc Captain to spend his last point of Might to win the Fight and kill the dwarf. Sam then charged the Gundabad Orc Captain and his companion into two dwarves making a break for the Dimrill Gate. However, both were unsuccessful in their second combat, the Gundabad Orc Warrior paying with his life.

With both Dwalin and Golb now out of Might, Dwalin had the Fight value advantage and was able to best his opponent for the third time in a row. This time he was able to inflict two wounds on the great orc, meaning that Golb had to pass his Fate roll to stay alive! Fortunately for Sam he passed - fate was on Golb’s side, for now at least. Nearby, Thrain and Bolg were both fighting ferociously and (after a tied Duel roll) could only be separated by a roll-off that landed in favour of Thrain, who was then able to score the first wound in the contest.

Despite this setback, the orcs were starting to turn the tide of the battle, with four dwarves falling at the expense of only two orcs. Thorin was at least able to kill the last Gundabad Orc Warrior on the crest of the hill, but was powerless to help Thror as he clashed with Azog once again.

In their Duel, Thror was gifted the higher Fight value as Azog once again fluffed his Heroic Strike roll! Elated, Damian rolled confidently for Thror, but his joy was short-lived as he was only able to roll a 4 highest and Sam punished him by rolling a 5! Thorin could only look on in horror as Thror was struck down; The King Under the Mountain had fallen and Azog hurled the King’s head towards Thorin in a defiant challenge!
Battle Report - The Battle of Azanulbizar

Turn 4

With the death of Thror momentarily stunning the dwarves, Priority switched to Sam’s orcs. Thrain’s Blood Feud Special Rule now came into effect and in a berserk rage he and Bolg hurtled into combat once more! Dwalin and Golb continued their Duel, whilst the Gundabad Orc Captain and nearby orcs tried desperately to prevent the dwarves from moving closer to Moria. Oblivious to everything going on around them, Azog and Thorin raced towards one another bellowing battle cries and clashed head-on in the centre of the board.

At the start of the Fight phase, the enraged Thrain called a Heroic Strike against Bolg and Sam decided not to counter on this occasion. Thrain was unable to take advantage of his higher Fight value though, only rolling a 3 highest! Bolg won the Fight but was unable to capitalise, inflicting just one wound (despite Thrain’s now-lowered Defence) which Thrain passed with the first of his 3 Fate.

Dwalin once again beat Golb in their epic Duel and finally Dwalin was able to kill his orcish adversary – this time scoring three wounds (leaving Damian wondering why he couldn’t have done that earlier!). Thorin’s free Heroic Strike took his Fight value above that of Azog who, with no Might remaining, could do nothing in return. Thorin rolled a 6 to win the Fight and caused one wound, Damian then immediately spent a Might point to cause another, leaving Azog with the prospect of death if he failed his sole Fate roll! Fearing the worst, Sam rolled without looking at the result. Damian’s groan told him all he needed to know – it had landed on a 6! Azog may have been badly wounded by Thorin but he was still extremely dangerous and Damian was hoping he wouldn’t pay for this missed opportunity.

Near to the Dimrill Gate, the Gundabad Orc Captain failed to kill the Grim Hammer he was facing. Elsewhere the fighting was just as bloody as the previous turn as the orcs continued to rally behind Azog; four more dwarves fell to the swords of the Gundabad Orc Warriors for the loss of only two orcs.

Outside Opinion

Tom: Damian was finding it hard to kill the Gundabad Orc Warriors equipped with shields and decided to use the Piercing Strike Special Strike against them; however, this was a risky strategy and it backfired as four dwarves fell as a result of their Defence being lowered over the course of Turn 4!

Azog begins his sworn oath to wipe out the line of Durin by decapitating Thror, sending Thrain into a blind rage and the dwarven army into disarray.

Azog and Thorin duel on the edge of the cliff!
Turn 5

Damian’s dwarves took back Priority and, with Bolg being the only Evil Hero with Might remaining, Sam decided not to call a Heroic Move. An enraged Thrain charged into Bolg and both Dwalin and Balin rushed forwards, ready to assist in the following turn – it looked as if Bolg would probably need that Might! The Gundabad Orc Captain continued to protect the Dimrill Gate by charging a Warrior of Erebor who had been racing towards it, whilst Azog and Thorin continued to contest the top of the hill.

Thorin only managed to roll a 1 for his Heroic Strike, giving Azog a chance! Both Azog and Thorin rolled a 6 in the Duel and it was Azog who took the roll-off! In this scenario, Azog’s I am the Master Special Rule does not work against Thorin, but he still managed to inflict a wound, which Damian managed to prevent by using a Fate point.

In the next heroic match-up, Bolg could only roll a 4 highest in his Duel against Thrain – surely a disaster! Damian nonchalantly rolled for Thrain only to manage a 3 highest, much to Sam’s delight! Bolg inflicted two wounds but Thrain passed his last two remaining Fate points to stay on 3 Wounds.

Turn 6

The Good side won Priority once again in Turn 6. Thrain had to charge the nearest enemy [Copy Ed - as a result of his scenario-specific Blood Feud Special Rule] so ended up charging a Gundabad Orc Warrior instead of Bolg, much to Damian’s disappointment. Bolg wasn’t let off the hook though, as Dwalin arrived to pick up where Thrain had left off! The Gundabad Orc Captain and nearby orcs continued in their efforts to block the way to Moria, but the dwarves were starting to edge ever closer and a single Warrior of Erebor managed to slip past and climb the steps of the Dimrill Gate!

All around the Dimrill Gate, the fighting was bloody; the Gundabad Orc Captain killed a Grim Hammer, whilst nearby a dwarf and an orc were both struck down. Thrain beat the Gundabad Orc Warrior he was facing and was able to bring down his enemy (but only thanks to the re-rolls afforded by his Blood Feud Special Rule).

Nearby, in the match-up between Bolg and Dwalin, Sam cursed in frustration as Bolg could only roll a 3 highest! Cackling with delight, Damian rolled casually for Dwalin and only managed a 3 highest himself, handing the Fight to Bolg thanks to his higher Fight value. For the second time in two turns, Damian had rolled appallingly in a Duel against Bolg! Bolg inflicted two wounds on Dwalin, who needed to pass at least one of his 2 Fate in order to survive. Damian could hardly look as he failed his first Fate roll, but sighed in relief as he rolled a 6 for his second and Dwalin survived by the skin of his teeth!

Once again Azog and Thorin clashed atop the crest of the hill and this time Thorin did not fluff his Heroic Strike and won the Duel. Needing to inflict only 1 more wound to kill Azog, Thorin only managed to score a 4 highest but, with a scream of ‘DU BEKÁR!’, Damian used a point of Might to boost this to a 5 and killed the Pale Orc!

Outside Opinion

Tom: After some clever backing away in the previous turn, Sam took advantage of Thrain’s Blood Feud Special Rule by forcing him to charge into a Gundabad Orc Warrior instead of Bolg. This prevented Bolg from being charged by both Dwalin and Thrain, increasing his odds in the Duel.
Turn 7

Seeing Thorin strike down the enemy leader inspired the dwarves to their third Priority in a row (Sam was not pleased!). Balin charged into a Gundabad Orc Warrior whilst Dwalin charged into Bolg again and, with no orcs blocking his way this turn, Thrain ploughed in as well! Both armies had given Thorin’s ferocious fight with Azog such a wide berth that there was nobody within charging distance of Thorin, so he rushed down the hill towards his father. The Warrior of Erebor that had topped the stairs last turn made it through the Dimrill Gate – only four more to go for Damian’s dwarves!

One Grim Hammer made it up the stairs and another three dwarves were closing in on the base of the stairs as Damian started to sense victory! The Gundabad Orc Captain and a nearby spear-wielding Gundabad Orc Warrior really needed to kill the Warriors of Erebor they each faced, otherwise the dwarves would surely overwhelm them! Sensing the importance of the Duel, the Gundabad Orc Captain rolled a double 6 to win the Fight and a 6 To Wound whilst his orc companion also managed to make a kill! Sam breathed a huge sigh of relief having greatly improved the situation around the Dimrill Gate - the game may not be slipping away from him after all!

On the central hill, Balin slew the orc he faced with ease, but could only watch on as Thrain and Dwalin took on Bolg. Thrain’s increased Fight value forced Bolg to Heroic Strike and Damian had no Might left with which to counter. Much to Damian’s dismay, Bolg rolled a 6 to win the Fight and whilst he only rolled one 4 To Wound, this was enough to slaughter Dwalin!

The first few dwarves break through the lines of Gundabad Orc Warriors and enter Moria!
**Turn 8**

Sam finally won Priority for the forces of Evil, allowing the Gundabad Orc Captain to charge a dwarf heading towards the Dimrill Gate and the Gundabad Orc Warrior with a spear who did so well last turn to head off another. However, despite their efforts, another dwarf managed to climb the steps leading to the Dimrill Gate with another close behind – there was still much work to be done by Sam’s orcs!

The now-terrifying Bolg charged into Thrain and Balin could not assist as he was tied up by a single orc. Thorin and a nearby Warrior of Erebor charged a Gundabad Orc Warrior and the Dwarf Prince called a Heroic Combat with his final point of Might in a desperate attempt to save his father from the same fate as Dwalin! However, in an incredible twist, Thorin and his companion rolled a 5 highest and Sam whooped with joy as his Gundabad Orc Warrior rolled a 6 to win the Fight! Damian could not believe it and buried his head in his hands, the orc failing to wound Thorin was scant consolation.

Unaware of Thorin’s failure, Bolg and Thrain duelled once more and Thrain again lost the Fight after rolling a 4 highest – Bolg was obviously affecting Damian’s dice. Bolg had clearly had enough of this fight as he rolled a 6,5,4 to kill off Thrain in one swing of his mighty pick! Sam whooped with joy again and Thorin (and Damian) could only look on in dismay – Sam now only needed to end the life of Thorin to take victory. Sam’s joy was dented as the orc spearman who had performed such heroics by the Dimrill Gate was slain by a Grim Hammer whilst Balin slew his orcish adversary with ease; however, the Gundabad Orc Captain continued his good form by killing another dwarf, leaving it all in the balance: next turn’s Priority roll would be crucial!

**Outside Opinion**

Tom: Damian’s decision to call a Heroic Combat with Thorin was not only thematic but also tactically astute. Not only would it have helped Thrain in his Fight against Bolg but it would have catapulted Thorin closer to the Dimrill Gate. Alas, luck was to abandon Damian!

**Turn 9**

Sam won Priority once again for Evil only for it to be snatched away from him thanks to Balin’s Longbeard Special Rule! This allowed a second dwarf to enter Moria via the Dimrill Gate whilst two more climbed the stairs as the dwarves pushed for victory. Dismayed by the death of his father, Thorin failed a Courage test to charge Bolg on a double 1 and had to use 2 Will points to pass! Bolg was also looking to avenge the death of his father and was more than ready for the fight. Balin ran towards the Dimrill Gate in an attempt to counter Sam’s defending orcs. The Gundabad Orc Captain sprinted up the stairs to fight the Grim Hammer trying to escape but, despite winning the Duel, he was unable to penetrate the thick dwarven armour. Sam had more luck at the foot of the stairs as Ancient Enemies proved its worth when another Grim Hammer was cut down by a Gundabad Orc Warrior.

Thorin’s free Heroic Strike took his Fight value above Bolg’s, yet once again (almost inevitably) Damian’s dice rolls abandoned him against Bolg as he rolled a 3,1,1 - clearly Thorin was still being affected by Bolg’s Terror! Bolg capitalised on this by inflicting two wounds and Thorin promptly failed both of his Fate rolls with a double 1! Damian selected some choice dwarven curses - Thorin’s ineptitude meant he was now left with just 1 Wound remaining! If Thorin died next turn, the line of Durin would be no more and Sam would take victory!
Turn 10

Sam grumbled as Priority once again went to the Good side and he could only watch in impotent rage as a third dwarf rushed through the Dimrill Gate. The Grim Hammer who had bravely fought off the Gundabad Orc Captain last turn was agonisingly close, but just could not cross the threshold to Moria despite running as fast as his short legs could manage! Sam sent the Gundabad Orc Captain hurtling into him in a desperate bid to stop him this time! Balin continued on his mission to reach the Dimrill Gate himself, charging into two Gundabad Orc Warriors in an attempt to break the orcish resistance. Steadying his nerves, Thorin passed his Courage Test this time round and charged into Bolg. Nearby, the only other Fight on the battlefield was an orc versus a dwarf – numbers had started to wear very thin on both sides with only five Evil and four Good models remaining!

The Gundabad Orc Captain won against the Grim Hammer but again failed to strike a telling blow. However, thankfully for Sam, the Gundabad Orc Captain’s Control Zone was now blocking the dwarf from getting past next turn! The dwarven Heroes dug deep, Balin killed one of the orcs he was facing whilst Thorin won the Fight against Bolg and managed to score a Wound, leaving both with just 1 Wound remaining!

Turn 11

Sam won Priority back for Evil only for it to be snatched away once again by Balin! This allowed Balin and the last remaining Warrior of Erebor to close in on the Dimrill Gate. Sam’s last two remaining Gundabad Orc Warriors charged into the back of the escaping dwarves but they were both killed ruthlessly – time was running out for Sam! Continuing their Duel, the Grim Hammer...
beating the Gundabad Orc Captain but failed to harm him; however, more importantly, the Gundabad Orc Captain had to Back Away from the entrance to Moria. Thorin and Bolg were completely unaware of the fighting at the Dimrill Gate as they were still locked in combat. With a great cry, Thorin managed to win the Fight and strike down his brutish opponent – Bolg was no more! Sam’s hopes were surely in tatters – the Gundabad Orc Captain was now the only Evil model left on the battlefield!

**Turn 12**

Sam rolled his eyes as Damian won Priority once again; crucially, the last Warrior of Erebor was then able to charge the Gundabad Orc Captain, nullifying the orc’s Control Zone and allowing the Grim Hammer to slip past and escape through the Dimrill Gate! Balin climbed the stairs with Thorin close behind but they could not save their fellow dwarf from being cut down by the Gundabad Orc Captain’s rage! Things were looking extremely tense – Damian only needed to get one more dwarf off the board whilst Sam had to bring down Thorin, who was left with just 1 Wound and no Fate! Could the Gundabad Orc Captain save the game for Sam?

**Turn 13**

Sam finally won back Priority and Damian chose not to counter with Balin’s remaining Might point as the Gundabad Orc Captain’s Control Zone would prevent Balin from escaping on this turn even if he moved first. Thorin raced up the stairs as Balin and the Gundabad Orc Captain clashed, with Balin managing to score a Wound and draw the sole Fate point of the last remaining Evil model. Perhaps more importantly, the Gundabad Orc Captain was forced to Back Away, leaving just enough space for a single dwarf to rush past him into Moria - the next Priority roll could decide the game!

**Turn 14**

Sam won Priority, but his joy turned to despair as Damian was able to use Balin’s final Might point to call a crucial Heroic Move and Balin escaped through the Dimrill Gate! Damian had now completed his objective of getting five dwarves into Moria; however he had not won yet – the line of Durin had to survive and with Thorin only on 1 Wound remaining this was no guarantee – Sam could yet snatch victory from the jaws of defeat!

The Gundabad Orc Captain hurtled into Thorin as the two sole models left alive on the battlefield clashed in a game-deciding face-off! Despite so much riding on it, Damian stayed true to his pre-game pledge and elected not to Shield! With bated breath, Sam and Damian threw their dice for this oh-so-important roll. The dice seemed to take an age to stop, but when they did, it was Damian who was able to celebrate – Thorin had won the Fight – and the game! In the final act of the battle, Thorin struck down the indomitable Gundabad Orc Captain with a final cry of ‘DU BEKÂR!’

The line of Durin had survived, but barely; there was no feast nor song that night, for the dwarves’ dead were beyond the count of grief…

**Outside Opinion**  
**Tom:** Damian saved Balin’s Might when there were certainly opportunities to use it earlier on in the game and his patience paid off as it allowed him to move first on the crucial final turn!
Damian: Wow! What a slaughter! That was an absolutely incredible game and I was relieved to steal a win right at the end. As is often the case, my carefully-laid plans quickly went out of the window; even though Dwalin did a great job of dealing with Golb, he and Balin were soon pulled away from the assault on the Dimrill Gate in a bid to help Thrain.

Of course, a special mention should go to Thorin who pulled through right at the death to win me the game. Thorin truly came into his own in this battle: he slew three Gundabad Orc Warriors, Azog, Bolg and the Gundabad Orc Captain - a mighty tally! However, it was darkly amusing to see Thorin fail a crucial Heroic Combat for the second SBG Battle Report in a row - it would seem that this is becoming something of a staple of our bat-reps and perhaps we'll need to include him in Issue 3's Battle Report to see if he keeps it up! I think Balin also deserves a special mention; he might not have had the same destructive power as my other Heroes, but he always seemed to be in the right place at the right time and played an absolutely crucial role in wounding the Gundabad Orc Captain in the penultimate turn before finally escaping into Moria to help me on my way to victory!

I was also very happy with Thror's performance, although he didn't start well; after my poor roll of a 2 for Thror's Fate in Turn 1, I strongly debated using his last 2 Might to boost the roll to a 4, this would keep the Arkenstone working which could potentially keep the King Under the Mountain alive indefinitely. However, I decided that Thror's Might was primarily there to drain Azog's by forcing him to Heroic Strike each turn and I think I made the right choice as Thror not only drained all of Azog's Might but also went on to inflict a crucial wound on the Pale Orc.

“*This was the most exciting recreation of the scenario that I've ever played*”

Damian

There's always a risk when you're producing a battle report that the game will be heavily one-sided or not particularly dramatic, but I can honestly say that this was the most exciting recreation of the scenario that I've ever played (helped no end by Rick's incredible scenery and Dave's stunning Azog conversion - thanks guys!) and I hope that this comes across in the Battle Report. All-in-all, it was a brilliant game that looked fantastic and was played in great spirits; I must say thanks to Sam for making it so much fun and for being a very tricky opponent to play against. DU BEKÂR!

DU BEKÂR! Damian claims a victory for SBG and the dwarves of Erebor by the tiniest of margins!

**Damian's deadly dwarf**

Whilst he could never match Thorin in raw killing ability, Balin was the unsung hero for the dwarves. He killed five orcs and inflicted a wound on the Gundabad Orc Captain, which helped Thorin to finish him off. He also played a crucial role in the attack on the Dimrill Gate, tying up the orcs and allowing other dwarves to slip through to safety!
Battle Report - The Battle of Azanulbizar

Orc of the Match - The Gundabad Orc Captain

Whilst it was Bolg who notched up the notable kills, it was the Gundabad Orc Captain that came closest to winning the game for Sam. Not only did the Gundabad Orc Captain kill five dwarves but his defence of the Dimrill Gate for the last five turns very nearly put paid to any chance of a dwarven victory; it was only the intervention of Thorin himself that spelled the end for this mighty foe and to the Evil resistance!

Bolg was certainly a contender for 'orc of the match' and easily made his points back in kills. Killing Dwalin and then Thrain in consecutive turns was quite the result! In the end, it was fitting that he fell in a revenge attack by Thorin, but even that wasn't a forgone conclusion as Bolg battered him down to 1 Wound before falling. He will certainly be making an appearance in my next Azog's Hunters army.

The Gundabad Orc Captain also proved his worth as a champion of evil in this game, slaying any dwarves who dared to approach his realm. His Defence of 7 meant that he was hardly threatened when he did lose a Fight and this, combined with his high Strength, makes him a worthy adversary. In the end it took both Thorin and Balin to take him down, falling as my last man standing [Copy Ed – last orc].

It could have been a totally different game if the two Gundabad Orc Warriors who charged into Balin in the first couple of turns had been able to kill him, as he turned out to be pivotal at the death. Alas, it was not to be; I must now skulk back to Mount Gundabad and tend to my wounds. Next time I’ll be back, stronger than ever, ready to end the line of Durin once and for all!

Sam: Well, that was close! This Battle Report was definitely one of the best games I have played in a long time. Hats off to Damian for playing a great game – both tactically and, more importantly, for making it such an enjoyable game! It felt as if we were both in the battle, living every important dice roll!

I think that I stuck to my battle plan relatively well; it was really only Bolg who strayed from it by charging down Thrain in a moment of impetuous hatred! After a slow start, the orcs really came into their own and proved their worth, even though we lost - Sauron will not be pleased…

“\textit{It felt as if we were both in the battle, living every important dice roll!}”

Sam

There were intense moments throughout, sadly I cannot list them all here! One moment that particularly stood out for me was when Azog saved his final Wound against Thorin and then proceeded to wound him in the next turn. And who can forget the last dice rolls of the game where the Gundabad Orc Captain had one final crack at Thorin for the win, only to fall agonisingly short! There were also some incredible twists and turns in Bolg’s Duels throughout – it was hilarious to see Damian’s dice fail him turn after turn against the hulking orc!
Painting Masterclass - Thror

Shadow & Flame is a collaboration between avid Middle-Earth enthusiasts Kev Lawrence (Shadow) and Dave Fredericks (Flame). They have been refining their respective crafts since 2001, providing the highest quality custom paint jobs, conversions, and scratch sculpts for all of your wargaming needs. Shadow has painted on commission for two years, during which time he has painted hundreds of miniatures for clients, while Flame’s conversion experience and commission services go back nine years, with his first scratch sculpts dating back to 2007. With all the excitement about the Battle of Azanulbizar in this issue, Kev got stuck into the beautiful Thror miniature and here he talks us through the tips and tricks he used to paint this incredible model!

1. Prime the model black. Once dry, drybrush Thror’s chainmail with GW Runefang Steel and paint the fur on his coat with a 60:40 mix of VGC Cold Grey and GW Abbadon Black. Finally, paint Thror’s hair and beard with VGC Cold Grey.

2. Wash the chainmail, hair, beard, and fur coat with GW Agrax Earthshade (thinned slightly with water).

3. Drybrush the raised areas of fur with VGC Cold Grey.

4. Paint Thror’s crown with GW Warplock Bronze and his face with GW Ratskin Flesh. Once dry, wash the face with GW Reikland Fleshshade.

PAINTS REQUIRED

Games Workshop (GW): Abbadon Black, Agrax Earthshade, Bestigor Flesh, Doombull Brown, Gehenna’s Gold, Nuln Oil, Ratskin Flesh, Reikland Fleshshade, Runefang Steel, Seraphim Sepia, Warplock Bronze

Vallejo Game Color (VGC): Beasty Brown, Bonewhite, Charred Brown, Cold Grey, Earth, Falcon Turquoise, Khaki, Stonewall Grey, Ultramarine

Vallejo Model Color (VMC): Dark Prussian Blue

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5. Pick out the detail on the crown with GW Gehenna’s Gold. Using a Fine Detail Brush, carefully paint two white dots in each eye socket, then use a 50:50 mix of GW Ratskin Flesh and GW Bestigor Flesh to highlight the bridge of Thror’s nose and and the tops of his ears. Brush highlight his hair and beard with VGC Stonewall Grey.

6. Highlight the fur with VGC Stonewall Grey and then again with VGC Bonewhite. Once dry, wash the fur with a 30:70 mix of VGC Charred Brown and water.

7. Wash Thror’s crown and face (including his eyes) with a 90:10 mix of water and GW Agrax Earthshade.

8. Paint Thor’s clothing with VGC Ultramarine before washing it with a 50:50 mix of water and GW Agrax Earthshade. Paint his armour and the middle of his sword with a 70:30 mix of GW Gehenna’s Gold and GW Runefang Steel. Finally, paint the beard straps with VGC Charred Brown.

9. Wash the armour, sword and blue clothing with a 80:20 mix of GW Agrax Earthshade and water.

10. Wash the area under the fur collar and where the fur meets Thror’s body (e.g. under the arm pits!) with GW Seraphim Sepia.

11. Paint the edge of Thror’s sword blade with GW Runefang Steel, then wash it with a 50:50 mix of GW Agrax Earthshade and water.

12. Highlight any gold areas with a 60:40 mix of GW Gehenna’s Gold and GW Runefang Steel. Highlight the very edges of the gold areas with a 90:10 mix of GW Runefang Steel and water. Do the same for any chainmail using GW Gehenna’s Gold. Highlight any the blue areas with a 70:30 mix of VGC Ultramarine and VMC Dark Prussian Blue.
13. Highlight the blue areas once more, this time with a 35:15:50 mix of VGC Ultramarine, VMC Dark Prussian Blue and VGC Falcon Turquoise. Then wash these areas with GW Nuln Oil. Finally, highlight the edges of Thror’s clothing in GW Gehenna’s Gold.

14. Glaze the bottom areas of Thror’s fur coat with a 10:90 mix of VGC Beasty Brown and water and glaze the top areas with a 10:90 mix of GW Doombull Brown and water.

15. Highlight Thror’s hair and beard with VGC Bonewhite.

16. Lightly drybrush the fur coat with VGC Bonewhite.

17. Drybrush VGC Beasty Brown onto the bottom of fur coat, followed by VGC Earth closer to the bottom of the cloak in order to create a muddy effect.

18. Paint VGC Beasty Brown onto the back of Thror’s shield, followed by a wash with GW Agrax Earthshade. Then paint wooden panels using VGC Earth and highlight these with VGC Khaki. Paint the shield handles with GW Runefang Steel to finish it off.

19. Paint the front of shield with VMC Dark Prussian Blue, followed by a wash with GW Agrax Earthshade. Pick out the detail on the shield using a 70:30 mix of GW Gehenna’s Gold and GW Runefang Steel, before highlighting again, this time using a 60:40 mix.

20. Highlight the gold parts of the shield with GW Runefang Steel and then wash this with a 2:1 mix of GW Agrax Earthshade and water. Paint the blue areas on the shield with a 40:30:30 mix of VMC Dark Prussian Blue, VGC Ultramarine and VGC Falcon Turquoise before highlighting again with pure VGC Falcon Turquoise. Finally, mix a small amount of VGC Bonewhite with VGC Falcon Turquoise and highlight again to finish the model!
Rick Fryer has been creating scenery for *The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game* for over a decade. In that time, he has tackled such awe-inspiring projects as the Golden Hall of Meduseld and the White City of Minas Tirith. Rick built the incredible scenery featured in this issue’s Battle Report and here he talks us through the techniques he used to bring the Dimrill Dale to life.

When Damian and Tom asked me if I would be willing to make a gaming table for *SBG*, I was overjoyed. Then they told me that they wanted me to recreate the Dimrill Dale…This made me shudder - modelling realistic looking rocks is fiendishly difficult, but what a challenge - this was something I had to do!

1. To make the baseboards, I chose 100mm polystyrene board, which I cut to size (four 2’x2’ squares) and covered with coarse-graded sand using PVA glue.

2. I decided to paint the boards with a chocolate brown drybrushed with lighter browns. I then sprinkled on various colours of fine turf, which I sealed in place by spraying watered-down PVA glue on top.

3. Static grass can be made to ‘stand up’ by using a small electric current. I made my own applicator from an electric fly swatter, replacing the mesh with a sieve. This improves the appearance of the grass and once you have used one you will never go back to just pouring static grass onto PVA glue!
4. The first major decision that I had to make was what method I was going to use to make the cliffs and rocks. I have used rubber rock moulds previously, as they produce plaster rock faces which can look very realistic and are very easy to paint. The rock faces can end up looking the same if you only have a few moulds, so I bought a variety of moulds and set about using this method to make what seemed like an endless amount of plaster rock faces. I then began the mammoth task of making all the rock mouldings using lightweight plaster.

5/6. I then formed the basic profile of the five rocky hills. First, the small two-layered hills (5), then the large four-layered central hill (6). These were made from 25mm thick polystyrene board, which was stuck onto a hardboard base using PVA glue. I built ramps to allow troops to get to the top of these hills without having to take a climb test.

7. The next step was to cover the surface of all the hills with the rock mouldings. I painted the polystyrene with lightweight plaster in order to create a suitable surface upon which I could attach the rock mouldings. The rock mouldings were fixed in place using lightweight plaster and the resulting join lines were filled in, again with plaster. To allow models to reach the top of the hills, I added small rock ledges around the base of each level.

8. The large rocky outcrop was very big and ended up being quite heavy and I had to put ridges across the ramp to prevent figures from sliding down it like a ski slope! I added some talus around the base to finish off all of the hills.

9. With the outcrops finished, I turned to the Dimrill Gate itself. I made this in the same way as the outcrops (see Steps 4-7), but added steps (that would allow models to stand half-way up) and pillars made out of polystyrene. I purchased a dwarven-style rock arch for the gate, fixed it in place and painted it with plaster - it was now ready to be painted.
10. I decided to use expanding foam to make the two cliff cornerpieces as I wanted to experiment! This comes in cans: you squirt the foam through a long nozzle and it comes out in a long sausage shape which then expands, doubling in size as it sets and hardens. This can produce rounded looking rocks if layered; however it is a very uncontrollable process and you never know quite how it will end up looking! For the two corner cliff faces, I made up a corner from three sections of hardboard and built up the cliffs by squeezing expanding foam within the space this created.

11. Now, everything was ready for painting, or in the case of the plaster-pieces, staining. I chose three basic colours made from very watered-down water based paints: a yellow-brown, a red-brown and a mid-grey. The plaster sucks up the moisture staining it, so I randomly splashed these colours over all of the rocks. I then gave everything a very thin wash of an earth-like colour. All of these colours will fade if left like this, so I sprayed everything with thinned-down PVA glue to seal the surface and stop this from happening. I then added shading by washing on a thinned-down dark grey paint followed by black, before again spraying everything with thinned-down PVA glue.

To give the cliffs an earthy look, I blew fine earth-coloured flock onto the surfaces while the thinned-down PVA glue was still wet.

Finally, to make the rocks look more appealing, I added some green flock and static grass to some of the crevices, around the bases and onto a few selected ledges. With that, the board was finally complete; I cannot wait to see it used in this issue’s Battle Report!

The finished Dimrill Dale board in all its glory, ready and waiting for this issue’s Battle Report to begin!
When the SBG team asked me to help repose Azog, my immediate reaction was "repose how exactly?" Damian and Tom asked for a more intimidating pose with Azog's left forearm intact but I still couldn't visualise it so I just asked Damian to pose as the prospective model for me. The photos served their purpose well (as well as being comedy gold!) so I got to work.

Oddly enough, this is a very simple conversion [Copy Ed – for you perhaps…]. Azog's left leg was cut off at the hip and rotated 90 degrees, with the torn loin cloth re-sculpted over the join. His head was cut off at the base of the skull, rotated and glued back on. At this point the neck looked a little thin, so I gave him bulkier neck muscles. It was important to remember that Azog has angular scars etched into his skin, so the putty blade was used to push the scar lines in to where they met the original ones on Azog's torso. The raised arm was slit at the elbow, bent outwards slightly and filled with putty to extend it further.

The hardest part of this conversion was creating the new forearm. Leaving Azog's 'claw-arm' in place, I heated the arm by dipping it in hot water for a few seconds. Once it became soft enough, I bent the stump back slightly to straighten the arm and then sculpted a new forearm up to the wrist over the top of the existing claw. Once set, I sculpted the fingers by attaching a trapezium-shaped blob of putty for the hand (smallest side to the wrist) before pressing in lines to separate the fingers. This was left to set before a thumb was added with a small sausage of putty. The knuckles were also made a little bit more prominent by adding a thin line of putty over that area, which was then separated into four smaller raised areas and worked into the existing hand to smooth the join.

And that's all there was to it! I have to admit, I now prefer this pose to the original and I'm looking forward to seeing it painted in the Battle Report!
With Kev busy painting Thror, James Baldwin was the man charged with the job of painting the incredible Azog that Dave had converted. Here he shares how he created the wonderful blood and rust effects on the finished model.

**Blood:** I use a glossy acrylic paint called Tamiya Clear Red to get a realistic and gory looking effect. First, mix 3 parts of this red to 1 part black. Now leave it for a minute or so, the paint will get a bit gloopy with a lot of texture, and this is what we want! The trick here is to create depth by darkening the first layer. Next, dab it on in lumps with a fine brush on the parts you want to look really gory. Let it dry well before adding the next layer - pure Tamiya Clear Red - this is our fresh blood. The combination of gloopy blackened blood and fresh red blood gives a really gory effect.

**Rust:** What sets rust apart from other techniques is texture - you need to apply solid paint pigment to previously painted metal areas to give a really thick rust. You need at least two colours to make the rust look realistic as rust is never just one colour - MIG make excellent pigments in appropriate colours - Light Rust, Standard Rust and Europe Dust are good choices. Mix each pigment with a little matte varnish or medium and stipple them on to the model one by one in a somewhat random pattern with an old brush. Then, before the medium is dry, take a dry brush and dust on pure pigment with no medium - again, use several colours for this, lighter ones are better - to create a really dusty rust effect.

Painting this superb conversion by Dave Fredericks of Shadow & Flame really was a pleasure and I hope these tips help you to achieve some similar results!

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**Young Balin**

Damian wanted his Young Balin figure to be modelled with an axe so he could be used as the Balin, son of Fundin profile whilst still maintaining the movie aesthetic. Here’s how he did it...

After cutting Durin’s Axe off Balin, I drilled into the axe-head, first with a 0.8mm drill-bit (1) and then with a 1.2mm drill-bit (2). After cutting the Sword-mace off Young Balin (leaving the pommel to be part of the axe) I repeated Steps 1-2 on Young Balin’s hands (3). I then cut the spear down to size before glueing it into the axe-head. Finally, I glued the completed axe into Young Balin’s hands (4).
HOBBY BLOG
A brief look into what the SBG team have been up to during the production of this issue

Damian: Having finished my Army of Thror force, I have now begun work on my BOTFA themed Thranduil’s Halls army. So far I’ve painted up 8 Palace Guard and 12 Mirkwood Elves to accompany my existing Mirkwood Rangers. Next up are 2 Mirkwood Knights, Legolas, and Thranduil (whose horse has been lovingly converted into an elk by Dave!). Maybe I’ll even start assembling Smaug...

Tom: Over the next couple of months, I’m looking to complete my Azog’s Hunters force: this involves painting 12 mounted Hunter Orcs, some un-ridden Fell Wargs, and the “Three Hunters” as Sam calls them [Ed - see page 20]! After seeing what a great job Damian did on Golb for the Battle Report, I’m also going to paint him up. Oh and then there’s the small matter of Smaug...

Sam: Over the last couple of months I have completed many projects including a Dale-themed force. I’m currently working on expanding my Hobbit-era Mirkwood force by painting up the new Finecast elves (the glaive models are my favourite poses). Once these are finished, I’ll go back to Thranduil and his Mirkwood Knights. Oh… and I have a Smaug to finish assembling.

Kieran: My latest quest with the paintbrush has taken me deep into the forests of Middle-Earth in search of powerful and ancient creatures… Ents! These are some of the best models I’ve ever painted thanks to James Baldwin who has been helping me develop my skills. The key is to ‘not be hasty’ and practice, practice, practice so that, one day, I can paint the one and only Smaug!

Dave: I’ve made so many mounted Radagasts and elks for Thranduil lately that I’ve lost count! I’m currently sculpting some cats for a Berúthiel commission, trying to finish off the Morgoth sculpt I started 18 months ago and armour up a couple of Azogs. Mounted conversions of Gil-galad and Glorfindel are next. Oh, and I have several Smaugs here to assemble in preparation for Kev’s brush...

Rick: I am currently building the outer walls of Edoras by following the design given by Dagorlad in his article on The One Ring and I’m just starting to make the main gate itself. Next up is a Dead Marshes terrain board and I have already bought some Spectres to go in the water! I’m also tempted to start building a Laketown board for all these new Smaugs to burn down…
Dear Readers,

The primary aim of SBG is to create an attractive and informative hobby resource for fans of The Hobbit: Strategy Battle Game. It is produced in our own time and is, first and foremost, a non-profit fanzine by the fans, for the fans. If you are reading this, then you will be doing so in one of two ways. The majority of you will be reading the free pdf which is available online. Our pledge is that, as long as we are producing SBG, it will be available for free to anyone who wants it; we are not a business, we are not trying to make money out of this, and we will never charge a penny for the pdf download.

However, whilst we won’t ever charge for SBG, we would like to give readers a way of contributing towards the running costs of the magazine. So, once you have finished reading the issue, if you feel that you would like to contribute, then we would invite you to make a donation via our PayPal account: SBGmagazine@gmail.com

As this is a donation, please ensure that you use the Send money to friends or family option.

We would simply ask you to donate whatever you feel that the magazine is worth. Any contributions would be welcome and they will help to ensure that future issues are even better!

As a way to encourage people to donate, we have decided to run a competition! We are delighted to announce that Orc-Ward Battles has kindly provided a brand new box of Grim Hammers and the stunning Thror miniature for one lucky SBG reader to win and help them on their way to recreating the Battle of Azanulbizar! To be in with a chance of winning this fantastic prize, all you have to do is donate £2 to our PayPal address. Multiple entries per person are allowed, so, for every full £2 you donate, you will receive another entry into the competition. For example, a donation of £6.50 would give you three chances to win.

The competition will run until 31st August 2015 at which point we will draw a winner. Please ensure that you include your name and contact details in the notes section of the PayPal donation so that we can contact you should you win.

However, the original vision for SBG was to place a physical magazine in the hands of gamers. Viewing SBG on a computer screen or tablet should provide a satisfactory reading experience but there is something wonderfully comforting about turning the pages of a physical copy. Sitting in your favourite spot and thumbing through the pages of a glossy magazine is an experience that is utterly lost when viewing content on a digital screen.

Our hope is that the majority of our readers will want to read SBG in the intended format and start to build a collection of physical issues. Of course, the major hurdle in this step is that we cannot give away physical copies due to the high cost of producing a relatively short print run. However, anyone in the UK who donates £10 or more via PayPal will not only get at least 5 entries into the competition, but will also receive a full colour, A4 physical copy of SBG. Please include the address to which you would like us to send the magazine and we will get it out to you as soon as possible. Unfortunately, due to the increased postage costs, those with an address within Europe will need to make a donation of £13 or more, whilst those outside of Europe will have to donate £15 or more to receive a physical copy.

We hope that you have enjoyed this issue and would like to make a modest donation, therefore enabling us to produce SBG for a long time to come.

Thank-you,

Damian & Tom
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