

MacGowan: We started to get a couple hundred cards back each issue and they became important in the sense that if a reader took time to fill out the card he must have felt something — he must have been serious.

Lowe: *F&M's* response was sort of "if you care about us, we care about you..."

MacGowan: They criticized us for all kinds of things. We were even accused of being too "slick" looking.

DeBaun: The doctor's hands were too clean?

MacGowan: I got a long letter from the president of one of the smaller game companies. He couldn't understand why we were so artistic, so graphic.

Lowe: After all, you can't read pictures.

DeBaun: I thought they were supposed to be worth a thousand words?

MacGowan: He really freaked on it. Why is this picture here? Why do you show the counters to the game? Why did you put in a copy of the map?

DeBaun: Didn't you tell him it was because the readers were illiterate? We should have shown him some of the feedback cards... Actually, it was because the staff was illiterate. We'd use up all the words we knew among us and then have to fill up the rest of the space with pictures... Seriously, I think a major factor in the rapid growth of *F&M* was its physical appearance. The thing *looked* professional. And I think that professional appearance supported a lot of unprofessional reviews. It gave the magazine an aura of legitimacy.

Lowe: I remember one of the funniest examples of that was when someone — and this was somebody in the business who should have known better — approached Rodger with the idea that the *F&M* staff organize *Origins* one year. It was funny because it showed that people "out there" thought that there was something substantial, something physically substantial behind the magazine, when actually *F&M* was just an idea shared by a couple of guys who happened to be passing through the same part of the universe at the same point in time.

DeBaun: The myth was that we all worked out of the penthouse suite of the *Fire & Movement* building in the heart of Century City. The truth was that we were just plain, ordinary, average wargamer guys on a mission from God.... ■ ■ ■

StatRep: [continued from page 34]

Rules Dispute: 5.90

Average of 31 responses: 9 is none of consequence, 1 is constant disputes.

Comments on the Game System

Commando has a highly complex set of game mechanics which must be learned before the best results can be enjoyed. These are not layered in the conventional manner, but gamers may find the rules easily learned by limiting the number of different weapons to be used in the first few games until they have a good grasp of the basic system, and then adding to this until the complete system is being utilized. The historical game is a must for anyone planning to play the role-playing variations.

All aspects of the game are important, so each gamer should assess the strengths and weaknesses of his forces carefully. When units have high panic and preservation factors, it is necessary to find ways to offset these problems. The same applies to endurance, combat bonuses and debits, weapons available, and observation codes. Most of the data provided in the *Commando* scenarios is difficult to evaluate until it has been used once or twice.

There are gaps in the game system. One area of dispute is attempting observation. The rules allow each man one attempted observation during the observation phase. In the Actions off Vaagso Island scenario, men moving up the beach and failing to observe an enemy man in a bunker would presumably trip over him on entering the bunker from the rear, a point that creates many disputes.

Despite a few rules that need to be cleared up, a little common sense will generally provide the answers, and players can always establish their own house rules on any point they find confusing. Since this game really should be played in sets with sides reversed for the second game, any house rules added would have the same impact on both players.

Attempting to play with too many types of weapons is not recommended, since this slows the pace of play. The lack of unit counters takes a little getting used to, but it works fine most of the time. Most players here still prefer counters on their game maps, but others may find the pencil marks to their liking. *Commando* is a good game, recommended for those with the patience to learn it thoroughly. ■ ■ ■

CHICKAMAUGA CONVENTION REPORT

by Bill Watkins

\$400 in prizes! All new faces! The confounding of conventional wisdom! All in all, the best *Chickamauga* tournament in years. *Chickamauga* is one of the most intense and enjoyable games ever developed. However, the fact hasn't kept the tournaments from degenerating — same players year after year, same styles year after year. We really didn't have to play the tournament, we could just line up in order of probable finish. The situation got so bad I described last year's tournament as: 32 acolytes entering the room behind their High Priest (Hessel The Polyester). Solemnly, they join hands, adopt their most sincere facial expressions and intone the sacred words, "Gee, guys, I haven't played this game in a year!"

This year was different. Most of the old pros missed the Cherry Hill turnoff for Gen-Con East and were last seen heading for Canada. Consequently, most of the players were newcomers. Neither of the two finalists had ever been in a *Chickamauga* tournament before. In fact, second place finisher Phil Rennert couldn't remember ever having played the game against a live opponent!

The quality of play didn't suffer. Winner George Young had already won the *Eylau* tournament and Phil had bagged the *Micro 600* title. These guys are pros. The final game wasn't settled until the next to last turn, when Phil was forced to make a 1-2 attack and threw an Attacker Eliminated. Close, very close.

Winner George Young made a remarkable comeback. The very bloody game had us old pros believing George's Confederates were beaten before the first day ended. Luckily, George wasn't listening. He is going to be tough to beat next year.

SPI enlivened the proceedings by donating almost \$300 worth of games for a drawing among all the tournament entrants. I made sure SPI gained maximum publicity for their generosity by having the winners' names drawn by Marc Miller of GDW!

One other interesting result. Conventional wisdom has it that the Confederates will win the early rounds and the Union the later rounds, as the better players emerge. Our results were just the reverse. Probably a result of all those new players — none of whom had heard the conventional wisdom.

Either way, we still aren't sure the special balancing rules really balance the game. We'd like to be sure, before next year's tournaments. If you're not familiar with the balancing rules, they are: 1) Cavalry moves ½ MP on roads (you can combine on and off road movement); 2) Ineffective units on the map at the end count as victory points for your opponent — the only exception being for Confederate units which end east or south of the river; 3) The Confederates receive a train on Game-Turn 5 as a regular reinforcement. In addition to gaining attack effectiveness at night, units of both sides may regain effectiveness by remaining motionless adjacent to their train for one full turn. Also, no Union unit that exits before the Union train scores any victory points. Try these rules and send me your comments. ■ ■ ■

Desert Fox Addenda as of September 1981

[7.57] (correction) The notes to the table contradict 7.55 with regards to the Game-Turns on which rolls on the table are modified. Case 7.55 is correct.

[8.51] (clarification) Any one unit of any size may be transported by sea, or any number of units whose total of Stacking Points does not exceed 1 could be transported.

[11.9] (correction) 22 Armd appears in the illustration with an Armor Rating of 2. The unit in the illustration should be 22 Armd at type 3 Armor (and thus have a Combat Strength of 8 be-

fore halving for combined arms). The rest of the example is correct.

[13.21] (addition) A line is missing. The third sentence should read, "Non-motorized units that are eliminated and cannot trace a line of communications go into the Destroyed Units' Box." The fourth sentence should then begin, "If a motorized unit which is out of Combat Supply or cannot trace a line of communications is eliminated, the owning player..."

[5.18] (correction) The Italian *Articelere* Armd Arty unit should arrive on Game-Turn 13 (not 18). Game-Turn 18 is mistakenly printed both on the unit's counter and in 5.18. ■ ■ ■