

Dear Sir,
....I wholeheartedly agree with Tony Dinsdale that GDW's Torgau is full of interesting game playing ideas and recreates the flavour of mid-eighteenth century tactics beautifully. However, no one I play with has ever taken the hill as the Prussians, if the Austrian remains on it? Poor play by us or poor play-balance by GDW?
P H S Hatton (Dr)

Dear Sir,
Christopher Perleberg (Moves No. 31) was completely correct to take issue with the chateaux rules in *Napoleon's Last Battles*. The chateaux were formidable defensive positions but were not impregnable. Consider Waterloo. It was bad tactics on Prince Jerome's part as much as natural strength which prevented Hougoumont from being taken. La Haye Sainte, the victim of the only French combined arms attack of the battle (cf. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, p. 1085), did fall with the use of little more than two supported infantry brigades. This is impossible in the game. Now I agree that some historical events might be made improbable according to game rules, but surely not impossible.

Also, the defensive strength of the chateaux could be reduced by shell-fire from howitzers, as was belatedly done at Hougoumont. This is a tactic advised by both Fuller and Chandler in their accounts of the battle. And yet, according to the game rules, artillery (of any sort) may not fire at chateaux.

Consequently, I suggest the following rules changes and additions:

(10.4) (Change) Artillery may fire at chateaux at half strength.

(10.6) (Clarification) Combined arms attacks on chateaux are possible and have the normal effect, i.e., odds are increased by one column.

(10.7) (Addition) Each regular artillery (not horse artillery) unit has a howitzer strength of one. Each chateau has an intrinsic anti-howitzer strength of two.

(10.8) (Addition) Artillery units may bombard chateaux with their howitzer strength during their friendly combat phase. A Dr result means that a fire has broken out in the chateau.

(10.9) (Addition) After a "fire" result has occurred against a chateau, the defending player rolls one die during each friendly combat phase. A roll of one or two means the chateau has been destroyed and reverts immediately and permanently to the status of a town hex in all respects.

(10.10) (Addition) Artillery which bombard with their howitzer strength in a friendly combat phase may also fire normally at half strength in the same phase. All reductions in artillery strength are cumulative.

Philip Gray

Dear Sir,
Would you be interested in a light-hearted article for "Phoenix" consisting of a parody review of Chess as though it were a new wargame?

No stacking, automatic combat elimination, movement restrictions, mobile fortification units(!), victory conditions, lack of realism, etc., etc.

I'm sounding out opinion before I actually write it!

Roger Misson

Well...is anyone interested?

Dear Sir,
Congratulations on Phoenix 7 — certainly the best yet. I was sorry the article on "Panzergruppe Guderian" only covered suggested tactics for the first few moves. Not being a player of "Dungeons and Dragons" I was totally at a loss to understand what "Expedition to Castle Fil" was all about. I think one has to be careful to make your articles interesting to readers who do not possess the game — "Guderian" was a model in this respect, tempting newcomers to try the game....

.....Improvements I'd like to see would be articles on designing one's own games (something I'd like to try — but how do you start?), details of activities of local wargaming clubs, a start made on producing your own games (even if this puts the price of Phoenix up), and more on the basics of wargaming for newcomers — which links up a bit with my little article on using wargames in schools. I may do an article on how I adapted some of the games if you think it would be of any interest.

Walter Oppenheim

MAIL CALL



Dear Sir,
.....it is unfortunate that your first article on *Dungeons & Dragons* should have contained so many glaring inaccuracies. I do not think this is Mr Bolton's fault as I suspect he has not read the rules of the game (strange as it may seem to regular gamers, in *Dungeons & Dragons* the players are not required to know more rules than the referee sees fit to tell them); rather his referee is at fault, may his face be red for evermore. Admittedly, varying interpretations of rules are quite permissible, and one man's potion is another man's poison, but there is a definite dividing line between a personal interpretation and a sheer misunderstanding. So let me try to clear things up a bit.

The word "level" has three distinctly different meanings in the game: one refers to "levels" of the dungeon which are physically one below the next, become progressively richer in treasure (and more dangerous) as one delves deeper; then one refers to a character's "level" of experience — as each new character learns the tricks of his trade he achieves higher levels of experience and becomes progressively stronger (but it takes a long time to go up levels); thirdly, there are different "levels" of spells, progressively more powerful and harder to use. These spell levels are an independent classification; a 2nd level magic-user does not have the ability to use 2nd level spells, he may use but two first level spells per day. Only when he reaches the third level of experience does he gain a 2nd level spell. The level of the dungeon the fellow is on has no effect on this at all, so the magicians in Mr Bolton's story would not have gained an extra spell when they were whisked down to the second dungeon level. This also means that humble first level magic-users do not kill copper dragons; the spell "power word: kill" is a ninth level spell and quite unusable by all but the most powerful wizards. And how a copper dragon manages to fit into a small triangular room, I don't know.

Another point about the levels of experience attained by characters is that increasing levels make one more resistant to magic. This applies to beasts as well as to men, and since the spell "sleep" only affects creatures of the fourth level or less, that eighth level orc would not have dozed off quite so conveniently if the referee had been awake.

The secret of successful refereeing is to maintain balance, so that the weak characters do not make mincemeat of copper dragons, but on the other hand, large parties do not get completely obliterated unless they are very stupid or extremely unlucky. If Mr Bolton finds a more competent referee he may find he lives a bit longer.

Paul Morphine

The opinions and comments made in *Reader's Letters* are not necessarily those of the editor or publisher. The editor requests that letters submitted for publication in this column should be short and to the point to avoid unnecessary abridgement. Letters sent to the editor that are *not* intended for publication must be clearly marked as such.

Dear Sir,
First a few thoughts provoked by Phoenix 8; this is easily the best issue of the magazine so far; the physical quality is very pleasing and it is also gratifying to see a wider variety of articles and contributors. Paul Hirst's comparison of '1776' and 'American Revolution' was outstanding but the critique of 'Sorcerer' represents a regrettable aberration. I am all in favour of serious criticism of published games, but this reads like something out of a student rag magazine — "Stopcloning around", "a bit of local colour"??? — really Stephen and Andrew! — and what have the Roman Emperors to do with it?

I was most interested to read of your ideas to include short comments on games from a variety of readers; I have recently been concerned with the problems of rule interpretation and should like to suggest the introduction into 'Phoenix' of a column in which readers could discuss the problems and ambiguities they have encountered in particular games. It seems to me that this could reasonably be linked to the column of reader's reviews. Along with the reviews you could perhaps invite readers to send in details of any problems they have encountered. The two could then be printed together with an invitation to other readers who have the game to suggest ways round the difficulties. The intention is not to emulate the early issues of S&T where answers to rule queries were given by the game designers, but rather to promote discussion. If you see any merit in this suggestion, perhaps you will put a question on it into the feedback.

A. McGee

Have done — editor

Dear Sir,
In my opinion Phoenix has improved appreciably over the last three issues (the only ones I have got). However, there is still a lot to be done to make it better.

Because I have limited cash to buy new games, most of mine are the S&T subscription games — to encourage new subscribers, like me, can I suggest publishing scenarios on games which have recently appeared in S&T. I would also like to see more solo scenarios printed as I find I can not play as often as I would like owing to not having partners — preferably solo scenarios on recent games.

I agree with the idea of "general strategy and tactics in wargames" articles but I would also like to see advice on designing new scenarios for games.

Because so many (in fact, all so far) of the scenarios and modifications printed have not been relevant to me I would like to see fewer of these and more of the reviews and other articles. Salamanca and West Wall Quad (Issue 6) were very good but my favourite article has been Expedition to Castle Fil (Issue 7). The article on Montrose in Issue 6 was very good and made the scenarios in Issue 7 much more relevant to those of us who did not have the games.

The Fire & Movement review (Issue 7) was also interesting.

Is Walter Oppenheim (the Use of Simulation Games in Schools, Issue 7) underestimating his pupils? I am 15 and have not yet had much difficulty in understanding the rules — my first go at Assassinate Hitler (my first game after N.A.W.) was not perfect but since then I have been OK. As for the use of SPI games in schools I wish our History Teachers would follow his example and use them. It would improve our already interesting History lessons.

Matthew Perry