INSIDE GMT

BY GENE BILLINGSLEY

Welcome to issue Nr.7 of *C3i.* As you've no doubt noticed, Rodger has indeed managed to greatly improve the turnaround time on this issue. Although frequency is still not quite as quick as we'd like, four months between issues is certainly a huge improvement on our previous efforts. With Rodger at the helm and our writers continuing to submit interesting, useful articles, I'm looking forward to seeing a publication that retains its high standards for quality and justifies our subscriber's trust in us by publishing four issues a year.

Status of Releases

At present, our designers, developers, and artists are hard at work finishing the three fall releases, Battles for North Africa, Barbarossa: Army Group South, and Saratoga. These should have shipped or be in the process of shipping by the time you read this. Rodger is tackling the editing and design for the SPQR Player's Guide as soon as he puts this issue to bed, and Rick Barber is finishing the work on the maps for the 3-DoG upgrade kit. So we should soon be able to have all of the promised products out the door. I appreciate your patience as we've struggled a bit to get these items released. As you'll note below, with all of us doing this part-time, we really have our hands full.

Pipeline

As astute readers, you'll probably note the absence of the *Production Chart* from this issue of *C3i.* No, we didn't forget it, we took it out on purpose. Why? Well, it seems that the chart, although it was well-received by the readers, caused almost as much confusion as it dispelled. When we created the chart, it was intended to depict the various stages of design, development, and production for our games. It seems, though, that we created a lot of false expectations by listing all games we were working on, especially the ones that were in early design stages. We felt like we were trying to do a helpful thing by letting readers in on where we are going in the future, but basically it got turned into an expectation list that some folks wanted us to be enslaved to. With all of us doing this part time, we can only produce four to six games a year, many fewer than the Production Chart listed and some folks expected. So, to alleviate everyone's frustration, the Production Chart is history, at least for now. We will continue to let you know about what we have slated to release in the next quarter or so, but for the good of our staff's productivity (and sanity!), we'll cut out the look into the far future.

Card Games

Two factors have combined to force us to put a temporary (we hope!) hold on releasing card games First, the cost of producing a card game has gone through the roof. When we produced Hornet Leader in 1991, it retailed for $30. By comparison, to do it (and I'd love to do a second edition!) today and make any money, it would have to have a price tag of over $50, and even then we'd be making less profit than we did on the $30 game in 1991. The second factor is the much talked about decrease in sales in the wargame industry in general over the past year or two. Yes, this has affected us significantly just like it has the rest of the companies in our hobby. One of the reasons that we're so involved in computer games is to help cover the the lost revenue from board games (I prefer that approach to what Dean's doing with taking the Gamers to direct orders only because I'd still like our games to be available in stores). So the question is "how do we pay to produce the card games?"

Many of you have mentioned to me that you'd be glad to commit to buying certain games or series titles to help us be sure of that up-front production money. Looking at the card game costs realistically, for us to be able to afford the production costs of the card games, we'll need to have around 750 pre-order commitments in hand. If distributor sales don't increase anytime soon, that's the route we'll probably have to take; send you all flyers for the card games we have designed but not produced, and ask you which ones you'd commit to purchasing. Then we'll know for sure which ones you'll support and we can begin production. I really hate having to look at the card games this way, but it's the best solution we've been able to come up with so far. If any of you have any ideas, please do write and share them with us.

Great Battles of Alexander Computer Game Update

I told you last issue that I would give you more details on our Great Battles of Alexander computer game in this issue. Regrettably, I'm going to have to renege on that promise for now because of our new publishing agreement with Interactive Magic, a terrific computer game publisher. Their marketing folks are keeping a fairly tight lid on details about the game until the info hits the streets in the fall computer game magazines. I've agreed to respect their marketing strategies and their right to control the flow of information (they are after all footing the bill for the game production!) and they're pretty much leaving us alone to handle game design and development issues (a pretty good trade-off, in my view). I *can* give you some details about what we're doing with the project, and how it is affecting GMT Games and me personally. *(For game specific details, check out Interactive Magic's Web page at http://www.imagicgames.com/)*

A couple of years ago, GMT licensed the Great Battles of Alexander game to Erudite Software, a Utah-based software and consulting company co- owned by Dan Masterson (a master programmer, avid gamer, and good friend). In March of this year, Dan hired me to become Director of Games Development at Erudite to help them put the finishing touches on this game and begin working on a whole line of future releases. Best of all, Dan agreed to allow me to stay put and keep GMT in business while working with the Erudite team from here in California.

Please Turn to Page 41

DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK

Lost Victory: Forced March Rules

BY DAVID JAMES RITCHIE

The following rules were in the rulebook, but were taken out because they made the game play a little longer.

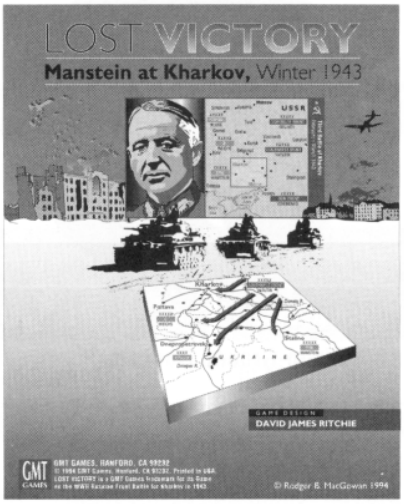
[20.5] Forced Marches

[20.51] A unit can increase the number of MPs it can spend in its Ops Phase by making a forced march.

[20.52] Any time during a stacks movement, you can announce that the stack is making a forced march and the number of MPs of additional movement it is attempting.

[20.53] For each forced march, make an immediate march check. Roll a die for the stack making the forced march; if more than one unit is marching, roll once for the stack. Modify the die roll as follows: -1 for each MP of extra movement after the first 2; -2 if the ground is drifted or muddy; -2 if skies are stormy. Interpret modified die roll results as follows:

- If the result is equal to or greater than the number of extra MPs of movement being attempted, each unit in the stack gets the full number of MPs with



no ill effects.

- If the result is greater than zero and less than the number of extra MPs of movement being attempted, each unit in the stack gets a number of MPs equal to the modified die roll result. Roll a die at the end of the stacks movement; if the result is a 1 or 2, the entire stack is disrupted.
- If the result is zero or negative, the stack gets no additional MPs and is disrupted at the end of its movement.

[20.54] Individual units can't spend more than half again the number of MPs in their printed MA during an Ops Phase. They can try to gain any number of MPs by force marching, but can't spend any MPs they gain in excess of this limit.

[20.55] HQs, armored trains, partisans, heavy tanks and unsupplied motorized units can't force march.

All other units can force march.

[20.56] If some units in a stack you want to force march can't force march, you must split the stack at the moment you announce the forced march. Only the eligible units force march, and only they are affected by the march check.

Inside GMT Continued From Page 3

The good news of this arrangement is that I get to have a lot of creative input as to how the **Alexander** game turns out, along with Mark Herman (who's contributing his enormous design skills), Richard Berg (who's helped the Erudite folks significantly with his insights into the details of combat during Alexander's day), and an excellent team of programmers and artists at Erudite. The other piece of good news is that by having a job in the computer game industry that allows me to stay put here in Hanford, **I** can keep producing games for GMT without having to depend solely on its revenue to live (and times have been real lean in the boardgame business in the past year or so). The downside of the arrangement is that I have now rejoined all the rest of our team as a part-timer and have even less time than before for GMT projects. So I guess it's not so surprising that our game production schedule this year has suffered.

The Future

So GMT is back in the situation we've been in for most of the company's six years of existence wherein all of us are doing the creating and producing of the games and magazines as a second job when we can squeeze it in. It's not the optimum way to run a company, but it's really the only way we can make it work given the economic situation in the boardgame business. As I hope you've noticed with our last couple of games, **Glory** and **Samurai,** we are not allowing this part-time restriction to diminish our commitment to turning out quality games, in fact quite the opposite. We believe that we have done some of our best work most recently, and look forward to getting our fall games in your hands so you can see for yourselves. Some have asked us "Why bother? Why not just shut down the company and save yourselves a lot of time and trouble?" Well, the truth is, although I have been sorely tempted a few times, all of us here at GMT really like creating and playing wargames, and want to keep doing it as long as we can keep making quality games that bring insight and enjoyment to other garners. Despite our limited time and busy schedules, we think our best work is still ahead of us and hope that you'll do what you can to continue supporting GMT Games and the wargaming hobby in general. Until next issue, enjoy the magazine and the games!