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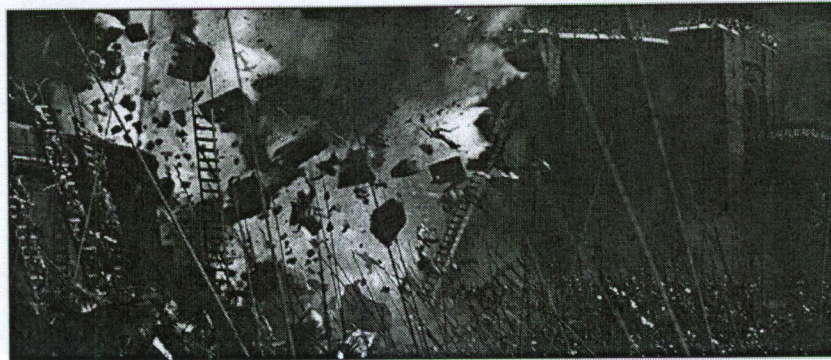
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Siege Tactics for The Lord of The Rings



Alessio Cavatore focuses on one of the most exciting areas of the The Lord of The Rings Strategy Battle Game - siege warfare!

Siege! The new rulebook for our The Lord of The Rings Strategy Battle Game includes a section of rules entirely dedicated to siege warfare. To be more precise, these rules are about the bloodiest part of a siege, the actual assault against the defended walls. Historically, such assaults were seen as extreme measures only to be attempted when all other methods - such as starvation, destruction of the walls through bombardment or mining, diplomacy, bribery, and the like - had failed. Committing troops to assault well-defended walls with ladders and battering rams was certainly a hard decision for any general to make. Often, it was only the news of a relief force approaching that would force a commander to attempt an assault and accept the extremely high rate of casualties involved in such an attack. However, Saruman certainly didn't have any such scruples about sacrificing the lives of his minions!

In this article, I will take you through what I believe make sound tactics for both Defenders and Attackers in our game. Let's begin with the Defenders...

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Siege Tactics - The Defender

From a Defender's point of view, the first thing to do is to make sure that your forces - normally heavily outnumbered by the enemy - are evenly spread on the battlements of the perimeter you have to defend. This deployment will allow you to move them quickly to react to the Attacker's moves. Thus, there will always be someone ready to intercept any scaling attempt. If the enemies make it onto the battlements, you're in trouble.

There is an exception that you should keep in mind, though. You can be sure that some of the Attackers are going to go for the weakest part of any fortification: its gate (and any other access doors). Thus, it is a good idea to make sure you have a few extra models on the battlements overlooking these passages and, most importantly, standing in the courtyard and ready to defend a possible breach and stop the enemy from swarming into your fortress. If you don't leave anyone in the courtyard, it could take too long for the Defenders to get down from the walls if a gate is breached.

As the enemy approaches the walls, it is a good idea to leave any of the Defenders that are not carrying missile weapons lying down on the battlements and hidden from view of the enemy archers. Your bowmen, on the other hand, should all be positioned so that they can open fire on the incoming Attackers while still benefiting from the cover offered by the crenellations. They will certainly be shot, but they can return fire. Their solid cover gives them the advantage, because half of the enemy arrows will break harmlessly on the walls next to them.

It is vital to concentrate your fire on the most dangerous foes first. I'm pretty sure that if you're being besieged by Uruk-hai, your target must be their deadly bomb teams. If these evil contraptions make it to the walls or - even worse - to your gate, they can blow a hole into your defenses and deny you all the advantage you have in your defended position.

Of course, even if you manage to kill the warriors carrying the explosive device, other Uruk-hai can still pick it up, and sooner or later, they'll have it against your fortification. Yet, it is good to delay the inevitable, as stopping to pick up such a heavy burden will slow down the enemy a great deal, and every turn gained is a boon in these tense games.

If the enemy has no bomb teams, then concentrate your fire on the enemies pushing siege towers or carrying battering rams for the same reasons as above. Though less powerful than Saruman's crude bombs, rams can still break through your gates and thus deserve special attention from your bowmen. If a siege tower makes it to your walls, you're in trouble, so you need to stop them with your missile fire if you can. If you can't stop the towers, then your only defense is to have a good number of your best troops ready to receive the shock troops that are about to assault you. If no rams or siege towers are present (your enemy must have really come unprepared for the siege), then direct your fire at the ladders.

If you have war engines, leave the ones that do not need line-of-sight in the courtyard where they'll be safe from the attention of their counterparts in the enemy army. In a siege, one of the best uses of hard-hitting machines like catapults and trebuchets is first to target the enemy siege engines and siege towers. Your engines' high Strength is often the only thing that can stop these siege devices!

When the assault comes, make sure your men are ready to intercept any of the Attackers that make it to the top of the ladders. Intercepting everyone can get a bit tricky if the enemy deploys more than one ladder on a wall. It's also bad if they have an Uruk-hai Siege Assault Ballista, which can transport screaming Berserkers atop an ascending ladder to make things worse! The only way to prevent them from reaching the battlements is to deploy your Defenders in front of the ladders and make sure that their control zones are sufficient to close any gap where the enemy can place his ladders. Try to have your hardest models (i.e., Heroes) facing the enemy ones, so that you don't have to stop these combat-monsters with ordinary warriors.

Once the ladders are up against the wall, the best thing to do is to drop them back on the heads of the Attackers, and your troops must try and do so as quickly as possible before the weight of several warriors has made it all but impossible. If you can, try to direct two of your men to push each ladder. Often, in the turn after the ladders are raised, the advantage comes down to priority. If the Defender wins priority, then the ladders can be thrown back empty. However, if the Attacker wins priority, then he can charge the Defenders on the ramparts, thereby preventing them from pushing the ladders down. It is so important to go first in these circumstances that I recommend using your Heroes to declare Heroic moves if you have to. I definitely think it's a good use of your Might.



When you are actually defending the battlements from enemy models that have charged up the ladders and engaged your men, it is wise to use the shielding rule if you can; you just need to win the fight to have a 50/50 chance of seeing your enemy plummeting down from the top of the ladder to its death (and maybe knock down a few of his comrades in the process).

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Siege Tactics: The Attacker

Well, the advice I'd give to the Attacker in many cases is to read my recommendations for the Defender and try to do exactly the opposite! However, there's a bit more to it than that...

First of all, set up as close as possible to the fortifications so that you get there as quickly as possible. The exception to this rule is, of course, your siege engines. These machines should sit more than 24" away from the walls, out of range of enemy missiles and safe to concentrate on their vital job.

The main thing to keep in mind for any Attacker worth his salt is one thing and one thing only: go for the gate! If you manage to destroy it, you won't need to go through the extremely painful "ladders thing" except as a secondary means of Attack. A gate is far easier to break through, even when facing a resolute defense, compared to assaulting from a wobbly ladder high above the ground!

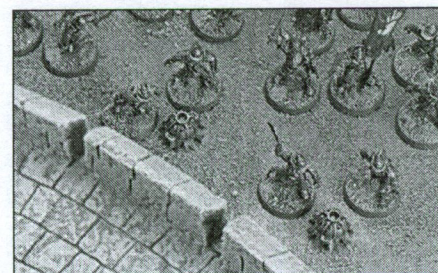
To this end, try to protect your bomb teams and battering rams as much as you can by marching a couple of your warriors with the highest Defense just in front of them. This tactic should ensure that your precious crewmembers are either hidden or at least partially covered by the models in front. Don't forget to place a group of models behind the group as well, so that they can replace the fallen living shields or bomb bearers.

Of course, the best defense is to attack, and a bit of counter-battery fire is always good. Have your missile-armed warriors and siege engines target the enemy bowmen and war engines first. Taking out some of the defending missile fire will certainly help your breach crew reach the gate in no time.

As for siege towers, never launch a siege without them! If even one of these towers reaches the walls, your chances of taking the castle are vastly improved, as the advantages of the defenders are cancelled and your best warriors and heroes can pour on the walls from their hiding places at the top of the tower (always use the worst troops to actually push the thing forward, since the enemy will concentrate their defensive fire on these poor souls).

If you are commanding Uruk-hai and your troops have to go up the ladders, remember that your siege assault machines are great. They allow you to propel models directly into combat with the Defenders. By engaging the Defenders in combat and preventing them from pushing your ladders down, you gain a very solid advantage. Make sure that the models ending up at the top of the ladder are your Heroes and other very hard troops. Berserkers are ideal for the job!

It is exceedingly difficult to scale the battlements when the enemy is defending them. Winning the fight against multiple opponents is only half the battle; you must also kill them, and they will receive the special save offered by the barriers. The tendency of those pesky Defenders to use their shields to bash you down from the top of your ladder (the accursed shielding rule!) makes scaling the walls even more hazardous. You really need your Heroes if you're stand a chance of making it, thanks to their better stats and points of Might. Of course, there is always the unfortunate chance of meeting Aragorn or a Troll at the top of the ladder. Life is hard when you're assaulting a castle!

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