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Wisdom and Might Tactics for Gandalf, Elrond and The Three Hunters

— Article by Adam Troke



With the great new miniatures for Gandalf, Elrond and the Three Hunters released in White Dwarf and making their way onto gaming boards everywhere, the Studio's own The Lord of the Rings ultra-beard Adam Troke has been champing at the bit to unleash his favourite tactics with each of these great new models. We decided to turn him loose, so take a look at Adam's favourite tactics and combinations for the wise and mighty...

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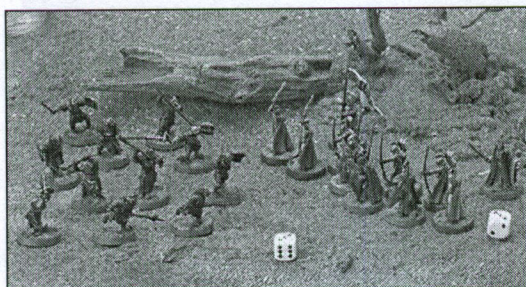
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Wisdom and Might Elrond, Master of Rivendell

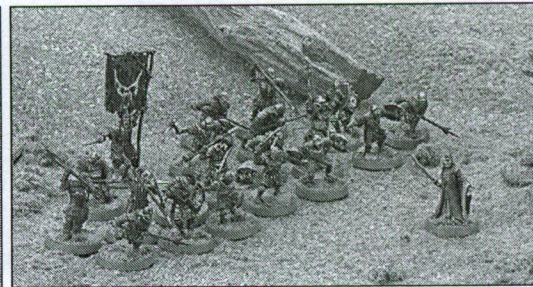
Elrond, Master of Rivendell

You don't live thousands of years, or fight in the vanguard at some of the most horrific battles ever known, without possessing a measure of battle skill. Of Elrond that is certainly true. Running in at 205pts Elrond, Master of Rivendell is a costly investment for any Good player to consider putting into their force - and as such you need to be sure that you can get your 'points worth' out of him. He's got a great Fight value, 3 Attacks and enough Might, Will and Fate to keep him in the battle until the very finish, but what really interests us as tacticians, however, are his awesome special rules and magical powers:



Foresight of the Eldar

Foresight of the Eldar is a subtle skill that shows a measure of Elrond's mystical ability. Before the game, roll a D6 - this is the number of 'foresight points' Elrond has. You can use these 'foresight points' to change your Priority roll up or down. Now, this might not seem too valuable until you consider its potential in the early stages of the game. Before battle is joined it is very handy to move second (which of course means letting your opponent have Priority), since you'll be able to react to your opponent's moves, placing your models out of sight of archers, or your archers in sight of the enemy. Use any foresight points you have to lose Priority rolls in the early turns, allowing you to react to your enemy's movement - perfect for getting the most out of all those Elven bows! If you still have any foresight points left when combat is joined, use them to allow you to move first or second, whichever suits you best!



Wrath of Bruinen

A magical power unequalled in potency, by even Gandalf or Saruman, the *Wrath of Bruinen* can utterly devastate an enemy advance. When used, all enemies within 6"/14cm are knocked to the ground and suffer a Strength 2 hit. Deadly! As an Evil player, I usually pack as many as twenty or twenty five models into an area 6" square - and the thought of having each of them take a Strength 2 hit fills me with dread. Elrond can make the most of this power by lurking back from the front line and using it to smash enemies to the ground once they have committed to combat, or to blast foes from their feet as his household troops launch their own charge. Try to avoid using this power close to creatures like Ringwraiths or other enemies with high Will - it's a terrible shame when Elrond's power is cancelled by an enemy Hero with an abundant Will store.

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Wisdom and Might Gandalf the Grey

Gandalf the Grey

Gandalf the Grey is the most versatile spellcaster available to the Good side and has a dazzling array of special rules and magical powers. Perhaps most useful of all his abilities is the spell *CastBlinding Light* - this wonderful little number has helped me out of more scrapes than I care to remember. Enemy shooting targeted within 6"/14cm of Gandalf while this power is in effect will only hit on the score of a 6. That's bad news for enemy forces that rely on shooting, and great news for a Good force huddling close to the Grey Wizard. In any given game I will *CastBlinding Light* in my first turn (on a 2+, it's a fairly safe bet using Gandalf's free Will point) and then in the second. That sets Gandalf up for the game and leaves you free to run riot. Some of his other powers require more thought to their application though, so let's look at a couple.



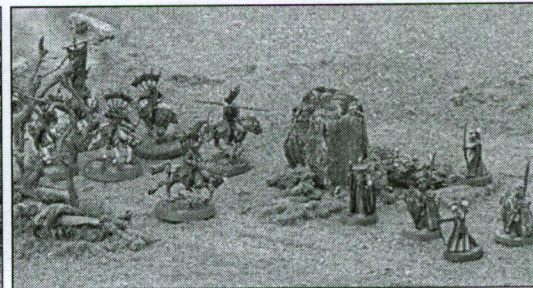
Sorcerous Blast

Harnessing mystical powers, Gandalf can literally smash his foes and send them flying. It's a common sight on many tables in Grand Tournaments and I've done it to people (and had it done to me) more times than I can remember. A careful Sorcerous Blast can be decisive. I follow three steps when unleashing Sorcerous Blasts of my own.

1 - Choose carefully. You've got to select a target that you're likely to prevail against (so picking the Witch-king with 20 Will points remaining is not the brightest idea), and also one that will inflict lots of collateral damage - make sure that the angle your victim is blasted in will strike plenty of secondary targets.

2 - Cast it like you mean it. Don't cast this spell with less than two dice unless doing so will reduce you to zero Will. I typically plan to get off two really effective Sorcerous Blasts in a game, so I use two Will points from my store and my free Will point from Gandalf's staff to ensure success.

3 - Play for keeps. Don't be afraid to throw Might points into the fray to make sure your power works and does maximum damage. Fail to cast the power by 1? Spend a Might point. Your blasted victim stopped short of knocking that crucial enemy... you get the idea.



Command

Being bossed about is no fun, but there's no denying it's useful on the battlefield. *Command* allows you to force an enemy model to make a half move of your choice and reduces his combat prowess to just 1 Attack at Fight value 1 (and prevents him striking blows if he wins - even Hobbits fight harder than that). The most obvious application of this power then, is to *Command* an enemy model and move him into charge range - perfect for drawing enemy Heroes out of formation and allowing your own models to single them out. More subtle uses exist though.

1 - Thwart! Send a valuable enemy model away from the action. By forcing a banner bearer, siege machine crewman or even an enemy spearman away you can genuinely screw up your foe's plans. Banners only have a range of 3"/8cm, for example, so by moving them away from the action the enemy will not gain its benefits - great stuff.

2 - Deny! Block the enemy with his own models. My good friend (and Doubles partner) Accountant Ben does this better than anyone I've ever played with - using an enemy model to block off a narrow pass, prevent charges, block lines of sight or otherwise muck up their own plans. Several times we've used this principle to bog the enemy down for an extra turn (which of course gives us an extra turn to arrange our defences or loose more arrows). In the above example, Gandalf could either draw a Haradrim Raider closer, enabling the Elves to charge or he could *Command* the lead rider and use him to block the narrow pass off.

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Wisdom and Might The Muster of Rivendell



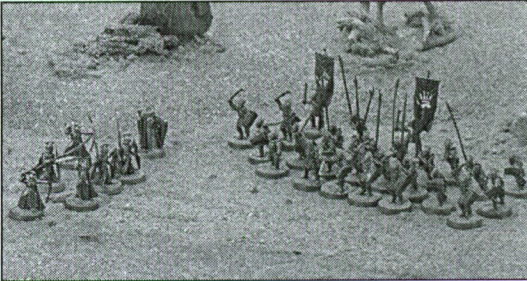
Elrond, Master of Rivendell	205
Gandalf the Grey	170
10 Elves with heavy armour & Elven blades	100
10 Elves with heavy armour, spears & shields	110
10 Elves with heavy armour and Elf bows	110
Total	695

This elite force presents a dire threat to almost any type of Evil force. Capable of outshooting most enemies (every model in the army can shelter within 6"/14cm of Gandalf, benefiting from his Cast Blinding Light power), and certainly outfighting all but most the most determined offensive in close combat, it's got few weak links. Typically the Elves will present themselves in a formation with the shieldbearers at the front with the archers firing over their shoulders until the enemy draw close. Once the foe is within striking distance, the formation smoothly switches and the archers withdraw, making space for the Elves with Elven blades. The archers are then free to look for other targets or join the fray as needed.



Wrath of Bruinen, Strengthen Will, Repeat...

In your Move phase, once the enemy has closed within range, cast *Wrath of Bruinen* with Elrond, using two dice. Once he is done, use Gandalf to strengthen Elrond's Will - so that next turn he can cast the spell again with two dice. If that doesn't cause chaos within the enemy ranks, nothing will.



Scrape the battleline clean.

Keep Gandalf on one of your flanks, where he can, at the right moment, devastate the enemy formation with a *Sorcerous Blast*. Players typically (I've yet to meet a player who doesn't do it as a matter of course) form their army into neat and tidy battlelines before engaging in close combat, and that is the precise moment to strike. Stride forward and blast down the length of the enemy's line.



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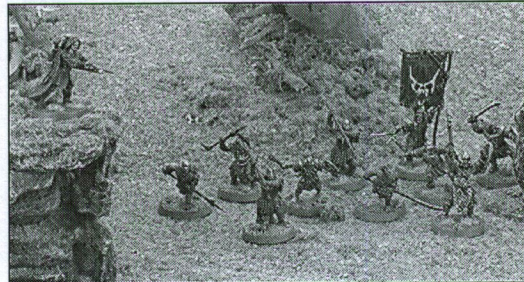
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Wisdom and Might Legolas

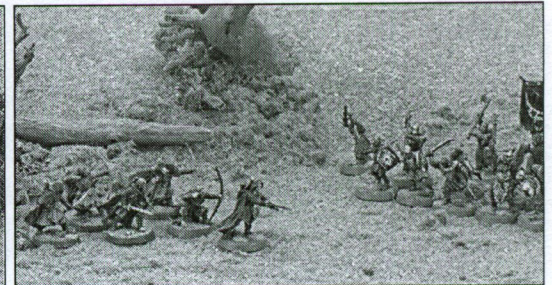
Legolas

If I may be blunt, I reckon Legolas to be the best Hero in The Lord of the Rings. Obviously he's not as destructive as Sauron, nor the Balrog - but then he only costs 90 points. What makes him so great is that he can 'reach out and touch the enemy', very effectively from an early stage in the game. Without subjecting himself to the same risks as combat Heros (picking fights with Trolls can have serious consequences), Legolas can kill off a sizable chunk of the enemy force. Use Legolas' Might points to cause wounds more easily and get busy mowing down the enemy. Suffering frequent casualties makes even the most confident player err towards caution, as well as having the obvious effect of breaking his force more quickly.



Pick 'em off

Sometimes a shot will present itself which is just too tempting to pass up, and this is where the second part of Legolas' Deadly Shot special rule comes into effect - he can hit automatically, without any need to roll. This even works on enemies partially obscured or even in close combat. Use this to take down banner bearers (when there's no friendly model close enough to pick up the fallen banner), knock wounds off of enemy Heroes who are close to death or even up a close combat if a friendly model is badly outnumbered, perhaps saving a friend from being trapped.



Maximum damage

This tactic is boring, but sound in practice. Many battles are won by swiftly breaking the enemy force (reducing them to half strength). This tactic works on knowing the 'to wound' table and playing to its strengths. Legolas has a Strength 3 Elf bow - so use it to its best effect. He's most effective against Defence 3 targets that he wounds on a 4+, so shoot them first. Then he's best against Defence 4 and 5 (whom he will need a 5+ to wound). Lastly he'll wound Defence 6 and 7 models on a 6. Now, here's where the boredom, and the tactic, come in. Mon Legolas accompagne généralement des figurines dotées d'arcs ordinaires, dont la Force n'est que de 2. requently accompanies models with 'normal' bows, which are only Strength 2. Strength 2 shots wound less easily than Strength 3 (obviously), so we need to look for ways to make them more effective. Since, in my force, there are more Strength 2 shots being fired than Strength 3 ones, I use Legolas to clear the way for the shots to follow. He scythes down higher Defence models, hopefully exposing lower Defence targets for the rest of the force. Consider the picture above - Legolas looses his arrows onto the Goblins with shields (he'd need a 5+ to wound either a Goblin with or without a shield, so he might as well take on the better armoured target). With some of those felled, the Rangers can then tackle the more vulnerable models behind. I told you it was dull - but it doesn't half make a difference in battle.

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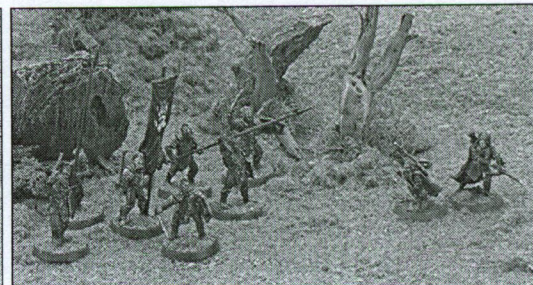
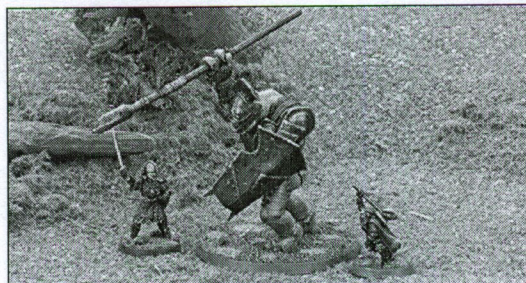
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Wisdom and Might Gimli

Gimli, son of Glóin

Gimli is the member of the Three Hunters most suited to wading into the enemy with abandon. His very high Defence makes him hard to kill, while the Axes of the Dwarves special rule means he can adapt to take on either high or low Defence targets. Use Gimli to spearhead an assault, defend a bastion or simply bolster your battle line.



Few versus the many

Gimli can either fight with 3 Attacks, or with 2 Attacks receiving +1 on the roll to wound. Choose carefully before the fight starts which you want. Typically at the start of the game, while I'm chatting to my opponent about the various scenery and scenario rules in play I say that unless I specifically state otherwise prior to making a dice roll, all my models will use their weapons 'single handed'. That saves on confusion later. Times that I would use Gimli's special two-handed attacks are when the enemy's Defence is 7 or higher. Since Gimli would need 6s to wound such targets. I'll also use Gimli's special two-handed attacks if he's being helped out in the combat by another Hero or a Warrior or two, like in the picture. Against the Isengard Troll, Gimli can rely on Eomer to help him win the fight and will only need a 5+ to wound when they win.

Tactic two: It takes two

Gimli is great for throwing into the hurly burly of battle, where frankly he excels, but there's another role I often assign to him in my games - protecting Legolas. Legolas frequently presents such an obvious menace when I use him (once he's shot down three or four enemy models, people start to take notice) that my opponent will often divert considerable resources towards killing him off. Cue Gimli. By placing Gimli on Legolas protection duty, you ensure that the Elven prince will be kept safe. Consider buying Legolas an Elven cloak for a start - that means that if he stands behind Gimli, he'll almost certainly be obscured. I like to imagine him hunkering down and using the incredibly tough Dwarf to take the hits for him. So Legolas shoots, Gimli hacks away and for 180pts you'll struggle to find a more effective combination.

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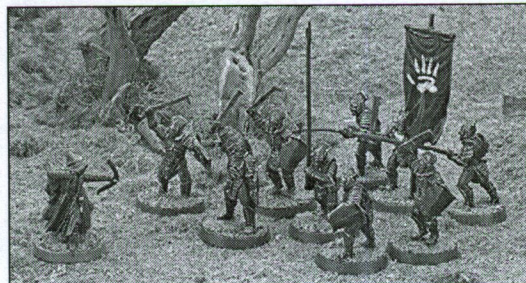
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Wisdom and Might Aragorn, Isildur's Heir

Aragorn, Isildur's Heir is easily the most versatile Good Hero in the game. He can shoot well, fight brilliantly, confidently lead troops with his impressive Courage of 6 and bolster many of those around him thanks to his excellent special rules. Add to that the fact that he gets a free Might point each turn and it's plain to see why he is so feared and respected. He's also a blast to use! Aragorn is great fun to play with, precisely because he is so versatile - and he's a firm favourite from the books and films.



Mighty, mighty, Aragorn

Every turn you can spend a Might point without fear of depleting your stock. That's awesome. Use these Might points to stop you getting charged (or to let you charge before your foe gets away), to shoot before your enemy can, to launch Heroic combats or to win fights. My personal favourite use, however, is to turn 'almost wounds' into actual wounds. There's no point hanging onto these Might points, you can't keep them from round to round so as soon as an opportunity to use them sensibly arises - take it.



Stick together

Two of Aragorn, Isildur's Heirs special rules are only of benefit if friendly models are within a certain distance of Aragorn. With that in mind, operate as much of your force as possible as a compact fighting group with Aragorn at its heart. That way you'll be able to race through difficult terrain as if it were the smooth and rolling fields of the Shire.

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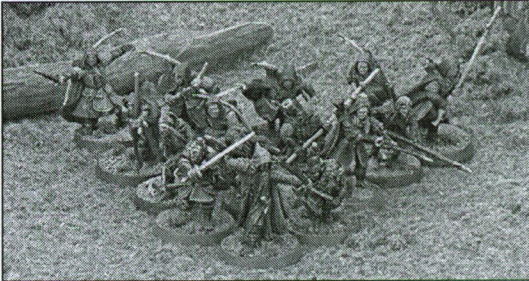
Aragorn, Isildur's Heir (with Elven cloak)	200
Legolas (with Elven cloak)	100
Gimli (with Elven cloak)	100
Halbarad	65
4 Dunedain (2 with spear)	98
16 Rangers of Arnor (8 with spear)	136
Total	699

This Grey Company force perfectly represents Aragorn and his kinsmen as they travel through the Paths of the Dead. Not only does it have a wonderful, evocative theme, but it also operates effectively on the tabletop. Boasting 22, Strength 2, bow shots that will hit on a 3+ (not to mention Legolas' own firepower) it can outshoot almost any force imaginable - but it also poses a tremendous threat in close combat, with a staggering 16 Might points and every model in the army having at least Fight value 4.



Teams of two

This army works brilliantly if you split the Heroes into pairs. I've already talked a little about pairing Legolas and Gimli together, but consider putting Halbarad with Aragorn. Not only is he a logical compadre for the Heir of Isildur, thematically speaking, but he's no slouch in battle. I use Halbarad to cover Aragorn's back - anyone trying to trap Aragorn or cut him off has to deal with a pretty tough contender in the form of Halbarad. His



The flying wedge

Most opponents are going to expect you to stand back and shoot with this army, which will work well enough- but consider getting stuck in. With Aragorn at the head of your formation you can move at full speed through difficult ground (of any kind). Use that to outmanoeuvre your foe and pick a location that suits you to fight in. Support your Heroes with spear-armed models and kick-butt in combat. Aragorn and Gimli with

stash of three Might points means that he can call Heroic moves too, allowing Aragorn to keep his Might stored up for winning fights and killing Evil models.

4 attacks (supported by spears, you see) are deadly - Legolas and Halbarad with 3 each are also very impressive. Before your foe knows it, they're in a fight to the death - and because Aragorn lets his allies benefit from the banner rules if they're within 3"/8cm, your chances are very, very good.

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