

# TACTICA



# LORDS OF EVIL

The Lord of The Rings is very much a story about Heroes, who are not necessarily shining paragons of virtue. Adam Troke embraces the darkness and shows us how the Lords of Evil work in the strategy battle game.

**W**hat I like best about The Lord of The Rings game is how Heroes interact and how incredibly potent they can be when used appropriately. That's not to say that all Heroes are all-powerful killing machines, but that they all have a task that they can perform effectively – from trampling the enemy beneath their feet to filling the warriors around them with bravado and self-assurance.

Gamers often focus on the Good Heroes, and with the likes of Aragorn and Boromir swashbuckling their way around Middle-earth, it's all too easy to see why. They are powerful and charismatic. You know what each should be able to accomplish, because you've seen or read about their feats in the movies and books. Evil Heroes are a little less clear-cut, which isn't to say that they're any less potent than their Good counterparts, just that sometimes you need to look beyond their appearance and the stat-lines to get to the meat of what they can accomplish for you.

The key to getting the most from your Evil Heroes is knowing at the start of the game what role you want them to achieve. Some, of course, can carry out more than one function, but even then, you need to have a plan and stick to it. It's all a matter of planning ahead when you're writing your army list.

The roles that an Evil Hero can carry out, in my opinion, are covered in the box below. Just looking at the five categories, it might occur to you that some named Heroes fit comfortably into more than one. The Balrog, for example, is a peerless fighter, but also keeps the Goblin hordes in line easily. Likewise, a Ringwraith is capable of Magical Carnage, but can also achieve Assassinations, Scattering the Foe, and even Mass Destruction if you mount him on a Fell Beast.

If a Hero can multi-task like that, then he's usually doubly important to your plans. Don't take daft risks with valuable Heroes, particularly those doing "double duty," in your games. Your plans will be doubly frustrated if he dies.

## Evil Tactics

### Mass Destruction

Put simply, as if this one needs explaining, Mass Destruction is the no-holds-barred elimination of enemy warriors by any and every means.

### Leadership

Evil Warriors are craven and cowardly compared to the stalwart Free Peoples, and strong leadership can give you the edge when the going gets tough. Underestimate it at your peril.

### Magical Carnage

From brutal spells like Sorcerous Blast and Drain Life to cunning powers like

Compel and Sap Will, the magical carnage tactic involves using spells to hamper your foe's plans. And the Evil side has access to a lot of spells.

### Assassinations

Couldn't be simpler really – use your Heroes to butcher the enemy's finest and most powerful models, wreck all their battle plans, and pave the way to glory for the forces of Evil.

### Scattering the Foe

These Heroes can take advantage of a broken foe and prey on the crumbling resolve of your foes.



## MASS DESTRUCTION

The Balrog, Sauron, Mûmak, Troll Chieftain, Burdhûr, Khandish King on Chariot, Ringwraith on Fell Beast, Spider Queen, Gûlavhar, and Uruk-hai

If you want to use one or more of your Heroes in a mass destruction capacity, there are a couple of basic principles that you should strive to adhere to.

The first is to keep moving at all costs – be the charger, not the charged. By doing so, you will be able to pick your fights, which is essential when you're trying to get to grips with the enemy. There's nothing worse than having a potent Hero charged by a lone Warrior (often a suicidal Citadel Guard or Royal Guard with the *Bodyguard* rule, in my experience), who prevents you from unleashing your full force.

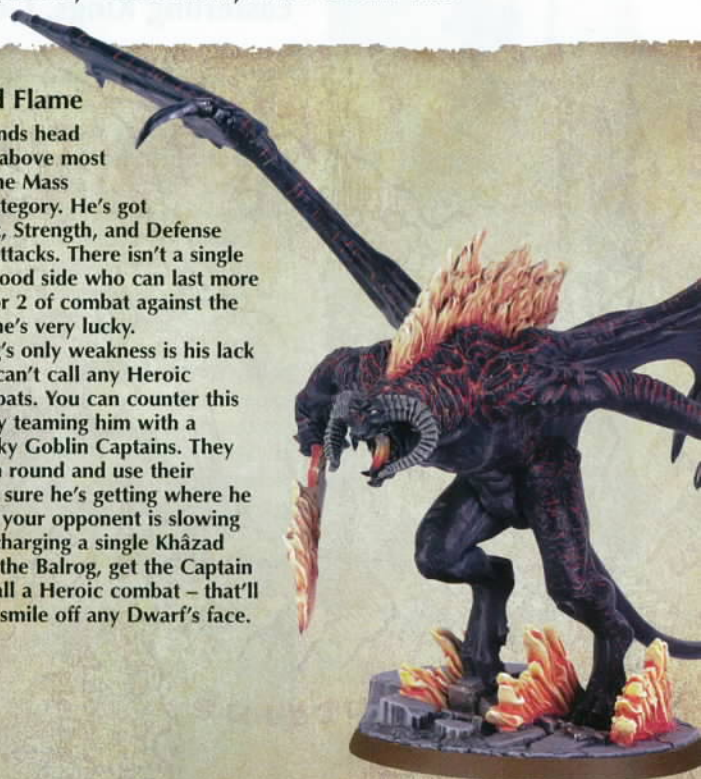
Keep moving by using Might Points to call Heroic moves. If your Hero has the *Trample* special rule, or is a cavalry model, it's especially important to do so. Count on spending most of the Hero's Might to do Heroic moves.

The other principle is "don't fight one on one." A Troll Chieftain or the Balrog, for example, can easily take on (and generally kill) two or three models a turn. Get him stuck into that many enemies. You can do so by calling Heroic moves but also by flanking him with suitable comrades. If you can kill three models a turn with your Balrog, you're using him properly.

### Shadow and Flame

The Balrog stands head and shoulders above most Heroes from the Mass Destruction category. He's got awesome Fight, Strength, and Defense values and 4 Attacks. There isn't a single Hero on the Good side who can last more than a round or 2 of combat against the Balrog unless he's very lucky.

The Balrog's only weakness is his lack of Might – he can't call any Heroic moves or combats. You can counter this shortcoming by teaming him with a couple of plucky Goblin Captains. They can follow him round and use their Might to make sure he's getting where he needs to be. If your opponent is slowing you down by charging a single Khâzad Guard against the Balrog, get the Captain in there and call a Heroic combat – that'll soon wipe the smile off any Dwarf's face.



### The Heroic Mugging

Sometimes, you'll find yourself wanting to penetrate further into the enemy lines than you could by making a normal move. Or perhaps you want to get several of your models fighting more than once in a turn. Simply administer a Heroic Mugging. Send a Hero and as many Warriors as you can against a single enemy Warrior or Hero – ideally one of your models should have a higher Fight value than the victim. Now declare a "Heroic" combat.

In the ensuing fight, the poor Good model is systematically butchered and your jolly triumphant Warriors can skip off to join other fights. This tactic is great for dealing with minor Heroes and Wizards or simply for gaining ground, since effectively all the models in the fight get to move twice that turn. Used wisely this tactic can be as decisive as any I know of. A Ringwraith on Fell Beast, for instance, can feasibly cover a distance of 24"/56 cm in a single turn.







### Shamans

These models have the Fury spell – arguably the most influential spell in the game. While Fury is in effect, all friendly models of the same type as the Shaman (Orcs, for example) automatically pass all Courage tests. Even better, the effect is automatic. Thus, the Shaman doesn't require line of sight like a *Stand Fast!*, and it works even if the Shaman is engaged in close combat!



### Gothmog

Gothmog is a great Hero, able to crush Good Warriors with relative ease and even match swords against many Good Heroes. His true strength, though, lies in his *Master of Battle* special rule. This skill enables him to call a free heroic action of the same type as any enemy Hero within 6"/14 cm. Simply devastating if used in the correct way, this ploy can frustrate the enemy's plans and at the same time leave Gothmog's own stash of Might free to spend as you choose.

## LEADERSHIP

Sauron, the Balrog, Saruman, Sûladan, Uglûk, Shamans, Easterling Kings, Gothmog, Barrow Wights, and the Nazgûl

**T**he most basic principle behind the leadership tactic is to make your Warriors do what you want them to – in a nutshell, that's stay and fight to the last Orc! That's a hard thing to ask when you look at the average Courage value in the Evil force. Fortunately, although Evil Warriors are yellow-bellied cowards one and all, their leaders are more than capable of keeping them in the game.

Any Hero with a Courage value of 5 or better is fit to be used in a Leadership capacity. Courage 5, in my opinion, is the minimum trustworthy Courage value, and I always try to include one or more such Heroes in my force. Essentially, once you get to Courage 5, your chances of passing a *Stand Fast!* test are better than they are of failing. Simple really.

Keep your leaders out of trouble and central to your force so that they can affect the maximum number of models. In such positions, they are ideally placed to issue Heroic actions. The most common and important of these are Heroic moves, which will enable your force to seize the initiative when they don't have Priority or retain it if your opponent tries to take it from you. Some Heroes have extra benefits too. Take Saruman for example. He has a 12"/28-cm *Stand Fast!* range, which allows him to affect a larger number of models than most. This ability makes the fact that he costs as much as three Uruk-hai Captains more palatable, as he can hold a line firm more confidently. If you're willing to sacrifice the odd Orc Warrior, consider taking Uglûk for the same purpose.

### Networking



Here's a simple tactic that works with Shamans. If your force is in any risk of becoming broken, make sure that your Captains are within 6"/14 cm of your Shaman (see example). Normally, *Stand Fast!* rolls are not passed on from one Hero to another, but the Shaman's Fury spell works on every model of the same

race (Orc, Moria Goblin, or Uruk-hai), Hero or not. By keeping your Heroes within 6"/14 cm of your Shaman, you can remove the element of risk from Heroes taking their Courage tests and effectively cover an area of up to 18"/42 cm. That's a lot of Warriors you don't have to worry about.



# MAGICAL CARNAGE

## Sauron, Ringwraiths, Barrow Wights, and Saruman

**C**ausing magical carnage involves utterly wrecking your opponent's tactics with a barrage of spells. From the uncomplicated power of Sorcerous Blast, which can demolish tightly packed formations and throw riders from their horses, to the subtle will of the Barrow Wights, who can Paralyze the foe, Magical Carnage can take many shapes. All of them can help you secure victory for the powers of Darkness.

The most common use of spells is to Transfix a Hero or Warrior and render him almost totally helpless. It's a simple ploy but no less effective for it. A slightly harder but more effective tactic is to Compel enemy models. Doing so allows you to force the target model to make a half-move of your choice (with the restrictions that you can't make him leap off cliffs or chop off his own head or anything daft like that). This spell allows you to maneuver enemy models into terribly dangerous positions (see *Isn't It Compelling?*). Bear in mind that this spell can be used at any point during the caster's move, allowing him to cast it before or during a charge if you wish. The spell can also be cast on an enemy who has already moved, so it's great for really messing up enemy formations.

### Ringwraiths

The Nine Riders in black have a dazzling array of spells to unleash on the enemy, and each of them has a specific purpose. At first glance, most of them seemed designed to help you to kill off or weaken single Heroes. However, Ringwraiths can actually unleash such an onslaught on the whole of an enemy army that they certainly qualify as belonging under the Magical Carnage category. For example, a well placed Compel spell can move a banner bearer out of formation so that he no longer supports his comrades and is potentially in the line of fire. A Black Dart can kill a model in the center of a line of Bowmen, preventing them from Volley Firing, or it can kill off a crewman of a Siege Engine. Even horses aren't safe from the Black Darts of the Nazgûl.

Using the Black Riders isn't a mystical art, as some people might have you believe – just look at their spells and think up ways to scupper your enemy's plans with them. And remember – when you've only got 1 Will Point left, stop casting spells. There's never a good reason to sacrifice your Ringwraith (more on that later).

### Isn't It Compelling?



Here, Saruman is positioned to deal with the doomed Théoden. By Compelling him forward 5"/12 cm, Saruman allows the Uruk-hai Warriors to surround the King of Rohan, trap him, and

spell certain doom for the Good Hero. This tactic is ideal for getting enemy Heroes away from their bodyguards and leaving the Warriors stranded with no leadership.

### Rohan (or Gondor or Dol Amroth) Bowling



Sorcerous Blast is the business, so it's a shame that only Saruman has the ability. Yes, it can kill models, and that's great. However, the spell's real value is in knocking things over – especially mounted models.

Any model hit by a Sorcerous Blast is immediately knocked to the ground, even off his steed. Against mounted formations, this spell is deadly. The best trick

is to aim at a Warrior who doesn't have any Will to resist the spell and blast him into several of his friends. They will all be knocked to the ground and lose their horses! Not only that, but if you haven't moved your own models yet, they are then free to make their own moves and charge the downed riders, making them sitting ducks for your horde.



# ASSASSINATIONS

## Barrow Wights, Ringwraiths, Shelob, the Spider Queen, and Hasharin

### Barrow Wights



There's nothing that says "your Hero is dead meat" like the Paralyze spell. One of my most heart-stopping moments in a U.K. Grand Tournament was when my Dain Ironfoot model was paralyzed right at the pivotal moment of the battle. Since then, I've had a hearty respect for the Barrow Wights.

The trick to using them effectively is to pack them in among a wedge of Orcs so that they can advance unhindered on the foe. Since the range of their spell is

only 6"/14 cm, they need to get close. The spell is cast on a 4+, so always use at least two dice to cast it.

The most important thing is not to cast the spell until you have some Warriors in position to take advantage of it. A Paralyzed model automatically loses any fights and is trapped, but he'll get a chance to stand up at the end of each Fight Phase, so waste no time piling into him and chopping him to pieces with two-handed weapons!

**K**illing an important Hero (or other key model, like a banner bearer) can often swing a game in your favor, and the Evil armies in *The Lord of The Rings* specialize at it.

Most forces feature one or two key Heroes, and killing them can massively increase your success rate. Consider an army with Aragorn or Boromir in it. Your opponent is relying heavily on their combat prowess. If you bump them off early on, then their plans are seriously dented. Likewise, an army with lots of bodyguard troops can survive even if it gets broken. By killing the Hero that these Warriors are protecting, you blow your opponent's plans out of the water.

The manner of the assassination is really up to you, but as you might have guessed it normally comes in one of two ways: shooting him dead or hitting him with sharp things. Sadly, the Good side boasts many very tough heroes, so hitting them in combat is often ill-advised, and some subterfuge is required. Cue the *Spider Surprise*.



### The Hasharin

These grim assassins have a respectable Fight value of 5 and 3 Attacks, but what really makes them dangerous is the *Bane of Kings* rule, which lets them reroll any failed rolls to wound. Take care, however, not to pit them against Heroes that are too powerful for them to take on. Any Hero with a Fight value of 6 or higher is just not worth fighting, but Captains of Gondor, Rangers of the North, Wizards, and Heroes of Rohan are fair game!

### The Spider Surprise



Shelob is just splendid for dealing with troublesome Heroes. With her ability to move fast over almost any terrain, she can generally get to where she needs to be, and at 90 points, she's easy to include.

Ideally, use a Ringwraith to Compel your intended victim into range of Shelob, as in the example picture above, and have her charge in. She gets +1 Attack on the turn she charges and has

the *Knock Down* special rule. Thus, if she wins she'll deal out four Strength 7 strikes, and she can reroll failed wounds, too! Not many Good Heroes will get up from that.

The Spider Queen is just as good at this devious tactic and has the added advantage that she can spawn little Broodlings to keep enemy Warriors from helping out the doomed Hero.



## SCATTERING THE FOE

Sauron, the Balrog, Ringwraiths, the Witch-king, and any other Hero with Might Points

### The Glory of 3/1/1



The Evil army has loads of Heroes with 3 Might Points (Lurtz, Grishnákh, Uglúk, Sharku, Vrashkû, and so on), and they're just the dependable types you want to have around at this point of the game. They're ideal for issuing Heroic moves and

tackling those enemy Heroes who are best placed to declare a *Stand Fast!* The "3/1/1'ers" are cheap compared to better Heroes, but that extra Might Point can really come in handy. Thus, consider taking them in your force if for no other reason.

This is the most straightforward of all the ways in which you can use your Evil Heroes and needs very little explanation. Assuming that you've been able to break the enemy force, you want to ensure that as many of his Warriors as possible flee the battlefield each turn.

This is where a special type of Hero comes in. These Heroes generally have either the *Harbinger of Evil* or *Ancient Evil* special rule, and both are tremendously effective. Any model in range of these villains suffers a penalty of -1 to its Courage value. This has proved the decisive factor in games for me plenty of times in the past – a force with lots of its models in range of a *Harbinger of Evil* rarely survives for more than a couple of turns.

With this in mind, it's all the more important *not* to throw your Ringwraiths away when they run low on Will Points. Hold them back, and use them for this special purpose once the enemy force has broken. A Ringwraith on his last point of Will can be very effective in this capacity!

Another thing to bear in mind is how crucial it is to deprive Good Heroes of their *Stand Fast!* ability. Any Hero with Might Points left at this stage can be a game winner. If a model is already engaged, it can't make a *Stand Fast!* roll.

### The Dark Lord

It would be wrong to end this article without taking a moment to talk about the most deadly and destructive Evil model in the game – the Dark Lord Sauron himself. There is simply nothing this armor-clad killing machine cannot do. He's a wizard of incredible power, a close combat specialist (matched only by the Balrog), an excellent leader, and brilliant at breaking the enemy. In fact, his only weakness is the warriors he has to fight alongside.

If you're including Sauron in your army, and it's easy to see why you might, use him to spearhead your attack. The trick is to make your opponent fixate on him and nothing else and ignore the other models in your force. Don't worry if he sends dozens of warriors to fight the Dark Lord – that's what we want. Use the rest of your army to take objectives or whittle away at the edges of the Good force, while Sauron marches across their corpses swinging his powerful mace.

