

MULTI-PLAYER GAMES

By Andy Meechan



Rick's right you know, multi-player games are a great way to play Warmaster. In fact it's dangerously close to being the best way to play Warmaster (which would be a multi-player game on a large table with great terrain and loads of well-painted armies). Furthermore, I am so enamoured by the idea that I've started thinking up various ways to execute multi-player games. So if you're at a loss some weekend and have a few mates round, or if your Club is looking for a reason to stick a couple of 6x4's together, then read on.

There are certain factors that remain unchanged throughout multi-player games (having more than two players for a start!). Employing an umpire is recommended as they can keep the action flowing by resolving disputes and round up any wandering players when it's their turn. Other factors are less stable, such as how Command of each side is resolved, the arrival of reserves in particularly large games, and who is charged with supplying the biscuits (usually me, but I try to encourage the others to stock my cupboards).



COMMAND

Although some Races in the Warhammer universe lend themselves to infighting and general insubordination in the lower ranks, you'll find that there is usually a strong leader at the top of the pile (he's the one wielding the biggest stick). In some cases the leader is not always best respected by his

sub-commanders, be this through inter-tribal disagreements, personal ambition, or incompetence (perceived or proven) of either party. These factors can be toyed with to add a bit of spin to any game.

There can be only one

Given enough players, each side can choose a player to act as Overall Commander, who spends the game issuing orders from his camp and expecting them to be interpreted as closely as possible. The other players aren't allowed to talk to each other unless their respective Generals are within 30cm of each other on the battlefield. The Overall Commander should also be represented by a (suitably impressive) token on the tabletop, allowing direct exchange with individual Generals within range. At all other times, orders are given in written note form only and should be kept simple.

The Overall Commander issues all of his orders before his sub-commanders. The Umpire should collate all of the notes to be passed around the field of battle and assess them for brevity. Edits should be made where necessary and a Command roll for each note made in private to see if it is delivered whole, in part, or not at all. Use the highest Command value for the race nominated as Overall Commander on the allied side. (The Overall Commander should be of a Race represented by at least one of the allied armies.)

A variation would be verbal commands issued to sub-commanders; again via the Umpire. In this case, the Army Commander issues the order to the Umpire, who carries it to the intended player, or not as the case may be. Use of command rolls can again be applied to misplace or even misdirect orders! (My favourite blunder is giving one

General another's orders as well as their own!) If a Command roll is unsuccessful then refer to the Overall Commander Blunder table for the effect:

OVERALL COMMANDER BLUNDER TABLE:

Roll Where are they going?

- 1-2** The sub-commander receives no direct orders from the Overall Commander this turn and may ad-lib as they wish, or continue to execute their orders from a previous turn.
- 3-4** The orders are delayed and will arrive next turn. Just inform the player that no orders were received as with the result above. If the sub-commander is issued more next turn, they may receive both sets!
- 5-6** The orders are misdirected to another of the allied players (who hopefully receive their own set of orders at the same time!).

Once all orders have been issued, the individual players may begin their own orders phase. As usual, a General failing a command roll will prevent him from issuing more orders but will not affect an allied army.

You don't want to do it that way

Another method of antagonising an allied force is to pitch together sides with differing views on life. High Elves and Dwarfs make for a great spectacle, as neither side would defer to a commander from the other, would treat any third party Commander (say an Empire Commander) with disdain and would ultimately do their own thing. (Competing Orc Warbosses, or Necromancers tussling to show off also make great playmates.)

This twist is advised for use in simple scenarios, as the Umpire is going to have to do a lot of work mixing up and misinterpreting messages. After all, if the Dwarfs start writing to the Elves in their own, heavy rune-script, the Elven commanders either try to translate, or go all out to provide a more elegant (i.e. Elven) solution (it doesn't matter what the solution is, it's bound to be more elegant than the Dwarfs idea anyway!).

Death by Committee

If you want to achieve nothing, but spend an awful lot of time achieving it, form a committee! This option for command is particularly suited for Empire armies composed from different areas of the Empire, or Chaos Warbands representing different powers.

In this command, there is no overall commander and players are free to decide what the forces should do... together. This should end in tears as the inevitable 'suits all' solution is usually the least imaginative (and safest) bet! The Umpire is best used here to keep discussion times suitably hectic, so that only quick thinking will save the day.

RESERVES

Normal battles take place on a 6'x4', or 8'x4' table which can comfortably pack in 3,000-4,000 points of allied armies. Throw in another ally to either side and you could be looking at 6,000 points per side; this means your dining room table is getting too cramped to swing a Goblin Fanatic (but it won't stop him from trying!). At 4' across, the average gaming table is going to allow only 20cm to deploy in. To avoid an unrealistic and unpleasant lining-up of the army, reserves should be used to form waves of attack, each bolstering the one in front (or preventing your opponent from routing it!).



Unless the scenario specifies otherwise, it is usual that the opposing forces will deploy on one edge of the table. When deploying, a minimum of 25% of the army should be placed onto the table, with the remainder arriving from reserve on future turns. Each turn has up to 25% of the army allocated to arrive as reserve. Units are allocated in advance to a specific reserve pool and are placed into battalions of 2-4 units.

Example: a 5,000 point Empire army elects to deploy 3,000 points, with 7 battalions totalling 1,120 points arriving on turn 2 and a further 3 battalions totalling 440 points on each of turns 3 and 4.

As it is easier to judge where and when forces should enter the tabletop at the planning stage, reserves allocated to earlier turns are more likely to turn up in the right place at the right time. When reserves are due to arrive, roll a D6 and deduct the score from the current turn number; the result gives you the number of battalions that have gone astray. Roll a D6 for each battalion affected, on a 1-4 the battalion arrives at a random point along the deployment edge, on a 5+ the battalion is placed into the reserve pool for the following turn. Note that a minimum of one battalion from the reserve pool must appear on-table on the turn allocated (be it randomly placed or not). If all battalions have gone astray, then the overall commander may choose one battalion that will appear from the allocated reserve pool; this appears at a random point on the side's deployment edge.

Example: given the Empire army above, during turn three there are 3 battalions totalling 440 points scheduled to arrive. Rolling a D6, the player is unfortunate and



gets a 1, which means that two of their battalions have gone astray ([Turn] 3 - 1 = 2). Rolling a further D6 for each battalion, the player gets a 2 and a 6: one of the battalions appears at a random spot along their board edge and the other is placed with the reserves earmarked for arrival on Turn 4. The third battalion is placed anywhere on the player's edge.

As you may have guessed, reserve battalions allocated to turns 4 or above will almost always arrive in the wrong place or at the wrong time – such is the hazard of co-ordinating a battle!

So, there you are, get out there make some alliances (the shakier the better!) and go to war with your neighbours (well, not literally!)