



- Mass Combat Rules -

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- Introduction -

"So began a battle that none had expected... Upon one side were the Goblins and the Wild Wolves, and upon the other were Elves and Men and Dwarves."

In a land darkening with Shadow, a company of adventurers will inevitably find themselves in the midst of massive battles. Imagine legions of Goblins and Wargs defending their strongholds in the mountains against a determined alliance of Beornings and Woodmen; or an army of Great Spiders threatening to close off the Elf-path with their terrible webs. How about Wolves and Vampires swarming from their dark caves, attacking the villages and outposts of The Free Peoples?

When combat involves large numbers of characters other than the fellowship of player-heroes, special rules may be desired to determine outcomes.

THE LOREMASTER'S ROLE

During mass combats, the Loremaster should pay special attention to his role as a narrator. It will be his creative descriptions of the battlefield drama that will keep the process from seeming too mechanical and boring, much like narrating a journey.

Of course, the Loremaster does not have to use any special rules at all. He can simply choose to narrate the entire war from beginning to end according to his own desires and pre-determined storyline. Or, as an easy random solution, he could roll a Feat die for each side, give a positive modifier to the army with an advantage and "presto" — the highest result wins the battle!

But these methods are unlikely to leave a satisfying feeling with most player-heroes who want direct

influence in leading their side to victory. They are looking for specific challenges to overcome to turn the tide in their favor. These rules provide those challenges.

As a director, the Loremaster "zooms in" on the location of the player-heroes to resolve their challenges in detail. The end result of each encounter imparts either a good effect or a bad one. This effect will make a difference in how well their side holds up overall. By keeping the emphasis on the player-heroes and their choices during large scale battles, the Loremaster stays more in line with Tolkien's books.

ANATOMY OF A MASS COMBAT

Every mass combat involves two main parts: **Battle encounters**, where the player-heroes attempt challenges that can help them win the war, and **Army attack tests**, where the overall results of the combat are determined.

In addition to these two elements, mass combats are divided into rounds representing one hour of fighting each called **mass combat rounds**. The Loremaster will need to referee a series of rounds until there is a clear victory for one side. If the battle lasts long enough, player-heroes may be required to make **Fatigue tests** to stay on their feet and **Corruption tests** to endure the horrors of war.

ARMY STATISTICS

All armies, including both The Free Peoples and the Shadow armies, share the same four basic characteristics: Attribute level, Combat skill, Parry rating, and Endurance. These characteristics measure the overall power, training, toughness, and size of the army.



The Loremaster and player-heroes will utilize these characteristics when making Army attack tests. This will allow for a bit of strategy on a large scale, keeping the players engaged in the entire process.

Attribute Level

One of the most important statistics any army possesses is its Attribute level. It is a numerical expression of the army's combined power, will, and cunning. This number is used as a bonus on all Army attack tests. It also represents the amount of Endurance damage an army causes on an ordinary successful attack; double this amount when a great success is rolled and triple it when an extraordinary success is rolled. Finally, it is used to calculate the army's Parry rating.

By using the Attribute level chart as a guide (found on page 26 of the Loremaster's Book), the Loremaster should assign each opposing force an Attribute level. This number should take into consideration the average Attribute level of the warriors comprising the group.

An average army of Goblins may be assigned an Attribute level of 3 or 4. They are not that powerful and shouldn't pose too big of a threat no matter what their size.

Combat Skill

The Combat skill statistic should reflect the training, tactics, and precision of each army. This number is the amount of Success dice used alongside a Feat die when determining Army Combat advantage (for the Free Peoples) and Army attack tests for both sides.

Using the Skill ratings chart as a guide (found on page 26 of the Loremaster's Book), the Loremaster assigns a rating between – (unskilled) and ♦♦♦♦ (superior) for each army. Exceptionally proficient forces might have ratings of ♦♦♦♦ or ♦♦♦♦♦. When assigning this rating, the Loremaster should take into account the average Weapon skill or Battle skill rating of the warriors comprising the army.

An average army of Goblins should be assigned a Combat skill rating of ♦♦. They will use the Feat die and two Success dice every time they make an Army attack test.

Order of a Mass Combat:

1. The Loremaster assigns **Army statistics** for each side in the conflict.
2. The Loremaster describes the onset of the battle, making sure to include distinctive features of the enemy and the battlefield.
3. The player-heroes determine **Army Combat advantage**.
4. Mass combat rounds begin. Steps 5 through 11 will be repeated in sequence until one side flees or is decimated.
5. If the player-heroes need to make **Fatigue tests**, they do so at the beginning of every mass combat round.
6. The Loremaster chooses a **Battle encounter** that may be resolved by the player-heroes if they so choose. The results of the challenge are applied.
7. If the player-heroes are required to make **Corruption tests**, they do so at the end of a Battle encounter segment or proposal.
8. Player-heroes choose a **Combat tactic** for their side.
9. Each side makes an **Army attack test**.
10. Damage from successful attacks is applied to Endurance.
11. Check for victory. If an army reaches zero Endurance, it is defeated.



Parry Rating

Arguably the second most important statistic, Parry rating expresses the defensive capabilities of an army through speed, shields and tactics. Parry rating is equal to an army's Attribute level plus a modifier given by the Loremaster between -2 and +3. Divisions of larger creatures are slower and less tactical, making it easier to hit them, while agile and shielded soldiers are harder to hit.

Parry rating will be used to modify the Combat TN needed to successfully attack and damage an army during a round of mass combat.

Because Parry rating utilizes the Attribute level of an army, it can change through special rewards or penalties that are given in conjunction with Battle encounters (see *Battle Encounters*).

An army of shielded Barding warriors has a Parry rating of 6. They are facing a shielded horde of Orcs with a Parry rating of 4. The Bardings choose the Careful tactic to attack the enemy. As a result, the Bardings will need to roll a 16 to hit the horde of Orcs (Combat TN 12 + Parry 4). The Orcs will need to roll an 18 (Combat TN 12 + Parry rating 6) to hit the Bardings.

Endurance

The number of Endurance points given to each army will measure its overall size, armour, and resilience. The Loremaster makes the final judgement about how many points to assign, but as a rule of thumb, 5 points should be given for every division (50 units) of normal-sized troops in an army. In addition, a 1 point bonus should be awarded for each division with superior armour and a 5 point bonus for each division containing large or hearty troops, such as Trolls.

A horde of Orcs contains 300 units (6 divisions) wearing mail armour and helms. The Loremaster determines that it should have 36 Endurance points (6 divisions x 5 points + 1 point x 6 divisions of superior armour = 36 points).

Over the course of a battle, an army's Endurance will deplete as it takes damage from successful Army attack tests. When an army's Endurance reaches zero, it is defeated.

ARMY COMBAT ADVANTAGE

Scanning the land and the formations of the enemy, the captain of The Free Peoples may devise clever commands that provide an advantage for his side.

Like assigning Combat advantages, described on pages 41-42 of the Loremaster's Book, a **Battle** roll is made to determine a number of Success dice that can be used for future Army attack tests. The player-heroes can make this roll using the **Battle** rank of the captain leading their side (the Loremaster should provide this information), or they can choose a captain from among themselves to make the roll.

The Battle roll is normally made at a *moderate* difficulty (TN 14), but the Loremaster can modify this to reflect a more cunning enemy or difficult circumstance, such as charging into a narrowing valley (TN 16+). He can also adjust it to reflect a natural advantage for The Free Peoples or a mindless enemy (TN 12 or lower).

The quality of the roll determines the number of bonus Success dice assigned.

Each ordinary success grants one bonus Success die, a great success grants two bonus dice, while an extraordinary success grants three bonus dice.

When it is time to make an Army attack test during the mass combat round, the player-heroes must decide whether or not to use one of their bonus Success dice to supplement the roll. If they do, they should describe how their side is taking advantage of the battlefield or the stupidity of the enemy.

FATIGUE TESTS

As stated previously, every round in a mass combat is equal to one hour on the battlefield. That is an extensive amount of time for an individual to be swinging a long sword or deflecting blows with a shield. Player-heroes will naturally become Weary during this period through the rigours of Battle encounters.



They will also need to make Fatigue tests regularly after a number of mass combat rounds equal to their Body score. The Fatigue test has a Target Number of 14 and should be made using the character's **Battle** skill.

A point of Hope may be spent on this test to invoke a Heart Attribute bonus. This represents the warrior's resolve to fight on even though he is weak.

If the test is failed, the player-hero gains 1 point of Fatigue, bringing him ever closer to total exhaustion and collapse.

Player-heroes should make this test at the beginning of every mass combat round when required.

BATTLE ENCOUNTERS

After narrating the opening scene of the battle, the Loremaster continues the story, centering the action on the player-heroes by choosing a Battle encounter they can choose to participate in.

For example, "You stare down the hillside toward the threatening front line of the enemy. Hundreds of Goblins pound their swords and shields and helmets in an eerie cadence. Then, with a loud screech, they rush toward you. Arrows rain down upon them as your side carefully defends the higher ground."

A large squad has quickly scaled the hill and is coming straight for you. Take them all out and you will reduce their army's Endurance by 10 points. If you fail, your army will lose 10 Endurance points!"

Battle encounters are meant for three purposes:

1. To afford the player-heroes an opportunity for personal combat in the middle of a massive battle.
2. To give player-heroes specific challenges that can affect the outcome of the war.
3. To keep the focus of the game on the player-heroes who are the main characters of the story.

Sample Battle Encounters

There are many different kinds of Battle encounters that the Loremaster can propose. The storyline, distinctive battlefield features, and nature of the enemy will all factor in when creating a specific challenge. However, they should all offer a reward for success and a penalty for failure.

The sample Battle encounters below are generic scenarios that the Loremaster can tailor to meet his particular storytelling needs.

Capture The Outpost

The heroes must take command of a key outpost. This can be a tower, a trench, a section of forest, or any area that gives an advantage when holding it.

If the heroes are successful in capturing the area, the Parry rating of their army increases by 4 for this round only.

If they fail, the Parry rating of the enemy army increases by 4 for this round only.

Cut Off The Head

An opportunity has arisen for the heroes to eliminate an enemy captain or prominent leader such as an Orc-Chieftain or a Hill-Troll Chief.

If the leader is captured or killed, the heroes remove an important source of inspiration, whereby decreasing the morale of the enemy army, lowering their Attribute level by 2 for the remainder of the battle.

A failure in this challenge means the heroes' army decreases by 2 Attribute levels for the remainder of the battle.

Note: Attribute level can never fall below 1.

Take No Prisoners

The company faces a long string of enemy warriors and must eliminate them. This can happen when the company is on the front lines, in the thick of battle, or if they are ambushing a unit.

If the heroes are successful in the challenge, reduce the opposing army's Endurance points. The number





The Loremaster now adjudicates the Battle encounter using the rules for personal combat found in the main rulebooks. The player-heroes will face two Wolf-riding soldiers and the Goblin captain. All they need to do is kill the captain to gain the reward for their army.

They are successful!

That drops the Attribute level of the Goblins & Wolves to 1. This will have a tremendous impact on the overall battle because now the Goblins & Wolves are limited to 1-3 Endurance points of damage per successful attack against the Dwarves. If they are to be victorious over the Dwarves, it will take them a minimum of 8 mass combat rounds, or 8 hours of fighting in the Long Marshes!

On the other hand, the Dwarves can potentially defeat the Goblins & Wolves in a little over 2 hours. But to do so, they must pull off two extraordinary successes and a normal success.

7. Since this is only the first mass combat round, player-heroes do not need to make Corruption tests.
8. Having given the heroes a chance to affect the battle, the Loremaster "zooms out" of close combat action and now focuses on the tactics of the whole army. He asks the player-heroes to choose a Battle tactic and they decide to be Aggressive, making the Combat TN 6 for the round.
9. The Combat TN to hit the Goblins & Wolves is modified to 10. The player-heroes make their Army attack test rolling the Feat die, 2 Success dice for Combat skill, and one Army Combat advantage die. They get a  on the Feat die (an automatic success), and one ! No need to add up the totals or modify the result with their Attribute rating. That's a great success!

The Combat TN to hit the Dwarves is 13. The Goblins & Wolves roll their Army attack test and come up with an 8 on the Feat die and a 5 on their Success die. Barely a success!

10. Because the heroes rolled a great success on their Army attack test, they cause 10 points of damage to the Endurance of the enemy. The Goblins & Wargs now have 25 Endurance points left.

The Goblins & Wolves inflict 1 point of damage on the Dwarves, dropping them to Endurance 23.

11. Neither side has been reduced to zero Endurance points yet, so there is no victory. However, the Goblins & Wolves realize that they are never going to win the war and they run for their lives back into Mirkwood, even though they have the majority of troops left!

AFTERMATH

When historians record the events of the war, they will remember that it was an aggressive move by the Free Peoples that took out the captain of the Goblins, which led to a quick and overwhelming victory.



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