

THE ANTARES INITIATIVE



ARTICLE BETA 0.03/DEC 2016

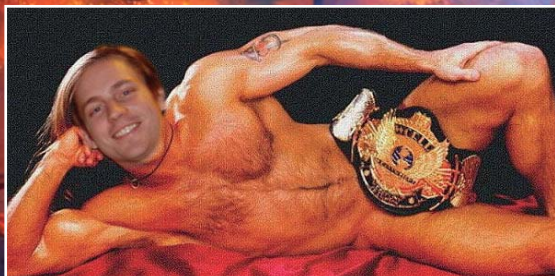
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DEC 2016

PLANET: DEFOR

ARTICLE BETA 0.04

LOCATION: DETERMINATE



HUW EVANS



CONCORD COMMANDER

The Antares Initiative Article 4 – It's Gamin' Time!

Well I hope all you homies had a great silly season. I know I did, but unfortunately it didn't include nearly enough gaming time. The time I did get to spend with Antares was both memorable and educational. As explained in my previous article, I have long suspected that larger games with more dynamic objectives would make for a much more balanced and fun play experience. This month, I got a chance to try that theory out!

I squared off against my old nemesis and the group's currently undefeated Bromite overlord, Bensome. We played 1500 points and tried out Andy's fun new (still work-in-progress) objective card system for the scenario (standard deployment).

"But you don't have 1500 points finished yet?!" I hear you mutter in derisive outrage.

Well you're right. We used many shameless proxies and the board looked like a complete mess, so you'll just have to suspend disbelief. Photos of the game will therefore remain in Spoon's shredder (I hope).

Ben was rocking a balanced and mixed Bromite force including a (proxied, but incoming) Brood Mother. I took a version of the force I'm essentially building toward, which is an all mounted theme. That meant three units of jump troops, two strike squads in a transport, two bike squads and numerous drones zipping around delivering plasma death or sandwiches as the need arose. Everyone has to keep their tootsies out of the hot tar and red dirt that makes up the surface of Australia (aka Defor) after all.

I'll start off by saying WOW.

The game was so much more dynamic, which is just what I was hoping for. In an area of the battlefield where most of my dudes were going down, there was still reason to move and with purpose; because I would either try to get my objectives or stuff Ben up on getting his (trying to guess what they were). In areas where I was strong, I would try to eliminate the enemy efficiently and then grab my objective points and zip away. The speed of my force also added to this dynamic feel as I was able to move all over the board as I saw fit.

Some memorable moments included:

- * Destroying Ben's Brood Mother with a throwaway round of shooting from a strike squad (less than 1/100 chance boys!).

- * The jet bikes tearing through Ben's backlines trying to get objective points for killing his support pieces and then proceeding to repeatedly bounce off borer drones (for the record they were still great).

- * "Frisbee" the Support drone gunning down two and half squads before he was finally consumed by lavamites - although not before headbutting his way through a single round of combat and almost seeing them off!



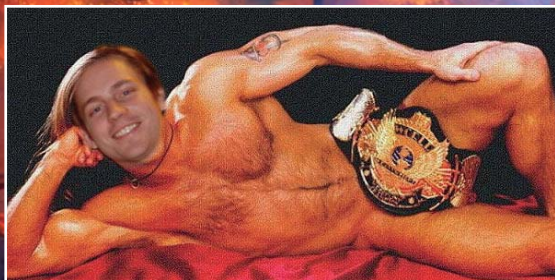
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The game ended in a narrow win for Bensome, with both of us scoring points from all four of our objective cards. Some would dispute this, but I'm sure Ben misread a few of his cards. One of these days Ben! I imagine the local Concord Shard is seriously considering demoting Lieutenant Teflon in favour of Frisbee.

Overall the larger forces and the objective cards did most of what I wanted to improve my engagement with the game of Antares itself. I will say I feel like the objective cards still need a bit of work, but that's just a matter of tweaking and I strongly suspect the final version of these cards will be well worth picking up on release. In fact, I will go as far as saying I don't predict playing many Antares games without them.

Unfortunately, some of the units still felt very unbalanced (I'm looking at you lavamites... don't make that cute lava dripping face at me!). These units also tend to be some of the cheapest units available so you will see them in every game against those factions (or almost any faction in the case of an X-launcher). Despite this, I say again that this is early days with Antares, both for us as a group and as a tabletop game in its own right. I have every confidence that it will continue to improve and these kind of balance issues will iron themselves out in due course.

Now if I could only improve as a player so I have more of a leg to stand on when it comes to blaming rules for my faults... Oh look a pig! How did it get up here?



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BEN KOCHSKAMPER



ISORIAN COMMANDER

December is a busy time of year and despite all the Christmas parties, end of year rush, and people going on holidays, we still managed to get a couple of games of Antares in. WNW have also stepped up the points to 750-1000 point battles, size matters right?!?!

The first game I'd like to talk about was the Rogue Drones scenario: it was a 2v1 game, Boromite and Concord (1000 points between the two armies) VS Isorians (1000 points). I thought this was a cool little scenario as you have to deal with the enemy whilst simultaneously trying to control the drones.

From memory, in this game I had the following force:

Command squad with 2 extra troops, spotter drone, medi drone, sling net on commander, leader 3

Phase squad, 2 extra troopers, and lance

Phase squad, 1 extra troop, lance, spotter drone

5 Tsan Ra, synchroniser drone, spotter drone, sling net ammo, leader 2

Targeter shard - 4

2 light support drones, spotter drone

Sniper, camo drone, shield drone, spotter drone

***Please note: there's probably a few things I can't remember in the list and I may have gotten some items wrong.*

The game started off a little slow as you deploy on the long end of the table, the Isorians may have seen the action sooner if they had have been sprinting rather than just using the run order. What I was trying to do was get my phase squads into terrain so they could benefit from cover and also cover other friendly units as they move forward. This didn't really work as well as I'd hoped as there was still quite a bit of distance between the enemy and my lovely Isorian folk. The one thing I wished I had done was field stand-in models. I really wanted to give pulse bikes a go but didn't. The bikes would have been really good at picking up objectives early.

The game started to hit its peak at turn 3, my poor sniper had so far spent most of the game down because of the rogue drone that decided to shoot at him (the sniper deployed fairly close to the centre near the drones)! This really didn't help my cause as Huw and Ben were already holding one drone and one unit of lavamites had just eaten my command squad... my sniper was meant to slow those lavamites down!

The Tsan Ra put some pins on those dreaded lavamites which was handy. That held them down for a turn and the following turn they were eliminated.

The Tsan Ra's glory did not last long.

By turn 5 the Boromite infantry had made it up the battlefield and took out my Tsan Ra. At this stage Ben and Huw held both drones and my units were going down like flies; I was being out shot by x-launchers and pesky concord C3 drop and strike squads. There was no coming back from here so we called it a game.



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ISORIAN COMMANDER

Highlights:

1 Phase squad trooper beating away a one of Huw's C3 Drop squads!

I'm not sure if this is a highlight: Tsan Ra don't work well as a huge squad mainly because of their large base size. After playing this game I feel they are more of a supporting unit, move them with a command squad and the follow ability and light up the sky with plasma carbines and plasma duocarbs. I learnt something, so I guess that's a highlight.

Lowlights:

Number of order dice seems to be a thing. Whilst we haven't played a huge amount of games, min/maxing units and order dice seems to be a huge advantage. For me it makes me wonder why you'd take large units.

X-Launchers and net ammo seems a bit over powered, even when it misses it hits. I think there should be a reduced amount of pins applied if it misses.

Lavamites are very scary and quite hard to deal with. I haven't worked it out yet!

Game 2

750 points Isorians Vs the Ghar Empire.

This has been the best game I have played so far. The scenario: Unexpected Encounter. The aim of the game was to get units off the opposing player's table edge as well as killing enemy units (but you only score points for killing units if you have units off the board).

From memory I took to following:

Command squad - 2 extra troopers, sling net ammo, spotter drone

3 Tsan Ra - sling net ammo and spotter

Phase squad - synchroniser drone, lance, sling net ammo, spotter drone

Phase squad, lance, sling net ammo, spotter done

Targeter probe shard - 4

Matt took a couple of Ghar suit units, 1 battle squad and 1 assault squad, 2 large outcast squads, one with a disruptor cannon and a unit of tectorists. ***There may have been some extra items/units for each army.*

This game seemed to go quite a bit quicker than other games we have played, not sure why that was but the game seemed to flow a bit better.

It was on like Donkey Kong in the middle: I had my command unit followed up by Tsan Ra, holding back the Ghar battle squad with mass single shots. I managed to put a pin on them which helped my cause, as slowing these guys down was crucial. I believe my sniper also managed to put a pin on them early on in the piece. This slowed Matt down quite considerably and he was struggling to pass his command checks to activate the battle squad. I was fortunate to manage a lucky shot on the battle squad which in turn caused a plasma explosion. That was cool!



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BEN KOCHSKAMPER



ISORIAN COMMANDER

Matt reciprocated and caused my Tsan Ra to go down with a gouger gun. This worried me quite a bit as they had the higher strike value on their guns making it easier to do damage. Those Ghar battle and assault squads are hard tin cans to move!

The middle wasn't looking good for me, at this stage as I had half a command squad left; 1 phase squad hiding from the assault squad and 2 Tsan Ra that were currently down. Matt had his Battle squad that were struggling to activate, the assault squad getting scarily close and his outcast squad with a disruptor cannon in a nice position, holding the middle.

To the right hand side of the board there was a face-off between a phase squad and an outcast squad... I had the right hand side of the board covered. Rapid fire from the phase squad decimated the outcast squad, and with pins it made it hard for Matt to activate his unit.

This game was very bloody in the middle and there were a lot of units staying down or not being able to activate due to failing activation tests. With the battle squad struggling to activate, this gave me the opportunity to get one unit off the board in the last turn.

Highlights:

Ghar Battlesuit exploding

Using the "Follow" special rule with decent success

Lowlights:

Not sure if there really were any as it was the most enjoyable game I have played to date.

Overall thoughts thus far (lack of game experience probably influences my thoughts, but here goes):

I find myself to be a bit of a competitive gamer and I'm not quite sure I could play Antares at a competitive level just yet. There are certainly elements of the game I really like such as the ability to react but there are also elements that just seem to be a bit too over-the-top like the x-launcher/net ammo combo. I'm enjoying the game but I'm finding it to be more of a beer and pretzels situation. Perhaps this was the intent with all the narrative scenarios.

For me to play this as a competitive game, I'd need to see more of the Isorian units released and an official Tournament Pack similar to what Mantic did with Kings of War. They created, what they call, the 'Clash of Kings Players Pack' which nerfed a few key combos/units in the game so it was a little more balanced. Who knows, my thoughts may change by the end of the initiative.

Bring on January!



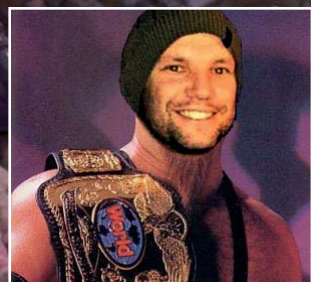
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MAT SELICK



GHAR COMMANDER

December 2016... wow that came quick. The fat jolly bloke completed the yearly rounds and the average adult life becomes time (and usually money) poor. Unfortunately for my Ghar, December was also not the month of activating pinned units.

My opponent Spoon (Ben K) was commanding a 750 point Isorian force and given the scenario of Unexpected Encounter (as mentioned above). I was cautious as Spoon would have an additional deployment that may run past me getting to my backline/scenario objective. My plan to counter this was using both of my suit squads (battle & assault) amplifiers early. My reasoning was for MOD2 was: 1) get into position quickly and 2) double fire to create large volumes of hits to down/pin my opponent and if I get lucky, wipe my feeble Isorian opponent's units off the board early. After that, casually wander across the board whistling Ghar tunes to win by objective.

I felt we both deployed quite well, with my battle suits to dominate the centre and my outcast units to hold the flanks and eventually push for scenario victory. A sound plan on paper... Not concerned with Spoons deployment I felt I was in the game.

First few turns I pushed forward aggressively, using my battle/assault suits amplifiers to follow my pre-game plan of get into position early then unleashing hell. Unfortunately for me, my battle suit shooting was largely ineffective. My scourer cannons were missing more than an intoxicated under 10's cricket team and was made worse by my amplifiers both going out of action turn one. The Gouger guns were more effective despite not being as accurate. The assault unit's shooting kept the Tsan Ra honest on the back line forcing the down action. This was a cagey plan of mine to attempt to only shoot/destroy one unit at a time with my battle suits by keeping a rear unit down.

Start of the 3rd turn:

At this point I was quite happy with 1 pin on both units of suits... No problem right? Just pass a command check or go down & worst case, another command check to activate next turn, all of which where the odds are in my favour. I'll get up, keep shooting/moving... WRONG!

At this point I had insulted the dice gods and couldn't roll a command check to save my life and a lucky shot hitting a reactor blew up a few suits. Wisely, Spoon took the initiative at this point to not only keep the pins coming on my unlucky suits, but also move forward toward my backline to keep the objective on the cards.

My units failing to get up kept my units from moving forward and kept them from causing casualties, which over two turns, took the objective away from me and gave Spoon a sniff at the win. I had one round of shooting which caused a pin, but Spoon did me one better. A successful command check, a sprint and a successful agility test (on a 1) meant, by just 1 inch, Spoon's squad got across the line and scored the objective for the win. Ghaaar!!

Highlights:

Despite being against me, my battle suits exploding and the final sprint for the win was very exciting and somewhat cinematic. This game was easily my most enjoyable despite going down as a loss.

Lowlights:

Not being able to activate units really took me out of the game. I could take amplifiers exhausting and reactors exploding and still remain competitive – but having half of my units failing to activate for two turns rapidly took me out of the game.



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BEN RANTALL



BOROMITE COMMANDER

A short but sweet entry from me to round out this month's info-dump...

As the others have already discussed, December is a busy time on all fronts. Even so, we'll always make time to game. I'd like to chat about the game Huw has already explained in depth, but from the Bromites (i.e. champions) perspective.

Excitement levels were high. Not only were we testing out a different way to play (using the experimental objective card system) but we also brought a much bigger force than we have ever singularly controlled... really what I'm talking about is being able to field a Brood Mother.

Amongst other Boromite staples were lavamites, work gangs and launchers. I'd also decided to try out the Locomite riders and the Heavy Frag borer.

So how'd it all go?

Well if you read Huw's piece then you already know. For those who skipped straight to their favourite Bromite player... it went well for me :p

The biggest decider were the objectives we drew, because in hindsight it was much easier for me to score victory points than it was for Huw. Adding to that, the particular combination of objective cards meant that I could score my main (which was worth a lot of points) and then double those points using another card. This effectively meant that one of my objectives (to take the middle) was worth more points than all of Huw's cards combined.

More stars yet aligned themselves: the other objectives I needed to control also sat comfortably close to one another while Huw needed to venture all over the board to pick up points.

That doesn't mean it all went swimmingly. Huw had a couple of trooper squads and a transport drone hovering around the centre... right where I needed him to NOT be. I couldn't fathom how I was going to shift half his force. This was compounded by the fact that I was only able to activate the Brood Mother once. Just. Once.

This 300point beauty (I also have hatchlings surrounding it) was only able to manage one round of shooting onto the transport and nearby squad before evaporating. I can't describe how painful it was to see that darling leave the board moments after it had arrived. A misplaced plasma round, a failed Res test, a roll of 10 on the Humungous Beasts chart. Forever shall we weep.

cheerful, upbeat voice Not to worry, I still have lavamites which did what all good lavamites do. That is, destroy the world. And destroy the world they did.

Huw did his best to avoid \ pin them to buggery but it wasn't enough. One somewhat damaged lavamite unit was able to get stuck in and tear the troop squads a new proverbial.

A second unmolested squad on a far side of the board were able to sprint into combat in a couple of turns and do the same (though a pesky weapon drone did its best to stem the tide).



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BEN RANTALL



BOROMITE COMMANDER

Through fear (I imagine) Huw left the centre of the board, my objective, and sought greener pastures. His bikes removed weapon teams over the course of the game and my locomite riders didn't do a whole lot other than swoop into an objective point in the last minutes. In my eyes it was a narrow win – the loss of the Brood Mother was a huge psychological blow (I apologise, now, to Huw if my demeanour changed after the “incident”). Silver lining: it was only a proxy! I imagine had it been the actual figure, I would have been inconsolable (or you might have passed your test! – Huw).

So another game, another win for the Bromites – the rightful Lords of Defor. I'm looking forward to exploring the objective cards system further and getting some more higher-point games in. Another thing to look forward to is the upcoming “create a character” directive. I've already written a backstory for Rico Raszak, leader of The Roughnecks (locomite riders) and I'm just awaiting the bits to put him together.

Finally on the horizon is the “War on Defor”: a tournament being held at the Melbourne gaming store “The House of War” and hosted by our Antares Initiative brothers “The Noise Sector”.

We so excited!

PHOTOS - BEN & HUW'S GAME

