



BUILDING A LOTR TOURNAMENT ARMY, PART 1 – DEVELOPING A THEME

By Frank Brown and Brent Sinclair

Almost as soon as the Chicago GT was over, the two of us – the “Ring”ers – began discussing our plans for the 2009 Adepticon LOTR Team Tournament. So when Jamie Welling asked us to put a series of articles together, we agreed. We normally like to keep our plans close to the vest, but the chance to share our preparations with our fellow gamers was intriguing and being able to hopefully build excitement for Adepticon was an opportunity we couldn't pass. In a few short articles leading up to the 2009 tournament, we'll discuss our process of building our army for the event, build some enthusiasm, and hopefully give other players some useful thoughts as well.

BUILDING FROM A THEME

This first article in the series discusses army building at the very beginning stage. The first step in building a good LOTR tournament army is to develop an army concept, or theme. At the 2008 GW tournaments, theme counts as 1 point on the scoring checklist, whereas at Adepticon LOTR players rate each other on army composition as a separate category. In 2008, it was worth 5 points per round. The better the theme, the more you scored towards overall placement. In 2009 composition, which includes theme, will be worth 3

points per round. So as you can see, unlike some other tournaments, at Adepticon, where LOTR enthusiasts run the tournament, *theme matters!*

So what is a theme? The first thing to remember is that tossing a bunch of figures into a list that's legal in terms of *Legions of Middle Earth* doesn't mean you have a well-themed list. Instead, an army theme for LOTR should be a concept that is derived from the books or the movies, or something that takes material and builds on it on a “what if” basis. Keep in mind the books go far beyond the stories of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy or *The Hobbit* – the appendices, *The Silmarillion*, *The Book of Unfinished Tales*, and *The History of Middle Earth* all can provide ideas for armies. The extended versions of the movies also expand army theme opportunities.

Ultimately, a good theme should include heroes and soldiers who fought together in Tolkien's world, or might have done so. A theme can be something fairly basic, like a Rohan field army with cavalry and infantry. Or it can be something that recreates a specific story. An example of a story-telling theme is Jamie Welling's 2007 Chicago GT army. Using a Minas Tirith list, he recreated a Gondor army during the

Stewardship of Ecthelion II, father of Denethor II, when Aragorn served *incognito* as Thorongil. Jamie's army was a wonderful reflection of a couple short accounts given in the appendices to *The Return of the King*. That theme then allowed Jamie to convert figures for his army to represent the heroes.

In 2007, the "Ring"ers decided to go with a Pelennor Fields theme, so that Brent could include Eowyn with his new Rohan army. That year, the tournament required each team to bring an evil and a good army, so Frank built a Mordor list for Pelennor Fields to complement Brent's Rohirrim. In 2008, we did something a little more specific. We decided to build the Gondor army that defended Minas Tirith during the Siege of Gondor. More specifically, our army was based on Pippin's journey through the city in the chapter "Minas Tirith" in *The Return of the King*. Every individual hero and troop type in our army was encountered by Pippin in one day as he walked through the city from the Citadel past the Fountain Court to the main gate to watch the fiefdom troops arrive.

The Siege of Gondor

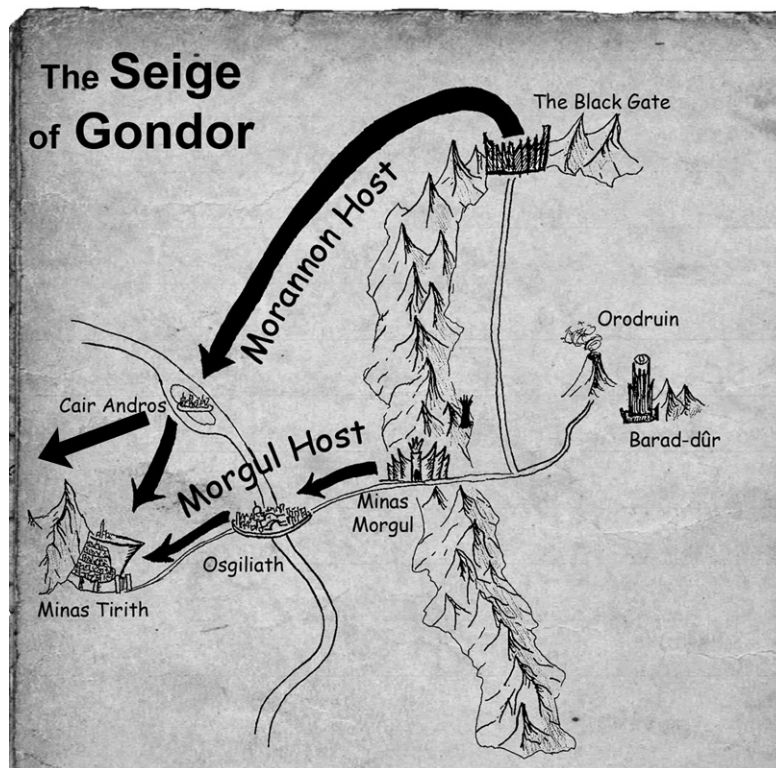
The "Ring"ers return to the Battle of Gondor this year, but this time it's from the other side. We'll launch an army worthy of Mordor on our opponents. So now that our main faction has been decided, it's time to build a more specific theme. Mordor and its allies fought Gondor in several battles during the War of the Ring. However, since we had built Siege of Minas Tirith and Pelennor Fields armies the last two years, we wanted to do something different. We decided to build Mordor armies that

mirrored those used in the overall invasion of Gondor from Mordor. So instead of an army designed around a specific battle, our armies will be designed around the invasion of Gondor – the "Siege of Gondor" as Tolkien describes it.

While the movies provide a great visual reference, they don't tell whole story. According to Tolkien, here's what happened during the Siege of Gondor. Not one, but two huge armies assaulted Gondor from Mordor. (This doesn't include, of course, the armies of Harad and Umbar that attacked in the south). First, as reflected in the books and movies, a large force marched from Minas Morgul to assault Osgiliath and then press towards Minas Tirith from due east. In "The Stairs of Cirith Ungol" chapter of *The Two Towers*, Frodo, Sam and Gollum watched that army march out:

Across the narrow valley . . . the walls of the evil city stood, and its cavernous gate, shaped like an open mouth with gleaming teeth, was gaping wide. And out of the gate an army came. All that host was clad in sable, dark as the night . . . Frodo could see them, small black figures in rank upon rank, marching swiftly and silently, passing outwards in an endless stream.

In the movies, this dramatic scene is near the beginning of *The Return of the King*. Who can forget the terrifying explosion of light and sound from the tower at Minas Morgul, and the accompanying screech of the Witch-King as his huge, malevolent army burst out of the doors of the castle heading towards the ruined city of Osgiliath?



The Invasion of Gondor, March 9-15, T.A. 3019

However, this army wasn't the full extent of the Army of Sauron. As described in the books another army – probably even larger than the Morgul host – marched from Mordor through the Black Gate. We'll call it the Morannon Host. As will be seen from the book passages below, this army was as important a part of the invasion of Gondor as the army from Minas Morgul. Without this army, the "Siege of Gondor" as Tolkien described it would not have occurred. Covering more ground than the Morgul host, it had two specific responsibilities as part of the invasion.

In fact, Gondor had anticipated that Mordor would use a two-pronged attack. As Prince Imrahil said in the pre-battle strategy sessions in "The Siege of Gondor":

"And what of Cair Andros?" said the Prince. "That, too, must be held, if

Osgiliath is defended. Let us not forget the danger on our left. The Rohirrim may come, and they may not. But Faramir has told us of great strength drawing ever to the Black Gate. More than one host may issue from it, and strike for more than one passage. "

This assessment turned out to be accurate when the Mordor armies hit both Osgiliath and Cair Andros and then assaulted the perimeter defensive walls, the Rammas Echor. Gandalf advised Denethor after the battles started in "The Siege of Gondor":

"The Rammas is breached far and wide, and soon the host of Morgul will enter in at many points . . . fugitives from Cair Andros have already reached us. The isle has fallen. Another army is come from the Black Gate, crossing from the north-east."

In addition to encircling Minas Tirith from the north, the Morannon Host also moved into Anorien to cut off Rohan's passage to the city. As Captain Ingold reported when he and his men fled into the city after defending the perimeter walls around the northern road into Anorien and to Rohan:

"There is no news of the Rohirrim," he said. "Rohan will not come now. Or if they come, it will not avail us. The new host we had tidings of has come first, from over the River by way of Andros, it is said . . . They hold the northern road; and many have passed on into Anorien. The Rohirrim cannot come."

When Rohan did come, it was blocked by the army of Mordor in Anorien. In "The Ride of the Rohirrim", Ghan-buri-Ghan warned Théoden that the Morannon Host had blocked the approaches to Gondor:

"We look out from hills. We climb big mountain and look down. Stone-city is shut. Fire burns there outside; now inside too. You wish to come there? Then you must be quick. But gorgun and men out of far-away . . . sit on horse-road. Very many, more than Horse-men."

So these two Mordor armies, attacking Gondor from different points to surround and cut off Minas Tirith, and then storm it, will provide the theme for our "Siege of Gondor" armies. One of us will command the Host of Minas Morgul, the other the Host of the Morannon.

In our next article, we will continue our research as we look into the makeup of these armies in order to build lists for them. Until then fellow gamers, dig out your books, blow the dust off your DVDs and find a theme suitable for the grandness that is the Adepticon LOTR Team Tournament!



A portion of Frank's Mordor army from the 2008 Adeptus Arizona LOTR GT