

CarolinaCon Regional MECCG® Newsletter

June 27, 1998

CarolinaCon Regional MECCG Newsletter

Issue 1

Introduction to the Newsletter

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Hi there and welcome to my newsletter! First of all, I would like to thank everyone for supporting me, and for submitting your ideas. Hopefully I can manage to give each of you a healthy dose of information and some entertainment as well.

In this, my inaugural issue, I have lots in store. This newsletter will deal strictly with Iron Crown Enterprises' Middle Earth Collectable Card Game (henceforth referred to as MECCG). I will detail briefly each of the columns included:

The **Introduction** is what you are reading now, and will not be in any more issues. It will henceforth be known in further issues as Letters from the Guard House.

The **Focus On:** column will detail something special each week, whether it's an interview with an industry person or a local player, or perhaps a detailed look at any particular aspect of MECCG.

The **Ponderance of the Week** is my chance to think out loud on a particular question, usually something that's been bothering me lately.

The **Deck Tip** is strictly that, tips and tricks of both casual and competitive play of MECCG from the experts.

Featured Artist is a column that will feature a certain artist by displaying and reviewing examples of his or her work and a brief interview.

The **Question of the Week** will be a survey question put to everyone to respond to, and will also show the results of the previous question.

(Continued on page 2)

Focus On: Mike Reynolds of ICE

James Kight

Welcome to Focus On. This week I interviewed Mike Reynolds of Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE), makers of MECCG, and I asked him some general questions about MECCG and Iron Crown.

CRMN: When did you start with Iron Crown?

Mike: December 1993 doing hourly proofreading and paste-up.



CRMN: How did you get your job with ICE and what are your job duties?

Mike: Myself and three other guys started a gaming convention in the central Virginia area called PrezCon. I knew two of my compatriots from the local boardgaming club. The fourth guy, John Curtis, joined us as the roleplaying

director. He worked as the head of production for the local gaming company Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE). Eventually, John learned I proofread for a local law publisher, and asked if I wanted hourly work proofreading Rolemaster products and helping production... damn straight, I did!

The invitation from John was the most important step. It was the luck needed to land this dream job. From that

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Introduction: (cont.)

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The **Card Review** will be a column devoted to spotlighting a particular card, either because of recent rulings or the reviewers whim.

The **Regional Tournament Information** is, in my opinion, the most important information in this newsletter, as it caters specifically to you, the player, especially those of you in Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas.

I have also included a spot for the **Letters Page**, in case I get any, and I am currently taking suggestions for the name of this column. The winner will receive credit and a random prize I have lying about, most likely a few rares.

And last, but not least, **The Final Word**. In this section I will spout out my opinions, and woe be unto those of a sensitive nature. The ideas expressed in the Final Word section are



Female nude sketch from Quinton Hoover, this issue's Featured Artist!
© Quinton Hoover

my personal opinions, are subject to change, and do not reflect the ideas or opinions of Iron Crown Enterprises and/or their employees. Don't sweat it.

While I have written most of the articles in this issue, and probably will for the bulk of all the issues, I will gladly accept submissions if anyone has an idea or column they'd like to share. Further in this issue you will find the submission guidelines.

For the second issue, I will have just returned from Origins in Ohio and will fill all of you in on all the happenings at the convention! I will be taking my digital camera, so expect lots of cool pictures of furious action from the show!

Expected demos at Origins are Elrond's House - a new Middle Earth boards game, Orcs & Trolls - a fixed set card game where you play, naturally, as either an orc or a troll, and more. I am also eager to see the new Middle Earth Battle System. I got a brief glance of it at PrezCon this year, and I must say I was impressed! The best thing so far about the Battle System is its ease of play. It plays a lot like Silent Death, for those of you who have played ICE's space combat game.

I should be meeting quite a few of the ICE employees at Origins, and I will do my best to get some inside information about MECCG straight from the source!



Pixie Queen from Magic: The Gathering Legends. This happens to be my all-time favorite Quinton Hoover card art. ©1994 Wizards of the Coast, Quinton Hoover

I will also keep my eye out for any artists I see there, and see if I can manage a short interview with any of them.

Thanks again for tuning in, and I hope you thoroughly enjoy this inaugural issue!

James Kight
Crown Guard, NC Piedmont Area



Kakita Toshimoko from Legend of the Five Rings, ©1996 Quinton Hoover (Legend of the Five Rings, © FRPG)

Design & Contact Information

For those of you who might be interested, this entire issue was designed and written using Microsoft Publisher 97 for Windows, and printed on an HP 5Si duplex printer. Times New Roman is the main font.

This issue was written and printed the week of June 27, 1998.

There is an online version of this newsletter here:
<http://mindspring.com/~jameskight>

Thanks for tuning in!

If you are interested in contacting me:

James Kight
240 Longwood Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27104

jameskight@mindspring.com

Focus On: *Mike Reynolds (cont.)*

(Continued from page 1)

point on, I worked hard, kept my nose clean, and tried to present my point of view when helpful to the company. Eventually ICE decided to produce the Middle-earth Collectible Card Game, and it worked out that I co-developed with Coleman Charlton his original design. I then became the series editor and expansion co-designer.

My base responsibility is writing the card text. I translate the general concepts for cards from our 6 person design team into card text. The design team is a mix of Tolkien scholars and game mechanics experts. I am also responsible for: (a) communicating with playtesters, (b) developing card text through playtest iterations, (c) keeping a finger on the pulse of our customers, (d) representing the marketing needs of the game, (e) writing articles and scenarios for publication, and (f) overseeing the rulings/errata process.

Oh yeah, I sold my interest in Prez-Con after our first year, but I am glad to see the convention growing every year since.

CRMN: How did you get involved with MECCG?

Mike: ICE has had the hobby gaming license for Tolkien products for years. The decision by ICE to produce a collectible card game based on Middle-earth was obvious. I had already enjoyed a rather intense exposure to Magic: The Gathering, so developing a Middle-earth ccg was a natural next step to attempt.

CRMN: What were some of the ideas about MECCG that were present from the beginning?

Mike: Characters and companies, the 5 Wizards as figureheads, two players competing in parallel rather than as good guy/bad guy, sites and regions.

"The original Balrog of Moria, Shelob and Morannon should have been much stronger cards...and cooler."

CRMN: Were there any ideas that never made it past the editing process?

Mike: Oh yeah. Originally, each turn a company moved one region. After a few turns, that company would reach their site. The first playtest game ever took 8 hours.

CRMN: How much freedom does the Tolkien estate lend to ICE in the design of MECCG?

Mike: A good amount.

CRMN: How does ICE determine a card's uses and abilities?

Mike: Usually, a card is conceived of from a simulation point of view by our design team, then we make a mechanic that gets across this inspiration.

Sometimes we start with a perceived mechanical necessity and try to find something in Tolkien for its card name and art concept—for example, Promptings of Wisdom and Piercing All Shadow from MEWH.

CRMN: Briefly go through an example card from design to printing...

Mike: We knew we wanted a card for Strider. Initially, we thought it would be très cool to develop him as a "good" agent. However, we developed the opinion that our customers do not want complicated rules additions. We also did not want to develop an entire theme of good agents, which would be needed to justify a hefty amount of text in rules insert. Thusly, for Middle-earth: The Balrog, we present Strider as a character manifestation of Aragorn II. Here is his initial text:

Strider Warrior/Scout/Ranger Dúnadan
[MPs: 3, Mind: 8; DI: 2, Pr: 6; B: 9;
Home Site: Bree]

Unique. Manifestation of Aragorn II. You may bring Aragorn II into play with Strider's company, removing Strider from the game and automatically transferring all cards on Strider to Aragorn II. +3 direct influence against the Rangers of the North faction. Strider may use Athelas as though he were Aragorn II, and need not tap to do so.

I thought the Athelas thing was pretty cool, but nobody else except Cliff Yanhke did. Eventually Coleman sat me down and said a "Mistress Lobelia" effect was better. He held me and wiped my tears, and the veils of confusion lifted. Here is the final text:

(Continued on page 4)

Article Submissions

Have an idea for an article? Is there someone you would like me to interview? Have a gripe that you would like to voice? Send me a letter! Put your ideas down and let me know what you think of the issue, what you

would like to see, what you would like me to change, or anything else that's on your mind. If you want to save time, send me your article copy either typed single-spaced, or better yet, email it to me so I can put in the

newsletter that much quicker. Lord knows we all hate to type. Please make sure your articles have a point, and that you get to it eventually.

jameskight@mindspring.com

Focus On: *Mike Reynolds (cont.)*

(Continued from page 3)

Strider R Warrior/Scout/Ranger Dúndan
[MPs: 3, Mind: 8; DI: 2, Pr/B: 6/9;
Home Site: Bree]

Unique. Manifestation of Aragorn II. You may bring Aragorn II into play with Strider's company, removing Strider from the game and automatically transferring all cards on Strider to Aragorn II. +3 direct influence against the Rangers of the North faction. Tap Strider to search your discard pile for any one item, ally, or faction playable at his current site - the site must be in Arthedain, Cardolan, Rhodaur, or The Shire.

(By the way, the R means it is a rare card.)

CRMN: There are some players who say that not enough playtesting is done with each expansion. How important to design and production is playtesting, and how does it affect the final product?

Mike: Playtesting is very important, and we playtest as much as we can.

CRMN: If someone were interested in submitting a card idea, what advice would you give them?

Mike: E-mail the idea to Craig "Ichabod" O'Brien at ichabod@cstone.net. You must also include a statement that you realize you will receive no compensation and the idea becomes the property of ICE. Otherwise we cannot even read the idea.

CRMN: Is there a card that you think should not have been printed?

Mike: We should never have printed

Gandalf, this was a huge mistake...just kidding. Gift of Comprehension serves no purpose. The original Balrog of Moria, Shelob, and Morannon should have been much stronger cards...and cooler.

CRMN: What is your favorite MECCG set?

Mike: I like The Lidless Eye. I think it has great art for 417 cards, the mechanics are balanced with respect to itself, and it feels...evil.

CRMN: How often do you play MECCG?

Mike: Once a week.

CRMN: What is the most memorable moment you remember in a game of MECCG that you were playing?

Mike: Watching James Kight kill my Durin's Bane and a Nameless Thing on the same turn. [Editors note: Eventually it was 2 Nameless Things...and I recall ending the game with no characters left on my side!]

CRMN: What is your favorite thing about MECCG?

Mike: Killing my opponent's characters with creatures. [See??]

CRMN: What are your thoughts about a MECCG tournament variation with a 45/45 deck minimum?

Mike: Sounds cool, the story aspect this format can yield can be great. Of course, trying to make it a standard is bad on the principle we are trying to minimize new information MECCG players need to know and adjust to.

CRMN: Why do you think MECCG (among few others), has succeeded where others have failed?

Mike: Great art, the Tolkien draw, and it is a real game—not just cards quickly molded to fit a license.

CRMN: What future do you see for MECCG?

Mike: The Dwarf-lord expansion and Elf-lord expansions.

CRMN: What do you see for the future of ICE?

Mike: Hard to say.

CRMN: What do you see for the future of Mike Reynolds?

Mike: No idea.

That's it! Thanks to Mike Reynolds for taking the time to answer my questions and for giving us a look inside the process of a CCG! If you have someone in mind you would like me to interview in the future, feel free to let me know!

Survey Question of the Week

Every week I will pose a different question to you, the reader. This will serve as a survey to find out how you folks feel about certain issues of MECCG from the cards to the rules.

I will also tabulate the answers to each of the questions and print the previous week's question here so you can see how your fellow players feel

about the subject as well.

For my first question, I will ask you one of the questions I asked Mike Reynolds:

What card from MECCG do you think should never have been printed?

You can send your answers either online, or mail them to me.

James Kight
240 Longwood Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27104

jameskight@mindspring.com

Ponderance of the Week: *New Expansions and 2nd Edition?*

James Kight

Recently, a lot of suggestions have been posed about what ideas Iron Crown Enterprises should use for future expansions for their MECCG product. Ideas such as a First Age expansion or even a war-game supplement for the various factions in Middle Earth have been suggested.

It's not easy business trying to wrap an entire expansion around a central idea or theme. Future sets like The Balrog, Dwarf-Lords, and Elf-Lords could be the answer. Perhaps it's easier to wrap an idea around 120 cards than 150, or like Lidless Eye, 417. Small sets should allow ICE to support a theme and allow them to expand the game without breaking it wide open.

Personally, I don't mind new ideas, I think they enhance the game and continue to bring more and more of Tolkien's Middle Earth into a playable arena. Now that's not necessarily a good thing. Too many ideas can easily confuse, especially considering the number of rules and errata already facing the new players.

There have been games that can introduce rules without too much of a hitch. Magic: the Gathering comes to mind. With expanding ideas like rampage, flanking, shadow and phasing, you might think it would be too much for players to keep up with. And it is to some extent. Many of the cards printed before the newer ones become obsolete. Does that make them stale? Not necessarily.

For the most part, I feel that such new rules give a new facet to the card game and forces people to break their habits and think of new ideas and combinations that were not available before. Used to be, there wasn't much to be done with a well-tuned roadblock

deck. You either dealt with it the best you could or you got hosed. Since the printing of Promptings of Wisdom from MEWH, that has changed quite a bit.

The trick for designers is to hit that happy medium between new ideas and status quo. How does a company expand its ideas without making the older ones obsolete? It isn't easy, I assure you.

So how does a beginner enter the game without feeling left behind? Unlike Magic: The Gathering, MECCG does not have a banned list, and all of its sets are free for use in any game or deck. On the average, Wizards of the Coast releases a stand-alone expansion and two to three supporting expansions per year. Not including reprinting of the core sets in a 5th, 6th, or even 7th edition.

So far, MECCG has seen 1 base set with an unlimited version and 2 supporting expansions, 1 stand alone with 2 supporting expansions (for both sets, one devoted to Fallen-Wizards using both alignments as support). Nowhere near the number of sets so far from WOTC (15 sets, not including reprints like Beta, Unlimited, Chronicles, Revised, 4th Ed., 5th Ed., etc.)

The question is, are we due for a true 2nd Edition? With the list of errata growing ever larger, the need for reprinting is becoming greater. Not just another printing of the core set, mind you, but a new "base" set gathering many of the cards (from all available expansions) that are in regular use in most decks; cards like Marvels Told, Wormsbane, Assassin, Lidless Eye, Mouth of Sauron, And Forth He Hastened, etc.

For the most part, except for the serious utility cards, we have managed to avoid the "same card, new name"

curse that Magic: The Gathering seems to fight every expansion. However, we have seen our share of basic reprints, such as Lure of Nature, Doors of Night, Twilight, etc. Some of these are necessary, some of them aren't (like the "Lost in..." cards). My suggestion for ICE is to gather together a listing of the cards most players would like to see reprinted (including those with heavy errata), and re-release them in a new core set.

Granted, all of the booster boxes even back to Limited are available to some extent, but not necessarily to new players. And, most of the old printed versions of the cards contain pre-errata text on them. Sure, there might be some players who would complain that a 2nd printing of an Assassin or Lidless Eye would lessen the collector value, but in my experience as a Magic: The Gathering player, that is usually not the case. Reprints for the newer player, "black border" for the older players. I have seen Beta Lightning Bolts go for \$6-8 easy, and yet Revised editions are still as common as dirt.

The big argument is bound to be what cards should go into a 2nd Edition. That could be argued at length. Some could argue to throw in the most commonly used rares like Assassin, while others (myself included) would much rather see a diverse reprinting of cards from both alignments, eliminating the "one alignment, one expansion" theme that has been fairly prevalent (except for Against the Shadow). New sealed starter decks could be a random assortment of both hero and minion decks.

When I demo MECCG, I have to constantly remind myself that unless I provide the product myself, many of these interested players won't have a

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Featured Artist - Quinton Hoover

James Kight

Welcome to the Featured Artist section for the CarolinaCon Regional MECCG Newsletter. **Quinton Hoover** is our first Featured Artist, and I have included some examples of his work in this article and throughout this issue. As witnessed by his body of work in the collectable card game genre, Quinton remains a very busy man. I was lucky enough to get in touch with Quinton recently, and I asked him a few questions. Most of the things you might be interested in finding out about Quinton can be found at his web site, located at: <http://www.members.aol.com/QHoover>

CRMN: Give us a brief background of your beginnings...

Q: I was born in Colorado in 1964 (which translates into "I know exactly where I was when Kennedy was shot -- kicking the hell outta Mom from the inside..."). I currently reside in rural Eastern Oregon with my wife, four kids, five cats and idiot dog. I've been working as a professional artist for a little over a decade, and have been making a living at it for about five years. Self-taught -- I hated art classes. I wandered into Magic after being turned down by Dark Horse Comics at Norwescon, and have been working steadily in the game market since, with the occasional comics project tossed in for good measure.

CRMN: How did you get started in fantasy art?

Met up with Conan the Barbarian at fourteen. I always drew, but I had no direction until then. That's when it finally REALLY sunk into my brain that real people drew comic books...

CRMN: What other type of art do you do?

Q: Oh, the occasional landscape, portrait, or animal painting. And the odd sculpture. Not much else I want to do -- I like my chosen genre. I also write a little, and I'm currently working on a dark fantasy novel.

CRMN: What is your favorite piece of your own work?

Q: Tough call. It changes all the time. Currently I am very fond of my forest pieces for Portal II, and most of the dragon pieces for Middle Earth.

CRMN: What other artist(s) do you consider to be a real talent?

Q: Oh geez...that's very hard to answer. I always leave someone out... Of my contemporaries, I'm fond of most of the old-timer Magic artists. Rob

Alexander and Richard Kane-Ferguson leap to mind, as do Drew Tucker and Rebecca Guay. Brian Snoddy. Chris Rush gets better all the time. Doug Shuler's been turning out very nice work. Harold McNeal...vivid imagination. Therese Neilson intimidates the hell outta me -- too talented. Tony Diterlizzi is doing very good work, and I've been fortunate to develop a recent correspondence with him. Randy Gallegos -- whom I've collaborated with.

Nicola Leonard creates some of the most beautiful jewelry I've had the

pleasure to see! Mark Poole, Melissa Benson. Jesper Myfors, who is too hard on his own work. [Mark]Tedin/[Anson]Maddocks who I can't really separate, as they seem to be two parts of one entity - both come up with incredibly vivid imagery... Fellow by the name of Allen Freeman-- a parter in crime from my comics ventures. I'm leaving people out all over the place, but you get the idea...

Guys like Brom and Biz do great work, but I consider them part of a different school, I guess.

CRMN: Who or what inspires you as you paint?

Q: My influences are mostly older comics guys: Kaluta, Wrightson, Windsor-Smith. Wrightson was the first artist I could identify by style. Discovered Frazetta around the same time as Conan, and I can only pray for that kind of talent. Alphonse Mucha is a profound influence on me, and I first discovered him, in of all places, a t-shirt shop. Still have the T-shirt after 17 years... As for what inspires me most...well, the need to eat. This is one of the few skills God saw fit to give me, so I'd best put it to good use.

CRMN: Do you have any plans to publish your work in collected form?

Q: Not at present. I honestly don't feel my body of work warrants it.

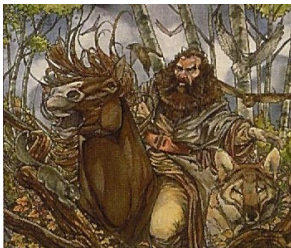
CRMN: What music if any do you listen to as you work?

Q: Classic rock or old, twangy country

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Cave Worm by Quinton Hoover - from Middle Earth: The Dragons ©1996 Iron Crown Enterprises



Fallen Radagast by Quinton Hoover from Middle Earth: The White Hand. ©1998 Iron Crown Enterprises

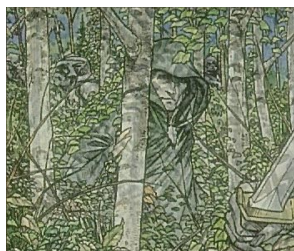


Snaga - Quinton's collaboration with Randy Gallegos from The Lidless Eye release. ©1997 Iron Crown Enterprises

Featured Artist: Quinton Hoover (cont.)

(Continued from page 6)

for the most part. Enya. Queen, Billy Joel, Meat Loaf, Paul Simon, Randy Newman, Warren Zevon, Loudon Wainright and the Beatles on the rock side; Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash on the country.



Hiding by Quinton Hoover - from Middle Earth: The Wizards
©1996 Iron Crown Enterprises

CRMN: What suggestion would you give to a budding artist who has an interest in entering the field?

Q: Prepare to starve? Smile and nod a lot? Take it like a man or woman? I dunno--I'm the wrong guy to offer advice. Every decent thing that hap-

pened in my career almost happened by accident. Meet deadlines. I don't, so I'm damned fortunate to be employed....

My sincere thanks to Quinton for taking the time out of his busy schedule to respond to my questions. Feel free to check out all the other Quinton Hoover art that you see throughout this issue. Expect to be surprised as the Featured Artist section continues next issue!

Artists lined up for future issues include: Liz Danforth, Angelo Mon-

tanini, Rob Alexander, Christina Wald, Donato Giancola, Tom Naismith, John Howe and many others!

Stay tuned!



A sneak preview of one of the new Balrog illustrations by Quinton Hoover for Middle Earth: The Balrog!
©1998 Iron Crown Enterprises

Card Review: *Rolled Down to the Sea*

Spencer Carney

Rolled Down to the Sea
MEWH Hazard Short-Event

Unique. Opponent must discard a ring item from his hand or from one of his companies if available. If no rings are available as such, he must reveal his hand to you.

At first glance, the usefulness of this card seems to be limited to play against ring decks. Read it again, and you will see that it has a great secondary effect - revealing your opponent's entire hand - if it doesn't force a ring discard!

I can see only two real reasons this card would NOT belong in every deck:

1. It occupies a hazard slot that might be needed for cards that enhance a primary strategy.

2. Playing this card opens you up to a -2 MP whammy from Will Shaken (a card that is currently seeing very little action).

On the plus side, this is one of only two hazards I know that lets you look at cards in your opponent's hand. (I'll give you a hint as to the identity of the other hazard card - it is a non-unique 5-prowess creature from The Wizards keyable to seven region and site types that reveals a card from your opponent's hand for each character in the defending company. Unfortunately, THAT card almost guarantees a free MP to your opponent in exchange for its scrying ability, and it almost NEVER lets you see his entire hand.)

Here are some (but by no means all) of the ways to make good use of Rolled Down to the Sea:

1. Use it to mess with a ring deck. (Duh.) This is the original intent of the card, and it can really hurt a player not prepared to discard a gold ring item from his hand. Ring decks do not comprise a high percentage of decks, however, so don't be surprised if you don't get many opportunities to flush your opponent's rings down the crapper.

2. Play it before a nasty creature to see what kind (if any) of cancellers or combat enhancers your opponent is holding. You can then use your knowledge of his hand to play your remaining hazards in a sequence that will give maximum effect.

3. You will get to see any resource (or hazard) combos your opponent is setting up. If he has resources such as factions or allies that must be played at specific sites, move your agents to those sites ASAP, or start holding creatures keyable to those sites.



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Ponderances of the Week: *New Expansions and 2nd Edition? (cont.)*

(Continued from page 5)

solid grasp of exactly how many cards are available to them for use in their decks. For the time being, Sealed Deck tournaments and Single Alignment tournaments allow us to ease these new players into the game without forcing them to grasp both sides at once.

From what I can guess, the new Lord of the Rings Card Game (a.k.a. MECCG Lite) will take greater steps in that direction. I've always felt that teaching with a story makes for a much more enjoyable experience for all parties involved.

Really though, it's not just a case of experienced players needing more cards, but giving newer players the opportunity to get ahold of cards that are for the most part no longer readily available, and without new players, and new ideas, this game will go nowhere fast.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT:

There have been discussions about how to release the next expansions. ICE has recently been considering releasing new sets available in two Challenge decks, each with half of the set, but with a total of 132 cards apiece (obviously there is some duplication as the entire set is only 120 cards). Each

deck would be available for \$19.95. I am confused as to why the change this close to the release date, but I guess that means the release date for The Balrog is going to be pushed back even further.

Their reasoning behind this move is to make MECCG more available to everyone, from collectors to players, and to reduce the price of putting together sets either for collecting or for play. A full set would now be available for about \$40, and a play set for about another \$120. By now you realize that this would mean the end of rares as we know it, and would make the collecting part of MECCG useless. My thoughts are that MECCG should remain as it started, a collectable card game.

This hotly debated issue makes my point in this article all the more relevant. If ICE is concerned about new players being able to enter the game fairly unfettered by the burden by past card availability, then they should release a 2nd edition of MECCG and throw in all those cards from past expansions that we think should be reprinted. New sets would continue to be released in booster packs, and the whole world would live happily ever after. Unfortunately, I think the decision has already been made.

How will this affect the new player? Well, if they only release the factory sets, play sets will become a matter of buying a few decks, and commons will be worth the same as rares. Will there be rares anymore?

Something to consider.



Archangel (full version) by Quinton Hoover for Portal from Magic: The Gathering.
©1997 Wizards of the Coast

Card Review: Rolled Down to the Sea (cont.)

(Continued from page 7)

4. It will let you see what kind of low-playability hazards your opponent is holding (a nasty triple-Wilderness Were-Worm or a double-Shadowland Wild Fell Beast, perhaps) waiting to hit you with. Now you know what to expect!

A final note: If your game has gotten to a point where you aren't concerned

with forcing your opponent to discard a ring or with looking at his hand, you're probably just looking to cycle your deck and call the council. Rolled Down to the Sea can help you out there, too - it has no playability restrictions (your opponent does not have to actually have a ring in play, Doors of Night does not need to be in play, etc.), so it will never clog you hand!

All in all, a very nice card.

[Editors Note: It's interesting to me to see how ICE often draws the line between playable and flat out broken. While some people would consider this card broken, even with it being unique, I would ask - who needs this card that much? One is plenty. To see a really obnoxiously broken card, refer to Ivory Gargoyle from Magic: The Gathering.]

Deck Tip: *Honing Your Hazard Strategy*

James Kight

One of the more common mistakes new players make is trying to build a deck that does everything. Sometimes their deck weighs in around 50/50 or 60/60. Don't laugh, we have all at least considered it at one time or another. There is nothing wrong with trying to do everything in one deck, but it certainly isn't going to be very competitive. Why? Well, the more cards you have in your deck, the less chance you have of drawing the cards you need when you need them. [Editor's note: I will leave it to the statistical experts to calculate the exact numbers. Suffice to say that the following theorem is true: The greater the number of cards you have in your deck in relation to the cards you have earmarked as critical, the less chance you will have of drawing those cards when you really need them.]

Each time you add a card to your deck, you are increasing your deck size by at least 2. The requirements for deck ratios mandate that the number of hazards and resources are always equal. As one side increases, so does the other., so adding 5 hazards really has an impact on your deck size.

By far the hardest decision for me as a player in constructing my decks is limiting my hazards. I always think of way too many cool things with which to pound and/or hose my opponent, and as a result I frequently find myself with upwards of 40 to 45 hazards. What do I take out!!!! I'd be willing to bet we have all been there before.

There are some simple basics to remember as well as some simple questions to ask yourself when you are trying to hone your hazards:

You don't always need 3 of everything: Many times the cards you

put in are simply going to fall flat. Either your opponent just doesn't go to the areas where your hazards are playable, or he is completely prepared for the cards you play. In that case, three copies of a useless card is three times as bad. Most of the time packing three Assassins is good insurance, but sometimes two or even one is just as effective. One of the factors that limits your hazard play is the hazard limit that you are currently allowed, which on the average, is about three. Do you always have three Assassins at the right time? Not usually. And you might only get one chance to play that Assassin, so for the rest of the game the other two are dead weight. Plus, with the high number of cards that allow you to recycle hazards, playing three of any hazard can be overkill unless your opponent is more than happy to oblige by staying in one area.

You can't possibly cover the entire spectrum of possibilities and remain effective: As much as trying to have three of every card can be detrimental, so can trying to use one of everything. I've very rarely seen an opponent try to cover the entire map playing resources and remain effective. Don't try to cover the whole map "just in case my opponent happens to go there." That is what your sideboard is for (see "Sideboarding" below).

Unfortunately, with most of the games you play (unless you know your opponent well enough), the hazard strategy you have is going to be a guessing game. Is my opponent going to go to the areas I have covered, or is he going to avoid those areas (much like the old Coastal Strategy)? Fortunately, there are some basic strategies that can cover a majority of areas.

Think about a focus point: Try to center your hazards around playability and power. Most of the time a hazard

is a tradeoff between the two. Give your deck a central theme, then build around it without strangling yourself with useless utility cards that more often than not get in the way.

I'll use the ever-popular man hazard strategy as an example. With such a strategy, cards like Rank Upon Rank are good for a number of reasons. First of all, it affects all of your man hazards, not just one. Secondly, it's a permanent-event, not a long-event, and will stay in play until it is either removed via cards such as Marvel's Told, or a man hazard is defeated. For the actual creature hazards, there is a whole plethora of men to choose from, whether it be an Abductor, a Thief, an Assassin or even some Brigands. Try to pay very close attention to what these creatures are keyable to, not just their power. It doesn't do any good to have a really nasty Assassin if your opponent never goes to a border- or free-hold.

As you look at the different men hazards, you will notice that most of them with the exception of Assassin have only one attack (Slayer does not count). That means that there are any number of cancellation cards that can work against them. That's why Assassin is such a popular hazard. Not only is the prowess fairly high, and you can choose who you go after, but it usually takes more than one cancellation effect to get rid of an Assassin.

Unfortunately, there weren't that many areas that men could attack. Now, creatures like Brigands, Pirates, Corsairs and Dunlending Raiders can allow you to fill a few of those gaps. For the most part, however, these are specialty versions of the men strategy, and might do better in the sideboard.

When I look at the different crea-
(Continued on page 10)

Deck Tip: Honing Your Hazard Strategy (cont.)

(Continued from page 9)

tures, I try to maintain a good balance between those hazards that are very balanced and those cards that have serious power. Even though I like the ability of an Abductor, my first choice would be an Ambusher. They are both playable in the same areas, and they both have the same prowess. Unenhanced, Abductor only has one strike, Ambusher has two, and Ambusher allows me to choose who gets the strikes. It really depends on what you are trying to accomplish.

Another good example is the comparison between Lawless Men and Ambusher. Again, Ambusher has two strikes at 10, playable in Borderlands and Borderholds, and gives the ability to choose who gets the strikes. Lawless Men is 2 strikes at 9, and is playable in Borderlands, Wilderness and Shadowlands. Which is better? It depends on the situation. On the surface, Ambusher would appear to be the better card, but Lawless Men will probably be playable more often. Ambusher is playable in 5 of 52 regions (9%) and at 20 of 101 possible sites, or just under 20%. Lawless men is playable in 31 of 52 regions, or just under 60%.

Play to your hazards strengths, and develop a focus point. Don't clog your strategy with every possible enhancer, but do put in the ones that are going to

be the most effective most often.

Try two half-strategies instead of one big strategy: If you think your particular strategy is not strong enough to warrant its own full strategy, don't hesitate to team it up with another functional strategy to fill in the gaps. One of the most powerful combinations I have had the displeasure of playing against was the infamous man/dragon strategy. Half-men, half-dragon. It sounds nasty, and it is. And perhaps not as difficult as you may think!

Decide which of the two you want to be your main focus, and use the other to fill in the holes. Using our earlier men hazard example, you could use three Ambushers, three Lawless Men, other miscellaneous men as you like, and then start looking at the areas in which you are lacking. Need to hit those Ruins & Lairs? A few cave-drakes always do well. This is the site/region half-strategy. One half covers one set of specific sites and region types, and the other half covers most of the blanks.

Another way to approach the half-strategy is to focus on areas of the map instead of specific region types. While this approach uses creatures that are a little less playable, it makes up for it with prowess. A Cave-worm can attack only specific areas of the map, but

it packs a hell of a punch with a 16 prowess, and is worth only 1 MP besides. This version of the half-strategy would include cards like Corsairs of Umbar, Dunlending Raiders, Cave-Worm, Ice-Drake, True-Cold Drake, etc.

The other half of the strategy doesn't always have to consist of creatures, however. Corruption is one of the most useful and flexible of the half-strategies, and can even serve as a full blown strategy with little or no effort. In this example, you would use your men hazards to cover the borderholds and free-holds (where, for heroes, most of the allies and factions are played), and use your corruption when your opponent travels to the Ruins & Lairs and Shadow- and Dark-Holds to get his items.

The reason why creatures will always factor into your strategy is the twelve-creature minimum required in all tournament-legal decks, so your best bet is to focus in on the ones you choose and enhance them somewhat, or ignore them completely and only give them the 12 spaces they take up. Oddly enough, a hero player can use an agent strategy like a chameleon. Your agents can count towards your creatures as well, but only half per agent.

(Continued on page 11)

Upcoming Tournament! BeachCon '98!

Do you enjoy the beach? Do you like playing Middle Earth? Wouldn't it be great to combine the two? Well now you can!

BeachCon '98 combines the best of both worlds as Daddy Jim's Comics hosts **BeachCon '98** in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina!

To be held at the Landmark Hotel in Myrtle Beach, **BeachCon '98** promises to be a great event! From August 21st to August 23rd, players from all over will converge for MECCG, Magic: The Gathering, Highlander, Legend of the Five Rings, and other collectable card games.

August 21st will be for Middle Earth demos and a Challenge deck Tournament.

August 22nd is Daddy Jim's 4 slot Magic qualifier (Rath-Cycle Limited format) for Pro-Tour Chicago.

August 23rd will be for two more Middle Earth Tournaments, a 2-deck General Opponent Tournament and a Lidless Eye Sealed Deck tournament.

Call the Landmark Hotel to reserve your room now! 1-800-845-0658 or contact Jim Bailey at

Daddy Jim's Comics (336) 889-9900

Prizes for the Middle Earth Tournaments include: 1 box of every set and expansion to be given away, and depending on the release date of the Balrog, a complete set of Balrog as well. Also to be given away are hundreds of rares, some miscellaneous Iron Crown Enterprises products, and other Tolkien Memorabilia!

Make the call today and save yourself a spot!

Deck Tip: *Honing Your Hazard Strategy (cont.)*

(Continued from page 10)

How necessary is the hazard?

This is a hard question to answer for many people because most of the time they think all of their hazards are just as important as the next. Start watching for cards that continuously do well in your games. Are there cards that do well less than 50% of the time? Are they effective less than that? If so, either put them in the sideboard or take them out altogether. They are probably either single-shot cards (which should be relegated to the sideboard), or just bad cards that need to be taken out.

Single-shot cards are those that usually only have one use, but probably have a larger effect on the game: Durin's Bane, Knights of the Prince, Landroval, any of the various ring-hoser cards, etc. Bad cards are simply that, bad. They have no point in the deck, they frequently clog your hand, or their effect can be accomplished more efficiently.

Using your sideboard: Your sideboard should be thought of as an extension of your deck. Those solid cards that didn't quite make the cut whether for playability reasons or keyability reasons frequently find their way here, to the sideboard. Let your single-use cards rest in your sideboard until you know you can use them to greater effect. There are always going to be such single-use cards that you

can use to surprise your opponent, but on the whole, keep them to a minimum. You aren't always going to be lucky.

How playable is it? Having played just about every single card game ever made, the one basic aspect to success in all of them (as far as deck construction) is speed. Speed, speed, speed. I cannot stress enough how vital deck speed is to a competitive deck. Make sure your hazards are playable and not lame ducks in your hand. A Cave-worm is nice to have, but in many cases I would have eagerly traded a Cave-Worm for a cave-drake.

If you aren't all that concerned with solidifying your hazards, at least make them playable. Crebain is certainly not the most powerful of hazards, but it is playable practically anywhere, and allows you to view some of your opponents hand. Corruption is playable no matter where a company moves, as long as the requirements are met.

Don't be afraid to try agents once in a while. If you don't get the hazards you need for a particular turn, move one of your agents. By the time an agent would be effective, you should have a good clue where your opponent is headed based on what he is playing.

Does it hurt your resource play?

Another aspect of hazard construction that is more difficult to manage is how

your hazards will affect your resource turns. Are you frequently going to orc or troll sites? If so, playing a Minions Stir might not be wise. Why give your opponent a free enhancer? Unless you can wait out your own long-events, or you are prepared to face those hazards, it's better to play your hazards away from your resources.

Room for one more? We have all at one time or another seriously considered adding "just one more" hazard to our decks. Try to avoid this compulsion, as it often leads to adding more, and eventually to second-guessing your entire strategy. Keep it simple. Don't unnecessarily duplicate cards in your deck, if one of them is obviously more effective. If you have From the Pits of Angband, you probably don't need Parsimony of Seclusion.

These are just a few of the things to consider when you are trying to work your hazards to a playable size. You are always welcome to do your own thing and experiment, but experience is always the best teacher.

Good luck!

More Quinton Hoover Art...



Winged Change-Master by Quinton Hoover
from Middle Earth: The White Hand
©1998 Iron Crown Enterprises

The Rack by Quinton Hoover
from Vampire: The Masquerade (formerly Jyhad)
©1994 Quinton Hoover
(Vampire & Jyhad ©1994 Wizards of the Coast)



Regional & National Tournament Information

Saturday, July 11th

MECCG Qualifier

2-deck General Opponent
Mirkwood Coffee Comics & Games
(612) 313-1387

CarolinaCon 9

2-deck General Opponent
no entry fee
Daddy Jim's Comics
(336) 889-9900
12:00 noon, High Point, NC

MECCG Tournament

2-deck General Opponent
no entry fee
Let the Games Begin
(864) 322-0140
Taylors, SC

Game HQ Tournament

1-deck General Opponent
Game HQ, (405) 691-0509
Oklahoma City, OK

Sunday, July 12

KingCon Constructed Deck

Constructed Deck
Keddy's Inn, St. John, NB
tomah@gov.nb.ca

METW Tournament

1-deck General Opponent
Hot Comics & Collectables
(612) 593-1223
New Hope, MN

Tuesday, July 14

JCTS Monthly Feature

1-deck Constructed
Warrensburg Community Building
Warrensburg, MO
turin@primenet.com

Saturday, July 18th

MECCG Tournament

2-deck General Opponent
no entry fee
Let the Games Begin
(864) 322-0140
Taylors, SC

Wizard vs Wizard

1-deck Wizard Constructed
SCGA-Coastal Hobbies
(714) 444-4566
Costa Mesa, CA

JCTS Challenge Deck Tournament

2-deck Challenge Deck
Warrensburg Community Building
Warrensburg, MO
turin@primenet.com

Sunday, July 19

Middle Earth Tournament

1-deck Constructed
Starbase One
(412) 521-3633
(no city listed)

Tuesday, July 21

JCTS Wizard vs Wizard

1-deck Wizard Constructed
Warrensburg Community Center
Warrensburg, MO
(660) 747-5942

Saturday, July 25th

CarolinaCon 9.5

2-deck General Opponent
no entry fee
Cosmic Castle
(336) 854-8844
12:00 noon, Greensboro, NC

Test of Wills 5

2-deck General Opponent
no entry fee, 10:30 am
DreamWizards, (301) 881-3530
Rockville, MD

Bad Boys (or Girls) of Summer

Ringwraith 2-deck Constructed
no entry fee
Let the Games Begin
(864) 322-0140
Taylors, SC

A Wizard Classic

2-deck Wizard Constructed
Major League
(517) 321-0068
Lansing, MI

Saturday, August 1st

CarolinaCon 10

2-deck General Opponent
no entry fee, 12:00 noon
Daddy Jim's Comics
(336) 889-9900
High Point, NC

Game HQ Tournament

1-deck Constructed
Game HQ, (405) 691-0509
Oklahoma City, OK

Thursday, August 6

GenCon '98

Mondo Sealed Deck Qualifier, 2-deck
General Opponent Qualifier,
Challenge Deck Tournament, Wizard
only 1-deck Tournament

Saturday, August 8th

MECCG Tournament

Sealed Deck format
\$15 entry fee
Let the Games Begin
(864) 322-0140
Taylors, SC

Regional & National Tournament Information (cont.)

METW Sealed Deck

1-deck Wizards Sealed Deck
Collector's Collection
(213) 523-2730
Duluth, MN

METW Tournament

1-deck Constructed
Collector's Collection
(213) 523-2730
Duluth, MN

Saturday, September 6

EnbiCon 4

2-deck Constructed
Colonial Inn, Fredericton, NB
tomah@gov.nb.ca

Saturday, August 15th

Casual Tournament

(non-sanctioned)
Greenville, SC
(more info forthcoming)

Evil Lurks its Evil Eye

2-deck Constructed or
Lidless Eye Challenge Deck
Major League (517) 321-0068
Lansing, MI

Friday, August 21st thru Sunday, August 23rd

BeachCon '98

Myrtle Beach, SC
The Landmark Hotel (800) 845-0658
James Kight (336) 765-9028

Friday, August 21st

6:00 p.m. Demo Event, no fee

9:00 p.m. Challenge Deck
2-deck format, \$10 entry fee

Sunday, August 23rd

12:00 noon General Opponent
2-deck format, no fee

2:00 p.m. Lidless Eye
sealed deck, 1-deck format,
\$12 entry fee
(1 deck, 3 boosters)

Saturday, August 22

Gamers for Tots

2-deck Constructed
Seven Oaks Hotel
(210) 656-1208
San Antonio, TX

Friday, August 28

Tradewinds VI

Three (3) Constructed 1-decks,
One (1) Sealed Deck
Warrensburg Community Center
Warrensburg, MO
jcts@iland.net

Saturday, August 29th

Excuse Me, Are You a Wizard?

2-deck Wizard Constructed
no entry fee
Let the Games Begin
(864) 322-0140
Taylors, SC

Saturday, September 5

Game HQ Tournament

1-deck Constructed
Game HQ
(405) 691-0509
Oklahoma City, OK

Saturday, September 12

Booster Draft 3

Booster Draft
\$15 fee
UNB Student Union Building
Fredericton, NB
tomah@gov.nb.ca

Saturday, October 10

Inconsequential

2-deck Constructed
Lord Beauerbrook Hotel
Fredericton, NB
tomah@gov.nb.ca

**If you have information
concerning any of these or any
other MECCG tournaments
that you would like to post
here, please send it to me via
one of the following channels:**

James Kight
CarolinaCon Newsletter
Tournament Information
240 Longwood Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27104

jameskight@mindspring.com

(336) 765-9028

Good Luck in your tournament
play!

MECCG Council of Lórien® Championship Information & National Rankings

Council of Lórien Championship Information

Here is all of the information we have at the moment concerning the 1998 Middle-earth Collectible Card Game Council of Lórien Championships:

1998 MECCG Season Council of Lórien Championship at AndCon '98 Toledo, OH Oct. 1-4, 1998

For information on attending AndCon:

WEB site: www.andonunlimited.com
e-mail: Andon@aol.com
telephone: (614) 856-3976

The sooner you reserve your space, the better. ICE cannot guarantee any hotel or convention space, though these should not be in short supply.

The top 2 finishers from the 1998 MECCG Council of Lórien (CoL) Championship receive a travel/lodging expenses paid berth to the 1998 MECCG World Championships as representatives of the Council of Lórien. If no Canadian or no American received a berth, then the top player of this country plus the next highest overall finisher receive a runners-up berth. Otherwise, the next 2 overall finishers receive a runners-up berth. A runners-up berth is an invitation to the World Championships, but you must provide your own overseas travel. The World Championships are planned for the winter of 1999 in Paris, France. The CoL Champion wins the Dwarven Ring of Durin's Tribe. The World Champion wins The One Ring.

At AndCon, there will be the following tournaments:

Open Tournament: The final qualifier of the season. Anyone can play (unless otherwise invited). The top 2 finishers advance to the semi-final round.

Preliminary Round: Participation by invitation only. Invitations go to the runners-up of qualifier tournaments who are not otherwise invited to the semi-final round. Invitations then go to the 24 highest ranked players not otherwise invited to this or the semi-final round. The top 6 finishers advance to the semi-final round.

Semi-final Round: Participation by invitation only. Invitations go to last year's Championship finalists. Invitations then go to qualifier winners or highest finishers not yet invited to this round. Invitations then go to the 24 highest ranked players not otherwise invited to this round. The top 2 open tournament finishers and the top 6 preliminary round finishers round out the semi-final field. The top 8 finishers advance to the championship finals.

Championship Finals: Participation by invitation only. The top 8 semi-final round finishers play for the Council of Lórien Championship. Finishers not receiving a berth to the Worlds are alternates.

Information on the exact formats and times of these

tournaments is forthcoming.

MECCG Rankings

These rankings are thru May 1998 tournaments, and cover the 1998 Council of Lórien season (beginning Sep. 1, 1997 and ending Aug. 9, 1998). The next update is expected soon.

For more information on get an MECCG tournament sanctioned, contact events@ironcrown.com.

Players gain or lose points based solely on where they place in sanctioned tournaments. Players start this season with 500 points plus 20% of their points over 500 from last season. A player must play in a sanctioned MECCG tournament after Aug. 31, 1997 to be ranked this season. The season ends Aug. 9, 1998. Thereafter, tournaments apply to next season's rankings.

See Council of Lórien Championship for information on how rankings apply to participation in this event.

Rank	Name	Location	Pts.
1	Brooks, Steve	Warrensburg MO	631.5
2	Kight, James *	Winston-Salem NC	620.5
3	Brown, Steve *	Fairfax VA	604
4	Kuhlman, Keith *	Warrensburg MO	601.5
5	Twitcheil, Mike	Greenville SC	598.5
6	Bruinooge, Nathan *	Silver Spring MD	591
7	Silverman, Eric	Cockeysville MD	591
8	Cable, Chris	Pittsburgh PA	588
9	Thompson, Phil	Warrensburg MO	572
10	Coble, John	Huntersville NC	571
11	Hollowell, Steven	Independence MO	567
12	Wong, Brian *	Whistler BC	558
13	Umphlett, Randy	New Hope MN	557
14	Sokolowski, Matthew *	Knob Noster MO	554
15	Feth, Gary	Pittsburgh PA	550
16	Langlinais, Scott	Dallas TX	543
17	Satterley, Brian *	Statesville NC	541.5
18	Bryan, Jason	Glen Ellyn IL	541
19	Sanders, Bill	Oklahoma City OK	541
20	Comer, Isaac	Warrensburg MO	540.5
21	Williamson, Sean	Greenville SC	539
22	Rice, Michael	Owosso MI	538
23	Grace, Joshua	Duluth MN	538
24	Lancaster, Forrest	Balfast ME	536
25	Norton, Van	Taylors SC	535
26	Bonneville, Alexandre	Rochester Hills MI	534
27	Meyers, Joel	Yukon OK	533
28	Cook, David	Brossard QC	531
29	Cox, Jeff *	Greenville SC	530
30	Robinson, Michael	Sedalia MO	528
31	Wuller, Steve	Fort Worth TX	528
32	Machen, Jimmie	New Kensington PA	528
33	Gorski, Gary	Pittsburgh PA	527
34	Margolese, Eli	Chapel Hill NC	526
35	Bialota, Joshua	Belfast ME	525.5
36	Pitteck, Michael	Pittsburgh PA	525
37	McDuffee, Jason	Lombard IL	525
38	Rice, David	Troy MI	524
39	Kenyon, William	Brooklyn NY	524
40	Sanders, Jason	Oklahoma City OK	524
41	Franklin, Skip	Grand Rapids MI	523
42	Finley, Chris	Spokane WA	523
43	Hayes, Kris	Pittsburgh PA	522
44	Bock, George	Dayton OH	521
45	Klank, Jason	Taylors SC	521
46	Radeshak, Jim	New Kensington PA	520
47	Hirt, Shawn	Ham Lake MN	520
48	Jarvis, Newell	??? TX	520
49	Bryan, Joe	Glen Ellyn IL	519
50	Wilson, Paul	Spokane WA	517
51	Kenefick, Bill	Tampa FL	517
52	Sutherland, Tony	Ann Arbor MI	517
53	Denman, Eric	Round Rock TX	517
54	Coyle, Ryan	Vancouver BC	516
55	Bishop, King	Belfast ME	516
56	Yates, Michael	Taylors SC	516
57	Medrano, Andrés	Austin TX	516
58	Escott, James	St. John's NF	515
59	Heiss, Nathan	Pittsburgh	515
60	Flynn, Rich	Wayne NJ	515
61	Weeks, Matthias	Chicago IL	514

62	Camey, Spencer	High Point NC	514
63	Hughes, Matt	Pittsburgh PA	514
64	Averett, Edward	Chapel Hill NC	514
65	Spinner, Jon	KC MO	514
66	McBride, Chris	Oklahoma City OK	514
67	Oxford, Larry	Belgrade MT	514
68	Pecchioli, Joel	Lakewood NJ	514
69	Hicks, James	Warrensburg MO	513.5
70	Bardou, Zac	Clemmons NC	513
71	Wilkinson, Kelly	Raytown MO	513
72	Mortell, Max	Ellicott City MD	513
73	Lund, Douglas	Ham Lake MN	513
74	Burke, Chris	Littleton NC	513
75	Walker, Joe	Piscataway NJ	513
76	Lanphear, Tom *	Phoenix AZ	513
77	Gardner, Chris	Raleigh NC	512
78	Derderion, Vaughn	Southfield MI	512
79	Fink, Adam	Selden NY	512
80	Perry, Darren	St. John's NF	511
81	Bryant, Alexander	Chehalis WA	511
82	Lyons, Bryan	Iowa Park TX	511
83	Griego, Robert	Live Oak TX	511
84	Riegner, Nicholas	Pittsburgh PA	511
85	Wark, Stephen	Montreal QC	511
86	Brooks, Carl	Nyack NY	511
87	Senden, Mayk	Eindhoven, Netherlands	511
88	Gerhardt, Stephen	Thomasville NC	510.5
89	D'Bonneville, Alex	Rochester Hills MI	510
90	Trépanier, Félix	Longueuil QC	510
91	Popkou, Mikmail	Lavac QC	510
92	Allum, Bob	Bozeman MT	510
93	Vailancourt, Bobby	Hastings-on-Hudson NJ	510
94	Dougher, Joseph	Saylorsburg PA	510
95	Guilbault, Michel	Quebec QC	510
96	Boxington, Nikky	Belfast ME	509.5
97	Templeton, Jeff	Fountain Inn SC	509
98	Rega, Angelique	Lansing MI	509
99	Cable, Clay	Pittsburgh PA	509
100	Cowlshaw, Brian	Norman OK	509
101	Moshiashwilli, Aaron	Somerset NJ	509
102	Nason, Steve	Unity ME	509

* player has already qualified for the semi-final round at the 1997/98 season Council of Lórien Championship

Qualified Players

SEMI-FINAL ROUND QUALIFIED PLAYERS

Qualified from 1997 Council of Lórien Championship

Andrew Potter (NY)
Cliff Yahne (IL)
Nathan Bruinooge (MD)
Brian Satterly (NC)
Keith Busbee (FL)
Brian Wong (BC)
Matt Sokolowski (MO)
Ris Misner (OH)
Demetrius Lemanski (MI)

Qualified from Qualifiers

Steven Brown (VA)
Keith Kuhlman (MO)
James Kight (NC)
Jeff Cox (SC)
Tom Lanphear (AZ)

PRELIMINARY-FINAL ROUND QUALIFIED PLAYERS

Eric Silverman (VA)
Stephen Brooks (MO)
Chris Burke (NC)
Sean Williamson (SC)
Scott Palmer (CO)

To get the latest rankings and updates, visit the following site:
<http://www.cstone.net/~ichabod>

Letters Page

Hi Folks! This is where I print all the letters you send me. However, since this is the first issue, I don't have any letters! Please don't hesitate to jot down anything you like and send it to me. All mail will be read and responded to, and if I have room (look at all this room!) I will print it here.

I am holding a contest to name the Letter's Page. Send in your suggestions, and the winner will receive lots of cool stuff like MECCG rares, some ICE products I have lying about, and their name in lights!

James Kight
CarolinaCon Newsletter
Letters Page Contest
240 Longwood Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27104

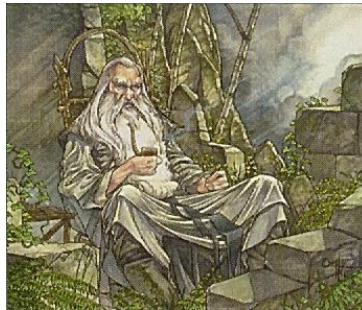
email me if you can:
jameskight@mindpsring.com

Since there are no letters for this issue, I will take this opportunity to give you a few more examples of Quinton Hoover's Art!

Enjoy!



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Cyron Zakka by Quinton Hoover for Battlelords ©1995 NME



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CarolinaCon Regional MECCG Newsletter

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Contributing Writer - Spencer Carney
Featured Artist - Quinton Hoover

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CarolinaCon Regional MECCG Newsletter

THE FINAL WORD

James Kight

Today is Sunday, June 28th, and I can't seem to get my mind off of this Balrog issue that's been heating up most of the recent discussions on the newsgroups. Iron Crown Enterprises has made the suggestion of releasing the new Balrog expansion as a set in two parts, each part available as one Challenge deck, complete with cards from the set and extra cards from other sets to make it playable with the other such decks.

A fellow player of mine (Spencer Carney) & I have been discussing this issue frequently over the last few days. What bothers us about this issue is the reasoning that ICE is using to release the set in this manner: to expand the player base. That's always a good

reason, but with all the complicated rules that have been implemented thus far for MECCG, is Balrog really the set to try to draw new players in?

Our hunch is no. From what I have heard, in order to play most of the set, even experienced players will have to take some time to digest the impact that the new cards will have on the game. Lord knows it's already hard enough enticing new players to join with 3 available alignments.

We try, right? And what is the inevitable response? "Too many rules to remember...." Trust me, I know we have all heard that one before. So what is the main goal here, ICE? With the future release of Lord of the Rings card game (MECCG Lite), ICE plans to tie into the licensing from the

movie, but most of the talk we have all heard about the movie is strictly hype. So what I get from this is ICE is trying their version of C-23 (from WOTC) with the Lord of the Rings Card Game. Same game, less rules.

I don't want less rules, necessarily, just more forethought. I really don't think Balrog is the set to try to get more people involved in the game. It's like trying to get someone started in Magic with Legends. Can you imagine what that must have been like? "Hey, try this cool new simple game. By the way, we've added a whole new set of rules to remember."

The Final Word for this issue:

Save the red carpet for 2nd Edition.