

ARRAKIS BY AIRMAIL



PBM DUNE

By Tom Swider

Today's postal hobby has been greatly enriched by neutral moderators (or "GameMasters"), which allow for the play of the proliferation of multi-player games. Notable postal games with a GameMaster (GM for short) are found now for *DIPLOMACY*, *KINGMAKER*, *WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN*, *CONQUISTADOR*. Roy Henricks, publisher of the well-respected amateur 'zine *Envoy* is currently running pbm games of *RAIL BARON* and *MAGIC REALM*, which serves to prove that anything is possible in the postal hobby. But, there seems to be little available to fans of SF. [Hopefully, this issue will set that right.] Indeed, considering the trend toward sf/fantasy titles and the seeming popularity of *DUNE*, it is surprising that it has not been absorbed by the postal hobby. With this in mind, I offer rules for moderated postal play which maintain much of the game's distinct flavor.

Pre-game Activities

Upon start of a game of postal *DUNE*, a neutral party must be chosen (or volunteer) to act as GameMaster. He will present final starting positions and faction assignments (taking the players' preference lists into account), the board position, adjudicate all players' orders, maintain the Spice and Treachery decks and record or disseminate any private information (for example, the cards held by each player, movement of storms, Bene Gesserit prediction, etc.). The GM will also act as final arbitrator for all arguments and rules interpretations.

Players submit the following when starting the game: 1) a preference list (a listing of all factions in the order the player would prefer to play them), 2) initial placement positions for the Fremmen and Bene Gesserit tokens (in case he is assigned either of these to play), 3) a prediction for the Bene Gesserit (in case called upon to take that role). After the GM has received all this information, he will issue the faction assignments along with the names and addresses of all players. Each should receive the following information:

- 1) Four leaders to choose among as traitors;
- 2) Starting locations for Bene Gesserit and Fremmen tokens;
- 3) Storm location;
- 4) Spice locations;
- 5) Treachery cards dealt to the individual.

In addition, the Fremmen player is secretly informed of the Turn 2 storm movement and the Atreides player is secretly informed of the types of Treachery

cards up for bid (but not necessarily in the correct order) and the location of the Turn 2 spice blow.

With his first set of orders, each player must inform the GM which of the leaders he drew will be in his play. If any player should fail to do so, the GM will select one randomly amongst those leaders not in his faction and inform him of the fact.

The GM will also assign a deadline date by which time all players must have their orders for Turn 1 on file with the GM; failure to do so results in loss of a turn (all units of the offender remaining in place)—there are special rules for failure to submit a battleplan in the section on combat below. Between the time the players receive the notice from the GM and the deadline, they are free to negotiate with their fellows.

Orders

When movement orders are due, the players should send the GM the following information:

- 1) Treachery card bids;
- 2) Revival, shipping and movement orders; and
- 3) the play of non-combat Treachery cards.

Further, the Bene Gesserit player should specify where he is hostile and where willing to land advisors should the opportunity arise.

When combat orders are due, each involved player should submit a battleplan for each combat, and indicate whether he will call "treachery" should the opportunity arise.

Feedback from the GM

After receiving movement orders from the players, the GM should send out a report to the players, including the following:

- 1) Storm round results;
- 2) Spice blow results;
- 3) Bid round results;
- 4) Movement round results;
- 5) Combats to be resolved and order of battle resolution;
- 6) A listing of where the BG are hostile this turn; and
- 7) Next turn's storm round and spice blow.

Should by accident members of the same alliance attempt moves which would result in joint occupation of a territory, the fraction moving in with the greatest number of tokens occupies it while the other player(s) are left back at the point immediately prior to entering the province. (For example: The Atreides and Guild players are allied.

Atreides orders nine tokens to ship down to Carthag and moves these same tokens to the Imperial Basin. The Guild meanwhile moves ten tokens in the Polar Sink to the Imperial Basin. The GM would report that there are ten Guild tokens in the Imperial Basin and nine Atreides tokens in Carthag. If the Atreides attempted to ship troops directly to the Imperial Basin or if Carthag is occupied by Guild forces, the Atreides tokens would remain in reserve.) Should there be a tie for the greatest number of tokens, the faction with the greatest amount of spice moves in; if a tie still exists, the position goes to the faction with the strongest remaining leader. (Remaining ties are broken by a random number).

So that the players and GM may make themselves as clear as possible on mapboard positions, the map's sectors are labeled with a number. Starting with the "Start Storm" sector and proceeding in the direction of the storm, label the sectors "1" through "18". Unless otherwise instructed, the GM will assume that any tokens moved are placed in the sector currently furthest from the storm.

X. Battles

If there are any combats, the GM will notify the players involved of the deadline by which battleplans are due. Players should list the number dialed, amount of spice payed, leader(s) and any attack/defense card(s). Players with "Karama" or "Truthtrance" cards and/or special combat advantages must inform the GM of the actions or questions to be made, and how these will affect their battleplans. A player may automatically use any character advantages he enjoys, along with any gained through an alliance.

If there is more than one battle to be resolved, the GM will determine the order in which battles are to be fought by random number. This will resolve any difficulties arising from one player being involved in more than one combat in a turn.

For PBM *DUNE*, the aggressor is termed as the player who occupied the battle site first. Tokens present at the beginning of the turn are given first priority, and are always considered the aggressor if involved in combat. (Note that if the BG player comes out of a state of co-existence, the other player is the aggressor if the BG occupied the territory with that power and was previously in co-existence.) Tokens which were shipped to the battle site have second priority, followed by tokens which moved there by planetary movement. Ties in the lowest priority are resolved in favor of the faction

moving the least number of spaces to arrive there. (All other ties are resolved by random number.)

If there are more than two opposing sides occupying a territory, combat must be continued until there is only one faction left, as per the normal rules. All occupants of the contested territory must submit combat orders; the aggressor must also state which player he wishes to fight first. The remaining players submit battleplans in case he is chosen to fight first. The GM will appoint appropriate deadlines for each battle to be fought.

If the Guild chooses to move before everybody else, he is automatically the aggressor. On the other hand, if he chooses to move after all other players, then all other factions are the aggressor when facing his tokens in combat.

Players must state if they will *not* call treachery into play if a leader in their play appears in the battle. The GM will assume they will unless otherwise instructed and take all appropriate measures.

Missing a battle turn: should a player fail to submit a battleplan by the declared deadline, he is assumed to have dialed a number equal to his token value minus one-half, zero spice, sent in his weakest leader (or a cheap hero/heroine if available) and utilized no treachery cards.

XII. Alliances

Players may automatically utilize any advantages gained from their ally (Exception: in a BG/Guild alliance, BG troops ship at half rates, and the Guild troops may "voice" their opponents). In the case of using the Harkonnen's power, "treachery" will always be called when a Harkonnen ally meets one of the Harkonnen's traitors in battle.

It is strongly suggested that alliances not be allowed to win. It is this player's opinion that alliance wins in *DUNE* are against the spirit of the game, although they can be formed temporarily to aid positions or stop another faction. This restriction will also bring the Guild and Fremmen endgame advantages into play more often.

Should there be no combats to be resolved, play proceeds to the next turn's movement. If there are combats to be resolved, the GM must set a short-term deadline by which time players must submit battleplans. After receiving these, he gives another report to all players, including all the following:

- 1) Combat results;
- 2) Collection round results;
- 3) A listing of all player's current spice holdings;
- 4) The number of cards up for bid next bid round;
- 5) A listing of final board positions; and
- 6) Any secret information due the Atreides and/or Fremmen players.

Should there be no combats, the information listed above (except item 1) should be included along with his movement report to players.

Modifications for Postal Play

It is axiomatic that play by mail will require some slight adjustments to the game rules. These have been kept to a minimum. The following are the comprehensive rules changes; unless otherwise noted, all rules remain in force.

VII. Spice Blow

When a worm appears, any alliances must be declared by the next movement deadline. Players may submit only one alliance choice; if players of a proposed alliance list identical alliance choices, the alliance is considered formally formed. (Example: Emperor proposes a E/BG alliance; Bene Gesserit propose a BG/E alliance. The GM would then notify the players that such an alliance does in fact exist. However, if the Emperor had proposed a

E/BG/H coalition, no alliance would have been formed since the Bene Gesserit did not list the Harkonnen. Too, since the Harkonnen player did not bother to submit any alliance proposal, the diplomacy of the Emperor would fail.)

When worms appear, if the Fremmen are able to take an action as a result, the Fremmen player must inform the GM of such actions in his next set of movement orders.

VIII. Bidding Round

Bidding is done simultaneously. Players may make their bids conditional upon the results of prior bids, but must try to be as clear as possible as to their intent. The GM is not responsible for problems caused due to a set of ambiguous orders. Players may specify that they will attempt to outbid a specific faction(s), where upon he will pay one more spice than the highest bid. Should two or more players attempt to outbid each other, the player with the most spice pays the amount necessary to outbid everyone else trying to outbid him (ties broken by a random number). Each card goes to the highest bidder; ties are passed to the faction with the most spice in hand (further ties are resolved by random number).

Players normally bid on a card by its numeric rank. For example, the Guild bids four Spice for the first through third cards, two Spice for the fourth and fifth cards, and attempts to outbid all other players for the sixth card. The Atreides player must bid by referring to a specific card (for example: "Bid 5 Spice on the Lasegun, and 2 Spice on each poison weapon"). The Atreides player may bestow his special bidding advantage to other players (see above for alliances) in his faction.

Bids which are illegal at their time of execution are automatically cancelled. This occurs whenever a player does not have sufficient spice to meet his bid, or has a full hand.

Note: If a player has acquired Family Atomics or Weather Control, and intends to play it, he must notify the GM a turn ahead in order to warn him of possible adjustments. For the next two turns, the GM will set a deadline for the player to notify him of whether the option will be exercised. Normally this will be the same day in which battleplans are due. The player may make play of the card conditional upon combat results, if he so desires. Otherwise, this due date should be approximately nine days after the postmark on the GM adjudication of combat. If not exercised, the player loses the option to utilize the card until the GM is again informed of its potential.

Note: Karama cards are played normally during movement or combat. The player may make the play of the Karama card conditional upon the actions of other players. (For example: The Guild player states, "I will play my Karama if, and only if, the Emperor attempts to ship to Tuek's Sietch.")

IX. Movement

Movement is considered simultaneous, in the normal order listed in the rules: revival, shipment and on planet movement.

Should movement result in the violation of Rule IX.C.2.f (occupation of Strongholds), units arriving by shipment take priority over forces arriving overland. If this method does not resolve the violation, the largest force (numerically) has priority over smaller forces (ties are resolved by random number).

XIII. Bribery

When players would like to make a spice deal, all involved parties must sign a contract (an index card is recommended) with the terms of the deal written on the card. The GM will make this deal known to the public, and has the right to adjust a player's orders by aborting certain moves if they

would break the terms of the spice deal. In the case where the player agrees to make a certain move, the GM may write or place a collect call to the player concerned to receive a change in orders to rectify the problem. If this proves impossible, the GM will change orders to meet the terms of the deal. A spice deal should be closely monitored to insure that players follow through on the deal. In the rare cases where the GM can't do anything to rectify orders which break a spice deal, nothing happens; however, the player who did follow through with the deal and has an opponent who was not able to meet his end of the bargain may either declare the deal null and void, or force the player to meet the terms of the deal as soon as possible.

Advanced and Optional Rules

The following rules may be used in PBM *DUNE* with little change: Additional Character Advantages, Additional Karama Powers, Weather, Increased Spice Flow, Spice Blow, and Advanced Combat. The GM should be able to implement these without trouble by applying the precepts displayed above.

Special Character Powers

Atreides: The player must make his battleplan conditional upon the results of prescience. He may bestow his bidding advantage upon other players as he chooses. This allows them to bid on cards by name as opposed to numeric rank. Other players should submit orders conditional upon whether the Atreides allows them, at his whim, to bid in this manner or not. To do so, the Atreides player must inform his "ally" what the card is for bid. There are two possible outcomes. The Atreides player may indeed allow him to bid on the card as is, or attempt to "trick" him. (As an example: The Atreides informs player B that he can bid on the LASEGUN. The Atreides player then instructs the GM, "I allow player B to bid on the LASEGUN". However, if he wishes to betray player B, he informs the GM that "I am telling player B that BALISET is LASEGUN." Player B could state, however, that he will bid normally or in the Atreides manner, if allowed. If player B made a bid on a card which Atreides wasn't allowing him to bid on, the bid is simply ignored.)

Bene Gesserit: The player must specify exactly where he is hostile during the upcoming turn. Other players should list alternative card plays in case of "voicing" actions, if they exist.

Emperor, Fremmen: these players must denote their special tokens with an "*" when submitting orders.

Guild: The player may, instead of moving simultaneously, move either before or after everybody else. If moved first, his forces always arrive at their destination first and will always be considered the aggressor. Should he choose to move last, all of his orders may be made conditional upon the moves of any or all other players, but any enemies faced will automatically gain the aggressor status.

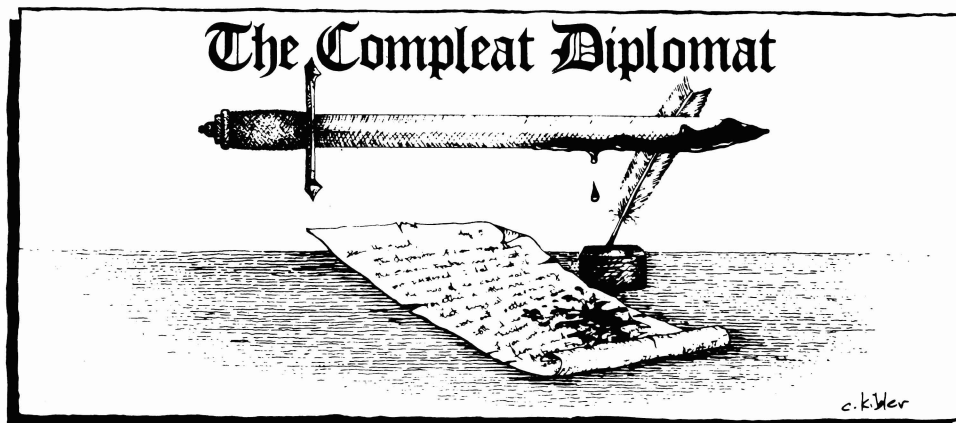
Harkonnen: When submitting the battleplan, he must give a list from the opposing faction's leaders of which ones he wishes to hold should they be captured, and which ones will be killed for the two Spice bounty. If this is overlooked, the GM will assume that all leaders captured are intended for execution for the bounty.

Miscellaneous

When it comes to playing cards and selecting battleplans, players should make their orders conditional upon possible results. Players are warned to make their orders crystal clear; should any doubt arise in the mind of the GM as to intentions, his rulings are final. It is suggested that no action occurs in cases of ambiguous orders.

The GM has final ruling on all rule interpretations and the manner in which the game is conducted. Should a player wish to make a complaint, he should notify the GM of the problem. But . . . the GM is final arbitrator (although he may reconsider the problem to protect his integrity and the interests of all players).

Any questions about this pbm system will gladly be answered by the author, provided a SASE is enclosed. Available also, with a SASE, are materials to moderate PBM *DUNE*; these aid in keeping track of players' cards, order of cards in deck, traitors, copy of the map, and guidelines on adjudicating special cases. Send all comments or questions to: Tom Swider, 1183 Robinson Hill Road, Endwell, NY 13760.



DIPLOMACY . . . With a Difference

By Rod Walker

CONVENTION CALENDAR

THE GENERAL will list any gaming convention in this space free of charge on a space available basis provided that we are notified at least four months in advance of the convention date. Each listing must include the name, date, site, and contact address of the convention. Additional information of interest to Avalon Hill gamers such as tournaments or events utilizing AH games is solicited and will be printed if made available.

Avalon Hill does not necessarily attend or endorse these gatherings, nor do we guarantee that events using AH games will be held. Readers are urged to contact the listed sources for further information before making plans to attend.

JANUARY 13-14-15

CRUSADER CON III, Denver, Colorado
Contact: Stephen Stein, Auraria Gamers Club, Metropolitan State College, 1006 11th Street, BOX #39, Denver, CO 80204.

NOTE: Tournament events will include *DIPLOMACY*, *KINGMAKER*, *SQUAD LEADER* and *CIVILIZATION* among other Avalon Hill titles.

JANUARY 14-15

CHIWAUKEE CAMPAIGN '84, Kenosha, Wisconsin
Contact: Thomas A. Beach, 1465A Sheridan Road #2, Kenosha, WI 53140.

NOTE: Tournaments include *WS&IM*, *SQUAD LEADER*, *GLADIATOR*, *STORM OVER ARNHEM* and *STARSHIP TROOPERS* among many others.

JANUARY 15

PANDEMONIUM OF WINTER GAMES, Toronto, Ontario
Contact: Walter Hnatiw, P.O. Box 67, Stn. F, Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M2Y 2L4. (416) 924-1989.

NOTE: Tournaments include *WIZARD'S QUEST*, *SQUAD LEADER*, *PANZER LEADER*, *PANZERBLITZ*, *DIPLOMACY* and *TITAN*.

MARCH 3-4

GOLD-CON II, Pompano Beach, Florida
Contact: John Dunn, Library, Broward Community College North, 1000 Coconut Creek Blvd., Pompano Beach, FL 33066. (305) 428-8832.

MARCH 16-18

TRI-CON II, Raleigh, North Carolina
Contact: James Moyland, North Carolina State Gaming Society, P.O. Box 37122, Raleigh, NC 27627.

MARCH 17-18

CENTCON 84, New Britain, Connecticut
Contact: Ronald Vincent, 471 Commonwealth Avenue, New Britain, CT 06053. (203) 225-0763.

Now, I know that there are a few of you readers out there who do not *Believe*. Still, you cling to the notion that *DIPLOMACY* is not *THE GAME*. I know you're out there . . . I've seen you with your duodecahedral dice, your six foot by eight foot boards, your hand-painted panzers, your callipers, sextants, micromanipulators, metric conversion tables, astrological forecasts, portable computers, and satchels full of little cardboard squares. I've seen you out in the gaming rooms at 6 AM, trying to get one of your games set up so that it will be ready to play at 3 PM. I've seen you arguing over the Volume III, Section 152, Paragraph 86, Subsection x(12)(m)(VII) exception to the rules. And I've seen you at auctions, trying to unload games which everybody was playing last year and nobody is playing this year.

"Sure," people will say, "*Diplomacy* is simple, easy to learn, easy to set up, and likely to remain popular after twenty-five years. But look at this neat game of *Tyrannosauruxs Rex*! It has EIGHT different scenarios! Wow, eight . . . twelve . . . twenty . . . fifty scenarios! It's not the same game every time." Well, that is an advantage, I'll admit; and everybody knows that *DIPLOMACY* has only one, right?

DIPLOMACY has, in fact, over 700 known scenarios, and the number is rising every year. These scenarios are called "variants", and they are all designed by fans of the game on an amateur basis. But don't let that tag "amateur" fool you, gentle readers . . . some of these people also design games professionally and many others are highly respected for their variant savvy within the hobby.

There are *DIPLOMACY* variants for almost every taste, interest, and number of players (from two to, theoretically, an infinite number). There are many variants which use the same playing board and pieces; these simply alter the rules, a little or a lot. Such games include economic factors, or new types of units (air power, for instance, or submarines), or perhaps only something as simple as negotiating initial placement of units before the game starts. Some variants make some changes in the mapboard (for which I recommend that the players could use a plastic overlay and grease pencil). A good party variant is one in which the board itself changes randomly in various ways during the game (again, the plastic overlay).

Many other variants exist with totally new playing mapboards (usually with many new rules to go with them). Whatever the reader is interested in, there is probably a variant that caters to it. There are numerous variants which add part or all of the rest of the world—the most popular of these being the "Youngstown" variant which adds China, India and Japan to the Great Powers and makes the

mapboard a cylinder. Subvariants of the "Youngstown" also add Africa; and one, YV XII, even adds the New World. There are many, many other global variants.

If the reader doesn't care for the period of 1901 . . . what then? Well . . . name the period. My own "2001" [\$2.00 directly from Rod if you're interested] is a global polar-projection variant, requiring three to ten players, with multiple subvariants of its own ranging from 1920 to the 21st Century. Games such as "Imperialism VII", "1939" and "Zeus" take *DIPLOMACY* into the ever-popular Second World War. And there are Napoleonic, Early Modern, and Medieval variants. The ancient world (both Roman and pre-Roman) is well represented. Too, one can find Colonial America, ancient India or China, feudal Japan, and numerous other eras and areas. Is *KINGMAKER* a bit complicated; try "Warwick", a *DIPLOMACY* variant of the period. Do you find *MACHIAVELLI* a bit too long to play; try "City State". Does *A Mighty Fortress* put you off; try "Excommunication".

Nor are the science fiction or fantasy fans neglected. Many Middle-Earth variants exist, including two ("War of the Great Jewels" and "Beleriand") set in the First Age! Barsoom, Dalarna, Earthsea, the Hyborian Age, Witch World, the Young Kingdoms, Kregen, the Foundations, and the Federation are all represented . . . not to mention many more generalized galactic and interstellar variants.

One can, literally, play *DIPLOMACY* set almost anywhere in the universe and in any age. The system is infinitely adaptable (one of the marks of a classic). All you need are the relevant rules and a map. Be warned however; amateur variants *do not* repeat the standard *DIPLOMACY* rules, nor do they reprint the standard mapboard (if that is what they utilize). Rules are written only as *exceptions* to the existing AH rulebook. Therefore, in order to play the variants, one must have the game.

But once you have that, what then? How does one have access to these wonderful variants? You could, of course, make up your own. That's how these all got started. (And, if there is an expression of interest from you readers out there, we might print some simple variant rules in this column some day.) Beyond this, there is a repository for this type of material. It is known as the *North American Variant Bank*, and our files include over 500 of the known variants. The *NAV Bank Catalogue* is \$1.00 (and is available from Rod Walker, 1273 Crest Drive, Encinitas CA 92024). The Catalogue will list the game variants available, indicate how many players are required, and list how much each costs to order. Furthermore, there are two fine booklets