

CAPTAIN'S LOG #38: SUPPLEMENTAL FILE

A BOLD NEW EXPERIMENT

Whenever we do an issue of *Captain's Log*, we have some stuff left over. Some of it is not time critical and just goes into the next issue. Some of it *is* time critical and if not used is simply lost and wasted. And sometimes we have material from a particular category which is just too much to use, so we pick the best, discard the rest, and move along.

So, now the idea is to put such things into a "Supplemental" file and put it on the website and let you have it for free. We will even roll the recent idea of a "designer's notes" file into the new "supplemental" document. It's an experiment, and we may or may not do it again, or every time. There is concern that the next *Captain's Log* may be too close to Origins for us to find time to do a supplemental file. We shall see.

I must confess that this is not a new idea. Three decades ago, one of my favorite wargame magazines did the same thing, putting the surplus articles into a supplementary magazine.

PUBLISHER'S NOTES

This issue was a fun one to put together. They're all fun to put together, but we have gotten the system sufficiently organized (and enough pages done months ahead of time) that we could enjoy the fun parts without the blind panic of trying to do too much of it in the final month. By the time we were beyond the previous projects and could focus on *Captain's Log*, fully a third of it was more or less done another third of it existed as complete drafts.

So, let's walk through the issue and let me share some background or other thoughts about things. I may give you some inside information, and some of that might actually be interesting. I might even discuss a few things that did *not* get into this issue and a few that might be in the next one.—*Stephen V. Cole*

HISTORY

The signature font for this section is LB Helvetica Black, although we don't seem to use it for article titles. I'll have to look into that. While I am on the subject, I have noticed that we still haven't gotten the hang of the idea of using consistent title styles in *any* of the chapters. Some articles have the titles in all caps, some do not. Some subheadings are in all caps, some are not. Next time, we have *got* to establish and enforce how those should work so the whole book looks more professional.

Doomward and the Vortex: Michael C. Grafton's story had been in the file for a year. We liked the story but were wrestling with the implications and requirement of publishing it.

For one thing, it was impossible to do a scenario for it because it was impossible to write rules that put a player into the limited intelligence situation of the characters. Once you read the story, you simply knew too much to play the scenario.

Some players went crazy over the idea of wormholes, which they thought (incorrectly) would confirm and allow their ideas of moving the Hydran Fleet to Gorn space to attack the Romulans. No, these "vortexes" go somewhere, but it's not anywhere you

ever knew. It may be another time, another galaxy, another universe, but it's not anyplace on the *F&E* map. They don't last long enough to exploit, anyway.

I am told that one character in this story is a spoof of someone on the BBS, presumably all in good fun.

After the Ambush: This fiction story showed up in Email one day when I wasn't particularly busy (or didn't want to work on what I should have been working on). I read it for entertainment and found opportunities to add a few lines here and there to explain some background issues. After I edited it, this story stayed in the reserve file for far too long. It almost got used in *Captain's Log #37* until we did not have space.

Snapshots: We started doing these one-page articles a few issues ago. Players seem to like them, and I enjoy writing them. (I wrote Frequency and Myths of the Organians, as well as the Developmental History and Class History articles for this issue.)

Frequency is this issue's humor article. I had an idea to use the Midnight Shamadingdong bit but had no idea where or how to fit it in. The Imus thing was the same, a subplot in search of an article. I hit upon the idea of making them snippets of overheard radio shows, and when I needed a third one to fill it out, the story of Michael Vick came to mind. And of course, the *Free Trader Beowolf* is an homage to a favorite game of times past.

Myths of the Organians grew out of trying to understand in my own mind how the Organians could work. This is the problem of *Star Trek* and its lack of continuity. We met the Organians in one episode and never heard from them again. There is even one published *Star Trek* novel in which the Organians ban the Klingons from space travel for 1,000 years!

Games of the *Throne:* This came in from Gary Carney, who is the most endearingly annoying gamer I have ever met. He's full of ideas, interested in the most marginal parts of the *Star Fleet Universe*, and sends in an article about something every month. Many of them could not be used, but this one (with some editing) was not only publishable but actually interesting and, well, you just *want* to find something Gary sends in that you can publish because he's such a nice guy.

Class History: Players love these, and I hate writing them because they are actual *work* as you have to research every published story and scenario to make sure you did not contradict yourself. I have about five or six of them in progress at any given time and picked this one because players in the BBS topic said that the Lyrans have never had the honor of a class history.

I am working on one about Federation carriers for a future issue but it's the biggest one I have ever attempted, and I have no idea when I will have time to finish it.

Developmental History: The first of these, done a long time ago, proved popular and we try to do more of them. Many have written such articles but the tendency to rewrite history and create new fighters that make existing fighters obsolete makes it hard to accept input from outside. The article on the Federation F101 was unusually popular and sparked the publication of one about Kzinti and Klingon fighters. This issue, we saw the one for the Gorns and Romulans. Who knows, I might write the one about Tholians and Hydrans next time.

COMMUNICATIONS

The signature font for this section is Friz Quadrata.

News: Much of this page is standard and is repeated almost unchanged every issue because it is important information we need to keep in front of the customers and fans. I was surprised to see so many tournaments listed this time after what had been a visible shortage of events in previous issues. There were, in fact, so many of these that we had to move the ones for *Federation Commander* to another chapter. There should have been a report on the Origins *F&E* events and on the Origins miniatures events, but nobody sent one in and it didn't occur to me to go beat the bushes trying to get people to send them. I will hound people now (13 Nov) to see if they'll send in these reports for the 1 Dec publication date for *Captain's Log Supplemental*.

The article on outrageous people is one I have been "writing" for years. Whenever one of them showed up, or whenever I remembered one from days gone by, I stuck a note about him in a file. Eventually, I had about 30 of them and picked the top ten, but with a little extra space I added a few who tied for #10. I hope it doesn't come off sounding like I'm a cranky old man. I actually wrote it because in hindsight all of these incidents can now be regarded as funny. Sometimes an outrageous person is just misinformed. One of the guys on the list honestly thought I made a million dollars a year and couldn't understand why I would not spend a few hundred making his request happen. Sometimes an outrageous person is just a jerk, and sometimes it's someone who can only feel good about himself if he is destroying someone else (or trying to).

The article on restarting an *SFB* group grew out of several unrelated conversations on the BBS, Forum, and Email. It gave me an opportunity to provide some insight into how your Favorite Local Game Store works, and how its manager thinks.

After Action: These articles more or less write themselves on the BBS. Petrick usually does the hard part of the work on these. (He did this time; I did it last time when he was busy with X1R.) The files he gives me are several times as long and list every typo and missing comma. I boil them down to just the "game critical" items. This time, we're using the *Supplemental* file to publish the full file, and you can see just exactly how diligent he is about listing his own mistakes.

Command the Future: This is my article to write and it is the strategic vision for the company. It tears my heart out to keep repeating "We are going to do XYZ and it will be great!" because I don't have the time to do every project I can think of, and because outside designers are pretty hit-and-miss about actually delivering promised products.

The one in this issue spends more time on *Prime Directive* than anything else. As a publisher, I'm excited about this because for the first time I have an RPG line editor who is competent to do the job and who is *not me*. (I have been the line editor from the start and it's obvious that I'm no good at editing RPGs.) What is important to understand is that RPGs are not going to be done *instead* of the boardgames, but *in addition* to them, since now (for the first time) the head boardgame designer doesn't have to stop designing boardgames to edit RPGs that are written in Swahili, Sanskrit, and Lower Urdu.

Input Guide: This page came together while doing *Captain's Log #37* as I edited articles and kept finding the same problems that I had to take time to fix. If I can get the *F&E* guys to stop using sentences like "I stratted my reserve and directed on his mauler," it will give me time to do one extra product per year.

Starline 2400: This is, in some ways, the easiest and most important page. We just have to list the new miniatures we have done or are doing and show photos of them. I am glad to have Eric Olivarez as our Graphics Director, as nobody else can manage to take photographs that actually will print decently on the Kyoceras.

This issue was an especially heartwarming moment for me,

as we brought our deal with Iron Crown to fruition. When we did *Module Y2*, players asked about early ISC minis. I just didn't have the time or money to spend making 28 new ships for a secondary market. Between the costs of sculpting and molds, we would have made no money on them, but it would have taken up a lot of management time. The idea I hit upon was to find somebody who already made a line of starships and use those for our early ISC ships. I asked on the Game Publisher's Association mailing list for recommendations and was sent to Bruce Neidlinger of Iron Crown, who proved to be a super-nice guy to talk to. (Of course, he may have an inflated idea of how many of his ships that my customers will buy, but it costs him nothing to create a special web page for them.) We picked out some nice ships, did countersheet images to match, and here you are. Bruce even arranged for one of his fans to paint up a pair of cruisers and send us the photos.

Why?: This page is kind of easy to do since I only have to go download the "Why?" questions from the BBS topic and answer them. I do this a few times a year and whenever we do a *Captain's Log* I just slice off as many as I need.

Star Fleet Awards: Some people think that handing out imaginary medals and campaign ribbons is just silly, but Steve Petrick and I take it quite seriously. We go to a lot of effort to make sure that everyone who worked on projects gets his hard work acknowledged and rewarded.

This issue saw several interesting events. We elaborated on the Origins campaign ribbon. (Everybody who attends earns one, but to get a meritorious emblem, or a command clasp, or a combat clasp, you actually have to work for ADB during the show). Jean got her second Champion of Life medal and Leanna pointed out that her own Silver Star should also be changed to a Champion of Life medal. We added the GIA awards due to the rising level of Internet piracy. Jean got key awards for delivering the very difficult *PD20M* product.

Scatter-Pack: We didn't have one of these in this issue, as we just didn't have a lot of leftover notes looking for a spot to land in. The only thing was the Alliance flooring deal and we gave that its own headline.

FEDERATION COMMANDER

The signature font for this chapter is Ethnocentric, the font used as branding on all of the *FC* product covers.

Communique: This page is fairly obvious and easy. We just remind you what we have done, and tell you what we plan to do. We're proud of our accomplishments and excited about our plans for the future.

The page also includes a selection of "Questions from a new player" which *you* can use to educate new players entering your group. Just knowing the kind of questions on their minds makes it easier to recruit them.

Tactics: I can always count on Patrick J. Doyle to write a brilliant tactics article for *Captain's Log* and this time was no exception. It was a true joy to read. We actually used two of his articles in this issue, because they were so good.

Tournament: Mike West crafted a set of tournament rules for Origins 2008, and Mike Filsinger executed them, and had to adjust them when things didn't work as planned. (A player wanted to quit when he started losing, something that the scoring system could not deal with.) Mike and Mike worked hard over the following months to craft a set of rules that should be airtight.

Project Z: This is Mike West's project to give *FC* players a broader range of ships by showing them how to convert *SFB* ships. What nobody says out loud is that you can use his Z-rules to convert the zillions of *SFB* SSDs you can find all over the Internet, many of which are from genres we are not licensed to use in *Federation Commander*.

Command Notes: We really need people to write more of these for us to publish. We have so few that writing a decent

Command Note for *FC* might actually be the easiest submission to write and very nearly the most likely to be published.

Email & On-Line: I am blessed to have Frank Brooks running our Play-by-Email system and Paul Franz running our On-Line gaming system. They do a super job. Each took over for earlier heads of their divisions and has taken the divisions to new places to better serve our customers.

Scenarios: I have a bunch of *Federation Commanders* scenarios on file, but it always seems that it takes me hours to find two or three I can publish. Please write more! *Federation Commander* is so much "cleaner" than *SFB* that I can print three *FC* scenarios in the space it takes for one *SFB* scenario. I always try to have a good mix of writers, empires, and formats, such as the challenging three-player scenario in this issue.

Borders of Madness: The theory here is that some day we will actually print a product called *Borders of Madness* which will have streamlined *FC* versions of all of the *SFB* rules we left out. The object is to allow players to use the faster *FC* system to play out more complicated battles.

SFB SCENARIOS

The signature font for this chapter is Eurostyle Extended, which is also used for SFB Tactics and for Shipyard.

Steven P. Petrick is in charge of these, and he has a huge file of them ready to publish at any given time. Most of them are written by one writer! He's good, but we'd love to see scenarios by many more authors. If you want to get published in the *Star Fleet Universe* you have a better chance with a scenario than with a ship, a rule, a new empire, or a story!

We call the scenario chapter the "Salami Section" since I can use as many slices as I need to fill the space. If somebody doesn't do a promised article, we add his pages to the scenario chapter and go get another slice or two of salami. If somebody's article is a page too long, we take that page out of scenarios and put a slice or two of salami back in the refrigerator.

When selecting scenarios from that huge file Steve Petrick has, I work from several criteria:

1. Lots of different authors.
2. As many different empires as possible.
3. At least something for our "fringe" areas such as the Omega Octant and the Magellanics.

When I get to the end of the available pages, the last scenario picked (not necessarily the last one in consecutive order) is the one that fits in the remaining space.

SFB DATABASE

The signature font for this chapter is Eras Bold.

Background Questions: This came out of a series of questions on the BBS, and seemed important enough to be published.

Monsters: Steve Petrick does a monster per issue, adding all of the rules to take that monster places the original scenario never envisioned. This issue, it was the turn of Arastoz. Next issue will be the Energy Monster.

New Rules: Not that *SFB* actually *needs* new rules, but we try to publish one that players actually want now and then. This time, we printed an old rule which was published a decade ago but is hard to find since it's in *Module S2* and in the original *Prime Directive* rulebook.

Ask Admiral Growler: The way this gets done is dynamic. There is no "Growler for *CL#39* file"; there is simply "Growler we haven't published yet". People ask *SFB* questions in the BBS topics, Mike Filsinger answers them, Steve Petrick then sorts them into categories, Jean Sexton edits them, and I (Steve Cole) make the final selections. Growler is normally four pages. This time we did six (to have spares) and used four and a half (to balance with the *Anarchist* article). Since we have a huge backlog, we printed some of it in *CL#38: Supplemental*.

Brothers of the Anarchist: The first one of these was done twenty-plus years ago but never published because TFG-#2 mistakenly thought it was *Brothers of the Anti-Christ*. I gave it to Steve Petrick to keep him busy, and he completed it as a major article. This issue, we published Chapter 18 and have at least six more to go.

Romulan Early Bases: When Steve Petrick decided to go ahead and publish these (after the staff had objected) he wrote an article explaining that their prophesies of doom were unfounded. He sent me a copy of the internal memo, and I turned it into this article because I thought it was worthwhile writing.

Update for X-Ships: Steve Petrick does an article of this type every issue, updating something that needs updating. This time, given the recent publication of *SFB Module X1R*, he decided to update the X-ships in all the campaigns. I'm *sooo* glad I did not have to write that!

Example of Labs in Combat: People are always asking us to do example articles, and this subject/idea was proposed three issues ago. When Steve Petrick ran out of anything else to do, he agreed to write this, and it turned out to be a very interesting article which I enjoyed reading.

SFB TACTICS

The signature font for this chapter is Eurostyle Extended. We used to use one called Future but it doesn't print very well because it's the wrong "kind" of font.

Battlegroup: I moved the battlegroup article to Tactics this issue for two reasons. One, we were kind of short on tactics articles, and two, the series has evolved from an exercise in accounting to a tactical discourse. Read the articles and you'll find players who never saw each other's writing who all came to the same conclusion: When you don't know where you are going to go or what you are going to fight, bring a scout! Notice how the #1 thing all of them say is to pump up electronic warfare so the Juggernaut doesn't blow your ships away before you can put your plan in motion.

To be honest, I used to hate *Battlegroup*, but that was back when it was nothing but accounting, so many points for drones, T-bombs, Marines, refits, and so forth. As it has evolved, it has become one of my personal favorites. Indeed, much of the impetus for creating a *Supplemental* file was to use the leftover battlegroup articles.

Primer: There is no law that says only Scott Moellmer gets to write these, but he does write them, and I'm grateful to start the work on every issue by asking "What is Moellmer doing this time?" If anybody else wants to write one, go ahead, as nothing says we cannot print two of them.

Term Papers: At the end of the Interregnum, we had 50 pages of Term Papers approved and on file and slowly used them in several issues. When we ran out of those, we had no end of new ones posted on the BBS. Then one particular player (who knows a good deal less about tactics and the game than he thinks he does) started flooding the topic with so many dubious papers that many authors quit writing papers at all. We have banned him from the topic and wish people who used to write papers would start writing them again.

Victory at Origins: This article never arrived for reasons which we do not understand. In future, it will be the policy that if the Origins winner does not have his article to us in time for publication in the November *Captain's Log*, he (or she) will be suspended from all tournaments until the article is submitted and approved.

Victory at Five Nations: This article arrived too late to be used and will be considered for *Captain's Log #39*.

Fighting the Magellanics: When we begged for tactics articles, Ken Burnside sent this one in. We didn't use it because the tactical graders said it was too similar to his previous article on the same subject. We put it into the *Supplemental* file.

STAR FLEET VENUES

The signature font for this chapter is Serpentine Bold.

Star Fleet Command: We continue to support the computer game that refuses to die.

Star Fleet Warlord: One of the oldest of *SFU* campaign games, *Star Fleet Warlord* was begun by Bruce Graw and is now carried on by Paul Franz. The system continues to grow and improve and I'm happy to have him running it for us.

Reviews: We don't specifically recruit or solicit review of new Star Trek products, but when one comes in that is as well written as the one by Jonathan Snyder, we publish it.

Galactic Conquest: Probably the oldest and longest-running *SFU* campaign game, *Galactic Conquest* is the creation of John Berg, who continues to run it. This issue saw John and his fellow GM Mike Incavo bring the first two universes to a close and launch Universe #4.

Prime Directive: We avoid actually publishing RPG stuff in *Captain's Log* since the RPG players refuse to buy an entire magazine just to get two pages about RPGs. Instead, we promote the *Prime Directive* product line by publishing interesting background articles, such as this Planetary Survey by John Sickels. Ok, so we "borrowed" the article from John's forthcoming book *Prime Directive Federation*.

PBEM and On-Line: What Frank Brooks and Paul Franz do for *Federation Commander*, they have long done for *Star Fleet Battles*, and they continue to do it with style and grace. Frank Brooks's reports on his games often end up being hidden extra tactics articles of great interest.

Star Fleet Battle Force: We continue to publish playtest material from future expansions. I had a request on file to publish the *Anarchist* and *Exile* (two captured-and-converted ships) but didn't want to since they are just more ships with nothing unique about them. Steve Petrick suggested that I do commando ships instead, which I did. Steve Petrick added the rules about shield reinforcement cards and Prime Team cards during proofreading.

FEDERATION & EMPIRE

The signature font for this chapter is Palatino.

The Front Page: I enjoyed poking a little fun at Chuck Strong, who has taken a firm hand on *F&E*. The base upgrade cost data was important and needed to be published. The Minefield rule is my reaction to the horrifying Telenko article.

Q&A: Mike Curtis answers questions on the BBS and sends me packages of answered questions and questions requiring rulings. I process a few every week and the result is three pages of *Captain's Log*. Because *F&E* players cannot seem to use actual English, Jean added a list of abbreviations.

ComPot Shock: This article terrified me.

Tactical Notes: Prolific *F&E* players never stop writing them. The Joe Stevenson article had been rejected twice because it restates David Crump's article of 20 years ago, but I finally agree that it was worth publishing as it is the key to game play.

Altered Alliances: The prolific Gary Carney wrote this interesting scenario. Chuck Strong made it playable.

New Ships: Ok, we all know that the only one of these that *F&E* players actually *want* is that Federation carrier, right?

SHIPYARD

The signature font for this chapter is Eurostyle Extended.

Early Years: Several pages of this chapter were used for Early Years material in honor of *Module Y2*. This included sublight skiffs (designed for utility space work, we are fighting a tough battle with players who want to use them as PFs), Paravian bases, and the Romulan early sublight bombers and their bases.

New SFB Ships: I went to the BBS and looked for new ships ideas. I started in the Federation section after some players complained that the Federation had not been "feeling the love" in recent issues.

The first thing I found was Loren Knight's "Armed Recovery Transport" which he seemed to think would be used in mid-battle to rescue crippled fighters. Not a chance (one good shot from a war cruiser and this thing is toast), but it had some uses in "dangerous areas but not in real combat". As I worked on it, the idea came to me that these ships had been around before the war as part of the local governments' "services" to the taxpayers to rescue stranded freighters and the like. Pressed into wartime service, they would have evolved into the ART which Loren envisioned (although nobody would send an ART into combat so perhaps there is no ... *ART of Battle?*). Wait a minute! Doesn't *The ART of Battle* sound like a scenario title begging to be written by somebody?

Many players had asked for a Federation answer to the Klingon C10V (a heavy carrier built on a heavy dreadnought hull). I looked over several submissions and ended up with this one by Mike West which isn't actually built on a DNH, but that gives us something to pick for next time.

The Hydran Templar came out of work on the *Master Starship Book*. Tos Crawford asked for it, and I told Steve Petrick to do it without telling him it was an idea from the same guy who invented the "Crawford Box" since Steve Petrick tends to see red and have fire coming out of his nostrils when he hears that name.

New Federation Commander ships: The plan had been to do just eight Fleet Scale version of LTTs, but players wanted both versions, we could only use four pages, and we had already scheduled them to be in *Booster Pack #94* next year. So we did four. The Federation and Klingons were an obvious choice. I picked the Kzintis and Lyrans because they fight each other a lot. I drove the staff crazy when I did the first draft as I accidentally copied the wrong movement cost off of an *SFBSSD*.

Again, reviewing Federation ship proposals I found an OCA design that didn't work (and created one that did). Steve Petrick noted that the ship was too good for Y125 and we changed some of the weapons to a Y168 refit. I also found multiple proposals for the BCP and did a composite one.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON CL#38

Usually, when Steve Petrick and I finish an issue of *Captain's Log*, we have a moment when we scream "Let's not do another issue like this!" Not this time. We actually had a plan and followed the plan and the issue (a very good issue) got done without a lot of Storm and Drama, no "working to midnight, three nights in row", and not really any "We forgot to do that article and now we don't have time to do it" episodes.

Captain's Log #38 is, very much, the culmination of a supreme effort that Steve Petrick and I have made to get the production of *Captain's Log* on something other than crisis management. It's not just *Captain's Log*; all of our products this year have been done by "a plan" based on how many pages had to get done every day, week, and month. We operated on the theory that "every day, we do the required pages first" and only then moved on to lower-priority things such as spending hours answering a single rules question. It's just a matter of setting priorities, and always has been, but it's too easy to allow "work on products" to become the "bank account of time" that can be drawn on for no end of lesser projects.

We always finish a *Captain's Log* so excited about the contents and the process that we want to start working on the next issue right away, and this issue was no different. We actually *have* started on *Captain's Log #39* but this is in the context of an overall plan to also complete many other products.