

The Magic of **MIDDLE-EARTH™**

Part Two



THE
LORD OF THE RINGS
STRATEGY BATTLE GAME™
TACTICA

In Middle-earth, the greatest spellcasters are heroes of legend, able to turn the tide of battle with their magic. In Part 2 of our Tactica, Simon Grant discusses Wizards.

Having illuminated the myriad spells available to the magicians of Middle-earth last month, it's time to take a look at those mighty beings who are capable of unleashing them. There is nothing more intimidating to face than an army with a capable spellcaster at its core and not knowing what tactics your opponent has planned for them. In this article, I will take a look at how to get the most potential out of these devastating Heroes, and for those facing them, how to stand a chance.

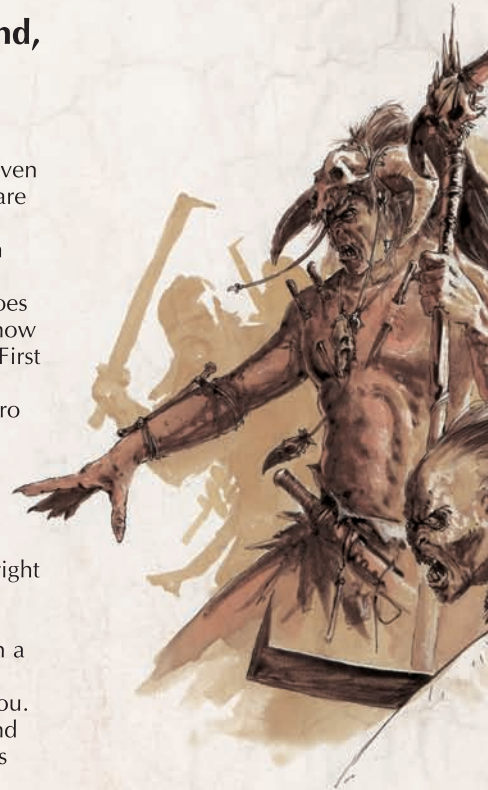
Broadly speaking, there are two types of spellcaster available to the denizens and Free Peoples of Middle-earth: Sorcerers and Warrior-mages. Sorcerers are fragile yet incredibly capable magic wielders, able to hurl enemies through the air with a quick incantation, or bind a victim helplessly in place through sheer force of will. Warrior-mages are well equipped and capable warriors who have mastered some basic

forms of magic, serving to make them even more powerful on the battlefield. Both are incredibly useful additions to any army, and are often the core around which an army and battle plan is formed. I will endeavour to show you how these Heroes can be incorporated into an army and how they can be both used, and countered. First off all, let's take an in-depth look at the two Hero types, then how one such Hero can be used in an example army list.

The Sorcerer

Largely used in a supporting role, these spellcasters can dominate the game through the careful use of spells at the right time and place.

Sorcerers are often fairly weak in combat, rarely able to hold their own in a fight and vulnerable whenever they are forced to do so, but don't let this fool you. Their main strength lies in their huge and sometimes indefinite store of Will points



Charging a Superior Foe



Some Heroes, such as Gandalf, are more than capable of fighting if the opportunity arises, but it is still best to engage only one enemy at a time where possible. Very few Sorcerers have more than a single Attack in combat, so it's best not to get overconfident, even if they have a respectable Fight value. Remember that spells can be cast at any point in the Move phase, so

you can still cast your spell of choice before engaging your intended victim in combat.

In the example above, Gandalf wishes to charge an Orc Captain – rather unwise, given the Orc's fighting prowess. To even the odds, Gandalf casts *Transfix* (1) before charging, allowing him to win the fight with ease and use his cavalry charge to crush the foe (2).



Cirion

Cirion, the impetuous captain of Gondor, is a fantastic headhunter and the bane of Sorcerers. His gung-ho bravery means that he benefits from a bonus of +2 to his Courage when attempting to charge a Terror-causing enemy, making it unwise for even the Nazgûl to stray too close. His 3 Might points also enable him to Heroic Combat his way through the enemy to reach his chosen target in a reckless yet swashbuckling manner, as befits the character. At only 55 points, Cirion is a real bargain.

and a flexible variety of spells, often including powers from two or even all three of the “ABC” categories of magic (See *last issue* – Ed). Kept protected and away from the thick of the fighting, but near enough to use the full potential of their magical arsenal, they can be devastating.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the Sorcerer lies in their choice of spells. It is

hard to cater for every circumstance when facing one, as they will almost always be able to confound your plans with a different choice of spell. For this reason, it is all the

more crucial to ensure that your Sorcerer is positioned where he can employ his spells to greatest effect, causing disruption to the enemy line by ruining your opponent’s plans with his magic, or even just his presence alone. A Sorcerer also makes a very tempting target, so use this bait to your advantage. Even Elendil can’t hack his

way through your lines to attack your Sorcerer if he’s *Immobilised*!

It is then a simple matter of bludgeoning said Hero into a fine red paste with the nearest Troll and/or generic evil minions. Easy. [Cue evil laugh].

I think Ringwraiths deserve a special mention here. They are simply fantastic in a supporting role, not only with their

“A Sorcerer also makes a very tempting target, so use this bait to your advantage.”

arsenal of spells, but with their Harbinger of Evil rule reducing enemy morale within 12", whilst their own high Courage value bolsters their cowardly minions.

Ringwraiths certainly don’t need to be in the thick of the fighting for their evil influence to be felt. For even greater impact, why not splash out on both the

Masters of Magic

Both Evil and Good players are spoilt for choice when it comes to picking a powerful Sorcerer.

1 Sauron the Necromancer

With a whopping 25 Will points and the ability to use them as Fate when required, the Necromancer has a surprising amount of staying power. Add that to his huge arsenal of spells including *Chill Soul*, the effects of his Ancient Evil special rule, and that of instantly killing anyone he wounds in combat, he is a sorcerous bargain at 250 points.



2 Gandalf (the Grey or White)

Gandalf simply has the best selection of spells available to a Good Hero. Because he is on both The Fellowship and Tower of Ecthelion army lists, he’s available to almost any budding army of the Free Peoples. With Glamdring in his hand and a Fight value of 5, Gandalf is no slouch when required to fight in combat. Gandalf the White, though more expensive, has the advantage of easier casting rolls for all his spells, making it largely unnecessary to use more than his free point of Will (from his Staff of Power) when using magic.



Shadow Lord and the Dark Marshal and watch your opponent's face drop! [Cue another evil laugh].

Most Sorcerers can be shut out of the game by engaging them in combat, even if not killing them. Ringwraiths are especially vulnerable to this, having to expend a Will point after every round of combat. Many of them also cause Terror, either naturally or by casting *Terrifying Aura*, so try to use your warriors with the highest Courage value, or a cheap Hero to accomplish this. Use Heroic actions if need be to engage them before they get the opportunity to cast their spell of choice, as they cannot use magic of any kind once caught up in combat. Try to think what spell you would cast in their situation and then look to counter it accordingly.

The Warrior-mage

Some spellcasters are more than happy to get stuck into the enemy, using their powers in the thick of it to swing the tide in their favour. These "Warrior-mages" are best identified by their high Fight, Attack and Defence values, notably higher than

the archetypal Sorcerer, making them much more capable of handling most combat situations. Their defining characteristic, however, is that they will have an abnormally high store of Will points and a few spells at their disposal. Some such Heroes, like Arwen Evenstar, are more delicate but cheaper in points, engaging in combat only when it suits them to do so, whilst her father, Elrond, is a heavy-duty frontline brawler, whose magical powers only serve to make him even more formidable in battle.

Such mighty Warrior-mages as the Elven lord Celeborn are expensive in points, but can easily fulfil the roles of two Heroes in most other armies. These massively powerful Heroes are best thrown into the thick of the fighting, using their spells to disrupt battlelines or cause even more damage. Don't, however, be tempted to ignore the myriad uses of the cheaper Warrior-mages, as they too will dominate an area of the battlefield if left free to do so, and can cause a surprising amount of problems due to their multi-talented nature. Heroes such as the Mouth of



Galadriel

Each of Galadriel's aspects fits into a different category. In her normal form, Galadriel is an all out Sorceress, vulnerable in combat, but with 3 spells and 6 Will points. In her wrathful guise as the Lady of the Galadhrim, she is much more of a Warrior-mage, with *Cast Blinding Light* protecting her friends whilst she dishes out hurt with 3 Fight value 6 attacks! You can only have one Galadriel in your army, so choose wisely.

3 The Witch-king of Angmar

With a maximum of 20 Will points, an awesome variety of spells and the ability to break the staff of an enemy Wizard, the Witch-king is a Sorcerer rightly feared. Include his option to ride a terrifying Fell Beast and the Witch-king can soar to safety on a whim, or redeploy to where his magical talent is needed the most. Give him the Crown of Morgul and he could even be used as a Warrior-mage instead, though be careful because his points can soon start to mount up.

Honourable Mention

Radagast the Brown

One of Radagast's best abilities is his Master of Birds rule, allowing him to target anyone in range of his spells, whether he has line of sight or not. With his One With Nature rule combining the effects of a Woodland Creature and an Elven cloak, Radagast can sneakily stay hidden from harm, whilst using his variety of spells to support his allies and stay at a safe distance.



The best of the best

The best Warrior-mages combine great martial prowess with a variety of useful spells to aid themselves – and their allies – in battle.

1 The Dark Lord Sauron

Unsurprisingly in the top spot for this category, too, is Sauron. With his Fight value of 9, Defence value of 10, an unsurpassed magical ability and range of spells, there was only ever going to be one winner. At 375 points even without The One Ring, however, he comes at a price.



2 Elrond

A hard choice between the lord of Rivendell and his counterpart, Celeborn in Lothlórien, but the ability to devastate a whole area of the battlefield with *Nature's Wrath* is priceless. Add that to his ability to re-roll any failed Fate saves thanks to his Elven Ring, Vilya, and using *Renew* to heal himself (or others) in the case of injury, Elrond proves himself to be an all-rounder of the highest calibre.



3 Gildor Inglorion

Similar in points to an Elf Captain, Gildor has good characteristics, a whopping 4 Will points, and *Immobilise*. Only needing a 3+ to cast this fantastic spell, he is superb at helping to counter the worst that your enemy can throw at you. Point for point, Gildor is one of the most flexible heroes in the game.



Honourable Mention

Dragon

Dragons are terrifyingly powerful beasts at the best of times, but add the abilities of a powerful spellcaster into the mix by taking the Wormtongue ability and there is little that they cannot achieve. Give your Dragon the Wings upgrade, too, and you will have an airborne magical menace that can threaten anyone anywhere on the battlefield.



Sauron – able to kill warriors with impunity and with no less than four spells at his disposal for only 60 points – should never be underestimated.

Most Warrior-mages have mastered the *Transfix/Immobilise* spell, and can be used to help nullify the strengths of enemy Heroes or monsters, making them brilliant for protecting a weak area of the battleline. Many of them also have access to steeds of varying shape and size, and can therefore be deployed to lead any cavalry you may have into the heart of the enemy lines. Accordingly, these Heroes should be positioned leading the tip of your army's spearhead, or protecting the chink in your armour. If you can get them to where they need to be, Warrior-mages can always be relied on to help get the job done.

It is worth bearing in mind that unlike many of the Sorcerer class, Warrior-mages only have a limited amount of Will points. Any method of draining their Will points, such as *Sap Will* or casting spells on them and forcing them to use Will points to resist, is a great tactic, denying them the use of their own powers. Fight fire with fire! Weaker Heroes can also be susceptible to a determined attack, removing the threat they pose as soon as possible – more often than not, they won't have the staying power of the more expensive Heroes.

The Defenders of Minas Tirith

Having enlightened you all as best as possible in the ways of the magical arts, I will endeavour to showcase an army using the principles I have mentioned. I have put together a 700-point army list – suitable for any tournament – inspired by the climactic scene when the gateway to Minas Tirith is breached, with Gandalf rallying the defenders to stand their ground.

The Shield Wall – Supported by their archers and a banner, this unit will be at the heart of the battle. Designed to suck in and soak up the best part of the enemy army, this will leave Gandalf and Imrahil free to do their jobs.

The White Rider – with the fantastic manoeuvrability offered by Shadowfax, Gandalf can be exactly where he needs to be at any given time. With the cunning use of a *Sorcerous Blast* at the correct angle, Gandalf can devastate the whole front rank of the enemy's troops, knocking them sprawling and hopefully killing a few to boot. The whole shield wall will then take a step forward and butcher the beleaguered troops mercilessly whilst they lie defenceless. By employing this method, I hope to be able to take on an enemy superior in either numbers or Fight value, with relatively few men of my own. Shadowfax will also allow Gandalf to get

The Defenders of Minas Tirith

Gandalf the White (on Shadowfax)	235 points
Prince Imrahil of Dol Amroth (Lance, armoured horse)	155 points
22 Warriors of Minas Tirith (14 shields, 7 spears, 8 bows)	183 points
1 Warrior of Minas Tirith (with banner) ..	32 points
5 Knights of Dol Amroth (Lance, armoured horse)	95 points
TOTAL	700 points



out of harm's way very quickly if required. Gandalf will bombard enemy Warrior-mages, forcing them to use their Will points in self defence, leaving them with little offensive magic. As you can see, Gandalf is integral to all my plans with this army. Forth the White Rider!

“Having the right spellcaster in the right place at the right time really can turn a game on its head.”

Imrahil and his elite Swan Knights are the head-hunters of the army. If I encounter an angry bunch of Trolls, as in the film, Gandalf will aim to pick on one Troll to *Immobilise* every turn, leaving Imrahil and his chums free to ride it down. I would

hope to repeat this tactic every turn, while distracting the others with my brave shield wall. If I encounter an enemy Sorcerer, I will instead unleash this deadly cadre of knights to neutralise the magical threat as soon as possible.

A Magical Middle-earth

Well, that's it. I hope that you will all have rediscovered how magic can be used in The Lord of the Rings game, and will consider including some Sorcerers and Warrior-mages in your armies. Having the right spellcaster in the right place at the right time really can turn a game on its head, snatching victory from the jaws of defeat. And what do I say to those amongst you that still stubbornly refuse to take a spellcaster in your army? It's best to be careful when fighting against an opponent who has heeded my advice and taken a magic user of his own... but happy hunting those enemy Wizards!