

BattleTech Overview

by Shawn F. Carnes

Commander's Crusade

The Latest BattleTech Expansion Combines the New and the Old

Gear up for combat, MechWarrior! Crusade has hit the shelves, raising the BattleTech bar another notch. Crusade, the fifth expansion released for the BattleTech trading card game, is the first to feature the new card layout format introduced in Commander's Edition. Plenty of new concepts and strategies await examination by MechWarriors both green and veteran.

The story behind the *Crusade* card set explores one of the most pivotal points in the history of the Inner Sphere—the reformation of the Star League. Task Force Serpent has completed a long trek deep into Clan territory, its ultimate target the Smoke Jaguar homeworld! Back home in the Inner Sphere, the era of “cooperation” has led the Houses to regroup into the Star League. With these developments, the battle for the Inner Sphere enters a whole new era.

We, the designers, had a lot of ground to cover with *Crusade*. We had to incorporate numerous story elements that really redefined what was going on in the BattleTech universe. The return

of the Star League and a hard march to a Clan homeworld are certainly not minor events! Fortunately, Glenn “Roadkill” Elliott was at the helm of this design and development expedition. The team set out to do more than just incorporate all the story elements FASA presented to us; we intended to enrich both the tournament environment and the social play environment.

All for One

This effort is reflected in the introduction of *Alliance* cards, which add a new and interesting level to game play. Your Alliance card is played before the game starts. Since the Alliance card counts toward your deck size of 60 cards, this means that your deck now consists of 59 cards. With this card in play, the affiliations of your cards change to allow new and unique deck configurations. For example, check out The Star League.

In exchange for taking -1 initiative for the entire game, you can build a deck with no House restrictions. This certainly changes the scope of battles currently seen out there on the tournament circuit.

Naturally, the Alliance cards are the first addition that veteran players notice. These cards radically change the scope of play, evoking the days when people ignored House and Clan affiliations when building decks. While the ability to add a host of new House- or Clan-specific cards to a player's deckbuilding arsenal is certainly a significant advantage, the design team feels that the

Shawn F. Carnes of Wizards R&D overheats and explodes on a daily basis, sending smack, hurt, and other forms of monosyllabic punishment raining down on anyone nearby.

