

drawbacks to Alliance cards are severe enough to offset this. Especially in the case of The Star League and The Invading Clans, we took great care not to completely disrupt the balance of play in our efforts to modify the environment.

I believe we struck the right chords when assigning the downsides of the Alliance cards. For example, take another look at The Star League. Not only does it give you a permanent -1 initiative, but you also lose *all* House affiliations. For example, cards that give a bonus to a Steiner 'Mech will no longer work for you. These Alliance cards should be valid for tournament play, but we're taking a wait-and-see approach until they get into heavy circulation and we get some feedback from the environment.

Strength in Numbers

Look for a slew of new personalities to hit the scene in the *Crusade* expansion. These cards add some new abilities and strategies to the game while bringing each personality's particular role in the BattleTech universe into perspective. As an example, let's look at Paul Moon—as an Elemental Star Commander, Paul Moon modifies other Battle Armor when in a battle.

The other new personalities in the game affect game elements according to their roles. Also, some personalities have been updated to reflect the new parts they have to play. For example, there is now a Khan Vlad Ward card, one that differs significantly from Vlad of the Wards.

Initiative, Schminitiative

What's a new expansion without some completely new strategies? *Crusade* introduces new options for Command cards, Mission cards, and more. For example, some new Mission cards—like Breaking the Envelope—enable you to do amazing stuff in exchange for lost initiative. Losing initiative can be a big thing in some cases; the odds that you'll lose key 'Mechs greatly increase when you're forced to assign your damage first.



Overheating when you lose initiative often means you're going to lose the overheated 'Mech. Breaking the Envelope makes that kind of setback a little easier for you to swallow—and a little more painful for your opponent. Expect to see cards like this popping up in tournament play, forcing decks that rely heavily upon winning initiative to deal with this threat to their stability.

I really groove on the "loss of initiative" cards. They represent a real threat in battle, but they don't always work the way you hoped. The price you pay—out-right loss of initiative—makes using them that much more challenging, but the payoff can definitely be worthwhile. Consider giving these cards a shot if your decks don't do well in the initiative department.

Personal Best

Finally, some of the cards on which I worked remain close to my heart.

Check out Trojan Horse, for example.

There's nothing wackier than seeing a weenie 'Mech explode into a million pieces, dealing some serious smackdown to your opponent. Plenty of cards like this will lay down the law on the unwary.

As I mentioned earlier, the *Crusade* expansion features the new card layout first seen in the *Commander's Edition* card set. Also, Vehicles have been fixed (per rulings first covered in "Reports on Trading Card Games," *Duelist* #29) to reflect their changed status within the game. For instance, Vehicles are now destroyed on a die roll of 5 or 6 rather than just 6. There's also an army of new 'Mechs to field in battle. They represent the latest designs from both the Clans and the Inner Sphere being sent to the battlefield.

One of the nastier new 'Mech designs, in my opinion, is the Kraken 2, a card that's exclusive to the Jade Falcons.

Enough talk—time to smack down the hurt. With *Crusade* cards on your side, there's sure to be plenty of hurt to go around! ■