**Player Reviews of *Crusade***

All in all, I think *Crusade* is a pretty well put together set, definitely rounding out a few of the game's rough edges. It is very Command-oriented, with cards like Hasty Alliance and Task Force Serpent, plus lots of good Uniques (including Khan Vlad Ward and Perigard Zalman, to name two). Politics-based cards make a much stronger showing than ever before, and we have a few new Pilots as well, along with a 4-cost resource that provides L and taps for 3R. Then we have the most anticipated cards of all, the Alliances. These allow for many more deck types than our environment has ever had before. Each one has a drawback very suitable for its effect and seems to further enhance one or more classic deck types (like Clan AMT, Clan resource, and Inner Sphere swarm). The Clans finally got a few cards to make those nice Politics-based cards they've always had a little more user-friendly, though a few more **'Mechs** with no assets or 1 asset would be nice. But hey, that's what Arc-Royal Defense Cordon is for, I suppose. My advice: get some before it runs out, because it will be hot.

--Matt Maroon

Overall, I would rate *Crusade* as a great expansion. There are some minor bugs and some potential problems, but that it always expected. I don't think that any one thing is SOOO powerful as to ruin the set, as the Vehicles originally did in *Arsenal.* However, Wizards and the DCI have learned their lesson from *Arsenal* and I expect that, given a few weeks, they will listen to the players' opinions and thoughts and start looking at these potential problems closely. A couple of must-haves in my opinion are:

1. Isolated Forces--You didn't really want to deploy anything AND untap, did you?
2. Battle Cobra Prime--Gotta love a 5-cost Resource killer.
3. Political Stranglehold--Can anyone help me dust off my Liao Suicide Troops deck?

Tim Davis

Well, after the debacle that was *Arsenal* and the anonymity of *Commander's Edition,* Wizards of the Coast has got things spot-on with *Crusade.* There is a balance that was missing from *Arsenal,* and a progression of new cards and ideas that was sadly missing from *Commander's Edition.*

In the past we have seen lots of new cards, generally for Davion on the Inner Sphere side and for Wolf on the Clan side. In *Crusade* there is plenty for all, House and Clan. Each House or Clan gains something significant, and that doesn't include the Alliance cards. This also evolves new strategies and possible alliances that will stop this game from stagnating. I can now see a number of really good, viable decks and plenty of variety to keep all players, new or old, on their toes.

Liao now has better **'Mechs**, sneakier Mission cards, and Subterfuge cards; C3 has been given a little boost; Jade Falcon and Smoke Jaguar now have the fast **'Mechs** that Wolf seemed to monopolize. ComStar and Marik get more **'Mechs** and Steel Viper has become a Clan to be reckoned with.

*Arsenal* emphasized Logistics, missing from the game at the time; *Crusade* emphasizes Politics, which has also been missing. There will not be as many AT or AMT decks played now. *Crusade* has given us the flavor and ammunition to deviate from our previous norms and evolve ourselves, and our decks, even further.

The only thing that I would say is missing would be a Smoke Jaguar Mission card. But then, that might come with *Payback.*

--Mark "Monty" Roberts

There are certain questions I ask myself before I buy cards from an expansion. Does the expansion contribute positively to the **BattleTech** line of games? What is the ratio of tournament-quality cards to "filler" cards? What does the set look like, visually? In Wizards of the Coast's latest expansion, *Crusade,* the answers to my questions provide me with much optimism about the game in general.

*Crusade* follows the first half of the Twilight of the Clans series. New **'Mechs** like the Battle Cobra B, defensive Missions, and a new affiliation are introduced in this set. Steel Viper has many new cards. The jury is still out on Alliance cards, but one thing is certain: they are definitely superior to the box powers of *Commander's Edition.*

Like *Counterstrike,* this set contains many cards that will likely find their way into tournament-quality decks. Cards like Force of Will and Hankyu Prime provide Clan players with even more ammunition to hunt down unsuspecting prey, while other cards like Blaze of Glory and Entrenched Holdings will make those same players rethink their strategies. While many players will stick to the old, standard archetypes, creative deck designers will notice just how much Wizards has stirred the pot for them.

Regarding the art, I have to give this set only average marks. The card design follows that of *Commander's Edition* and is good, but much of the art looks rather cartoonish. *Arsenal* is still the set to judge all others by in this department. That being said, the *Crusade* cards drawn by D. Alexander Gregory are nothing short of brilliant--take a look at the card Star League Proving Grounds to see what I mean. The Fire Falcon B (which I've lovingly nicknamed "The Sandy Little Tree Frog") is an amusing piece, but is also really cool art.

All in all, I must say that *Crusade* looks to be one of the more thoughtfully designed sets brought out by the Wizards team. I am already counting the days until *Payback.* Kudos to everyone involved. Now, if only I can figure out why I have a sudden urge to take up paintball....

--Eric Vaughn

Overall I must say I am pleased with how *Crusade* has turned out, but I have a few concerns.

1. Very, very few of the cards have decent artwork. I was disappointed in the quality of the art overall.
2. The Alliance cards The Star League and The Invading Clans have taken the fun out of the game, I think. Before *Crusade,* half the fun of the **BattleTech** TCG was trying to build a House- or Clan-specific deck with the available cards. Every House or Clan was missing something--you couldn't put all the "best" cards in the game in the same deck. Now you can build a Davion Pilot deck using Blitzkriegs (Marik) and play with the Kurita **'Mechs** like Owens OW-1D or Hitman, with Bearers or Chaos March Veterans in there. OUCH!

You can see where this is going. There is no challenge to building a deck anymore--put in The Star League and you can play with anything. The initiative penalty is no problem with the Davion box power (scrap a card from your hand to get +2 initiative), so why not do it?

With The Invading Clans, you can do the same thing with any Clan deck. Now the Dash Wolf deck just got nastier. Now you can combine the Wolf box power with the Ghost Bear Dashers and Dragonflys--put in the Ghost Bear Mission card Strength of the Bear or cards like Steel Talons, and you've got a deck that just overwhelms you with its speed.

Sorry for the length, but I just had to make myself clear. I am not very happy with how the Alliances work, and I think something MAY have to be done about it. I'll just have to play in a few tourneys to find out how they will really do.

--Tim Davis

I have only had a brief look at the spoiler list for the *Crusade* set. The set itself looks quite playable with many interesting new cards that give rise to many new deck themes. Older players should also find that they will be able to enhance their existing decks with a larger variety of cards.

There are approximately 50 new Units in this set, followed with the usual mix of new Resources, Pilots, and Command cards. It also seems that more time was spent creating the flavor text for the cards; in fact, for all but a few cards, it is quite worth the read.

This set is most outstanding in that it offers such a huge and diverse range of deck ideas for the players. Even with my rather brief scan through the spoiler list, deck ideas abound. If you enjoy building decks, this set offers perhaps the best range of concepts to date.

Steve Lake
Sydney, Australia

I think that *Crusade* advances the story line of the card game up to the timeline of the books pretty well. The Alliance cards reflect the political changes that have affected the Inner Sphere and Clans in the time between expansions. The emergence of Clan Steel Viper took a little longer than I thought was prudent, seeing as they were always the backup Clan in the invasion. The missions definitely rock, and House Liao is accorded its reemergence as a political power, which is faithful to the books. Some cards are already looking very powerful, and a few can be abusive in the right combos, but that's the same with any expansion.

Eric Freeland
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