

THE ORPHAN WORLD

A battle report by PETE HAINES and NEIL PARSONS

As part of his on-going play testing of the Necron fleet, Pete recently pitted his forces against Neil's Eldar, using the Bait scenario (slightly modified). Given these two fleet's characteristics a very different game ensued...

On the edge of known space, an orphaned planet is coaxed gently from its course by the inexorable pull of a distant singularity. It has been on a long journey since it was hurled from its star system millions of years before. It is barren and apparently lifeless, yet it holds a secret that may determine the fate of the universe. The planet is being sought by an ancient and implacable evil, the Necrons. Since their awakening, finding this long, lost world has been the focus of much of their effort. Their aim is unknown to the Imperium but so apocalyptic are the consequences of their success that the Farseers of Alaitoc have foreseen the disaster that beckons. Communicating through the Eternal Matrix, the union of Infinity circuits that links the Eldar, proud Alaitoc has secured the help of the pirate fleet of Prince Dra'va'Kul. Their charge is to watch over the Orphaned World and to prevent its detection by the Necrons at any cost. Their vigil had lasted a mere couple

of decades when their moment of trial arrived, a Necron battlegroup was detected on a search pattern. Decelerating from hyperspeed periodically to scan it was only a matter of time before they detected the orphaned world. Dra'va'kul passed word back to Alaitoc,

"Death has come searching, now it begins", before setting an intercept course. His clan sang their war songs as they raced toward the enemy on solar sails, but looked to their spirit stones as for the first time in millennia they faced a race even more ancient than themselves.

If you would like to find out what dark secret lies within the Orphan World and why the Necrons search the galaxy for it you will find out with the release of Codex: Necron coming in early 2002.

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

Having worked on the Orphan World story for Codex: Necron it occurred to me that it would make a great rationale for a Battlefleet Gothic encounter between the Eldar and Necrons. These are the two most advanced fleets in the game and match-ups between them result in a game quite unlike battles between the other fleets. I broached the idea with Neil Parsons, a regular adversary of mine, an excellent wargamer whatever the system being played and a big fan of all things Eldar, not least the fleet. I was delighted when he accepted the challenge as, having had my Chaos fleet stalked to oblivion by his Eldar it would be good to have some snazzy weapon systems of my own to use on him.

Given that the Eldar have the advantage of surprise in the background I figured 'The Bait' would be a good mission to play. It's easy enough to envisage the Necrons slowing to scan only to discover a small Eldar fleet observing them. Intolerant of any interference the Necrons give chase, the nimble Eldar

turning away and running for their lives while the rest of Clan Dra'va'kul speeds to their aid. As the mission was written is a raid and we wanted a more sizeable game we adjusted the points upward, setting the Necron fleet as 1200 points which meant the fleeing Eldar fleet would be 50% of this and the reserves at 100%, giving 1800 points of Eldar in total.

One of the mission special rules looked a bit odd though. In the victory conditions it is specified that the pursuer scores Victory points equal to the value of the enemy reserves brought into play. This means if the ambusher (in this case, the Eldar) use all their reserves they will have to destroy the entire pursuing fleet for no losses whatsoever in order to draw the game! Clearly there is a glitch there so we decided that instead of scoring the full points value of the reserve ships that enter play, the pursuer should score only 50% of their value. I recommend you make this change when playing the mission yourselves as it will be virtually impossible for the ambusher to win otherwise.

NECRON HUNTER FLEET 'RED HARVEST'

With the Necrons 1200 points goes very quickly, the choice really comes down to deciding how many Scythes to take. I figured in this type of mission I needed more speed and range than a Tombship could provide and I was not sure that Escorts could survive being exposed to Eldar bombers. I therefore took 4 Scythes and rounded out the fleet with a couple of Jackals. I didn't take a Sepulchre as a long-distance scouting fleet was not that likely to have one (the full implications of the Sepulchre will be revealed in Codex: Necron). Overall, my fleet was pretty fast, had excellent durability and good long-range hitting power, which I regarded as essential against the Eldar. I was sure that if I could bring the Eldar into lightning arc range my superior weaponry would give me the edge. My plan was to press the Eldar as soon as possible, maximising the panic that fighting a fleet that could match them for speed was bound to create. The list and their rolled Leaderships is shown below.

Scythe class Harvest Ship <i>'Dead Reckoning'</i>	
Leadership 8	275 pts
Scythe class Harvest Ship <i>'Fatal Embrace'</i>	
Leadership 8	275 pts
Scythe class Harvest Ship <i>'Leveller'</i>	
Leadership 6	275 pts
Scythe class Harvest Ship <i>'Apocalypse Bell'</i>	
Leadership 8	275 pts
Squadron of 2 Jackal class Raiders	
Leadership 8	100 pts
Total	1200 pts

ELDAR PIRATE FLEET CLAN DRA'VA'KUL

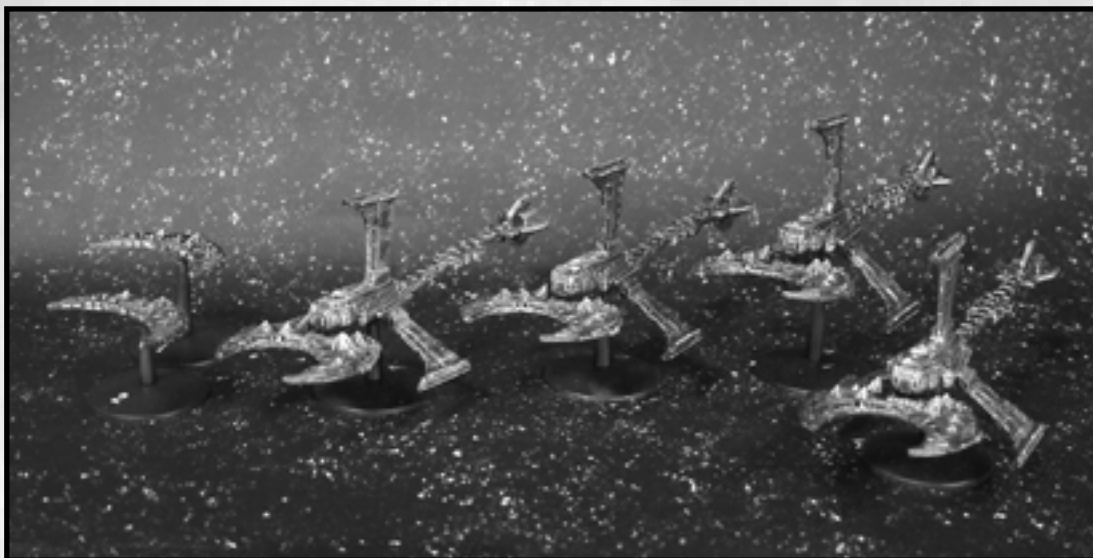
Rather than talking you through Neil's plans myself I solicited a few notes from the man himself, in the best battle report tradition.

'I was in a very good mood when I switched on my computer one afternoon. I was on holiday and happily painting a variety of figures when I decided to check my e-mails. One was from Pete Haines and since he is a regular gaming opponent of mine I simply assumed he was writing to say "hello" and arrange a game within the next week. I was right. But what he proposed left me wondering whether he was as pleasant a mate as I had thought!

What he proposed was a BFG battle report, the scenario being 'The Bait', me using Eldar, 600pts initially, with 1200pts of possible reinforcements. He would be using 1200pts of Necrons. I gulped and accepted the challenge.

I had read quite a bit about the Necrons and knew they were rather good. One person even describing their designer (yep that's Pete) as a sadist. (As if! Everyone knows I'm a veritable fluffy bunny of niceness – Pete) I had managed to evade facing the Necrons up until now but my time had finally come! So what forces to use?

Because we were playing a larger game than that suggested for the Bait scenario, we decided that the ambushers (me) would start on table with 600 pts of ships (instead of just one ship or a squadron). As the bait I chose two Eclipse class carriers, as these could be launching bombers from Turn one (Necrons get no ordnance to combat mine, so anything



Pete's Red Harvest fleet, beautiful in its simplicity!

other than bombers would be a waste). Instead of waiting for them to come on as reinforcements and thereby losing a few turns of launching serious damage potential. To make up the 600 pts I chose a small squadron of 2 Nightshades with the simple task of getting between the Eclipses and the Necrons. If the Necrons wanted to shoot at the Eclipses they would need to make a Ld test as the Nightshades would be the closest target.

The rest of my fleet was made up of what else I had in my collection. I like to mix Nightshades with at least one Aconite as the extra 5 firepower they provide to a squadron of 3 Nightshades means the squadron are dealing out as much death at 185 pts (8 firepower and 6 torpedoes) as a cruiser of equal points with the added advantage of a 2 + save against most weapons and a double move.

I had 3 of these squadrons along with a Shadow class cruiser and a squadron of 4 Hemlocks and 1 Hellebore (in retrospect I think I would have used a squadron of six Hemlocks) to make up the ambushing fleet.

My plan was simple, lure the Necrons to the edge of the table and counter-attack with the reinforcements entering table on Lock-On orders (it's a rare chance the Eldar have to go on to Lock-On as they should always use their move in the Ordnance phase to move away from their opponent).

The plan was a simple one, its execution not so (nothing about fighting with any Eldar force - 40K, Epic or BFG - is ever simple)...on to battle!

The full list and rolled Leaderships are shown below.

DECOY FLEET

Eclipse class Cruiser *'Legacy of Eldanesh'*
Leadership 9 250 pts

Eclipse class Cruiser *'Khaine's Dream'*
Leadership 9 250 pts

Squadron A. 2 Nightshades
Leadership 7 80 pts

Total 580 pts

RESERVE FLEET

Prince Dra'va'kul on Shadow class Cruiser
'Morrannon'
Leadership 10 410 pts

Squadron B. 1 Aconite and 3 Nightshades
Leadership 10 185 pts

Squadron C. 1 Aconite and 3 Nightshades
Leadership 10 185 pts

Squadron D. 1 Aconite and 3 Nightshades
Leadership 8 185 pts

Squadron E. 1 Hellebore and 4 Hemlocks
Leadership 9 235 pts

Total 1200 pts

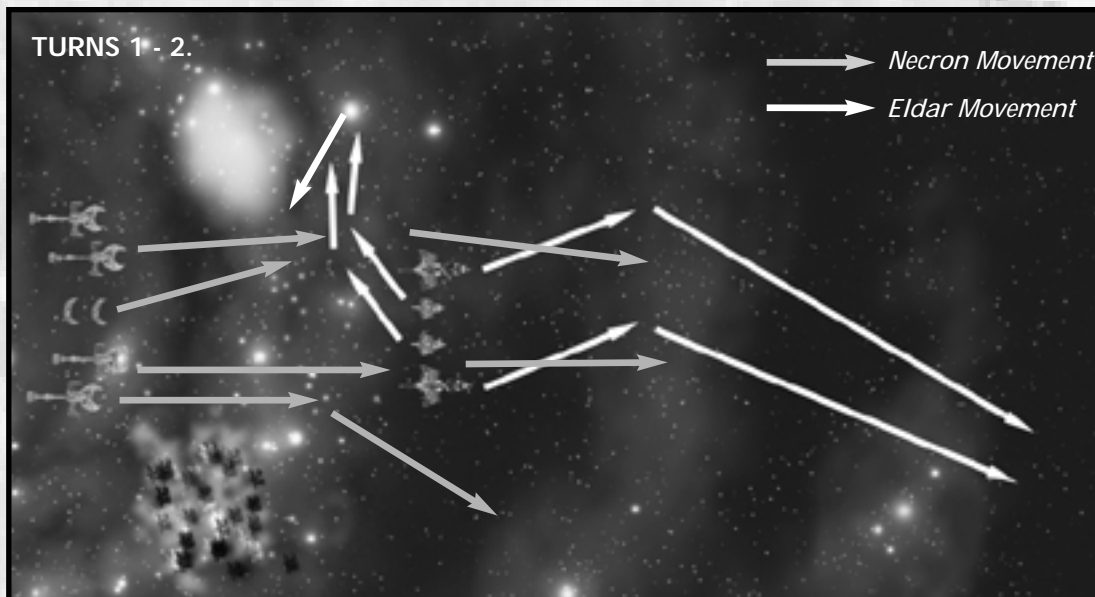
From a Necron perspective the combination of Pulsars, Torpedoes and Bombers is a worrying one. I had no real answer but hoped to be able to prevent Neil co-ordinating attacks by keeping him on the defensive.



The decoy fleet, which will bait the trap.



The reserve fleet, led by the Morrannon.



SET-UP

The game was played in deep space, only two bits of stellar phenomena were present, an asteroid belt and a dust cloud.

The Eldar decoy fleet set up in the centre of the table with the Necron fleet in hot pursuit 60cm behind.

TURN ONE

Eldar.

Both Eclipses made best speed, tacking slightly to starboard, heading toward the southeast corner of the table. To slow the pursuit both of them launched two waves each of two bombers in the Necron's path. The Nightshades turned to the north-west and took refuge behind the gas cloud.

This was a sound opening move, the Eclipses were heading to safety while the Nightshades asked an important question. Would I allow myself to be distracted into sending anything significant after them? If Neil didn't try it he would never know. Bombers only really pose a threat to Necron ships if combined with pulsar or torpedo attacks, so I wasn't too worried about the bombers in my path.

Necron

The Jackals came to a new heading and zipped swiftly around the asteroid field to engage the Nightshades. They caught the small Eldar ships in a volley of lightning arc fire but both braced and rode the storm. Meantime the Scythes engaged their inertialess drives and took off in pursuit of the Eclipses. Predictably one didn't make it and *Leveller* was left to bring up the rear. The Necron ships focused their lightning arcs on the bomber waves, destroying three of the four, and their particle whips on the

Eclipses, managing to score one hit through its holofields.

TURN TWO

Eldar

Both Eclipses reloaded ordnance and continued to head for the corner of the board, launching more bombers to cover their rear as they lured the Necrons into their trap. The Nightshade squadron turned to face the Jackals and launched a torpedo attack carefully angled to threaten both the Jackals and the *Leveller*. Despite the vaunted accuracy of Eldar torpedoes though no hits were scored.

Necron

The Nightshades were still trying to delay the pursuit of the Eldar carriers but were pushing their luck to do it. Their recklessness was exposed by the weapons of the *Leveller*. Under fire from its lightning arcs and particle whips the Eldar escorts grimly braced, but where their damage control had been adequate to withstand the Jackals, it was no defence against the mighty Scythe and both Nightshades were destroyed. Confident of the outcome, the Jackals had turned away to rejoin the main fleet which pursued the Eclipses at a more leisurely pace to give the other ships time to catch up. Also *Fatal Embrace* and *Apocalypse Bell* were able to lock on, greatly improving the accuracy of their particle whips. Khaine was with the Eldar though, two hits were successfully braced against and three others deceived by holofields. In a frustrated rage the three Scythes unleashed their solar pulses on the closing Eldar bombers destroying one wave.

The Eldar were running out of space, soon they would have to spring their ambush before the very tempting Eclipse bait was destroyed.

TURN 3

Eldar turn

Neil was still determined to draw the Necron forces as close to the table edge as possible before committing his reserves. *Khaine's Dream* reloaded ordnance (after a re-roll), as did the *Legacy of Eldanesh*. At bay in the corner of the table the assembled Eldar bomber waves raced to the attack. Four waves each of two squadrons struck at *Dead Reckoning* inflicting some damage and temporarily damaging the drives.

Necron turn

Any attempt at special orders was doomed when *Leveller* failed to engage its inertialess drive. It gamely closed with the Eldar cruisers anyway seeking to cover the main fleets right flank. The Jackals incredible speed had allowed them to catch up already and they concentrated on breaking up more Eldar bomber waves. *Leveller* had got within particle whip range and together with the wounded *Dead Reckoning* fired on *Khaine's Dream* inflicting two hits. Meanwhile *Apocalypse Bell* and *Fatal Embrace* targeted the *Legacy of Eldanesh* whose holofields continued to protect her well with only one hit getting through.

The Eldar were now completely boxed in. Given their unmatched speed though it was still possible for them to escape if that was all they were interested in. Typically of Neil though, he was interested in something altogether more aggressive.

TURN 4

Eldar turn

Khaine's Dream reloaded ordnance and headed directly for the main Necron fleet,

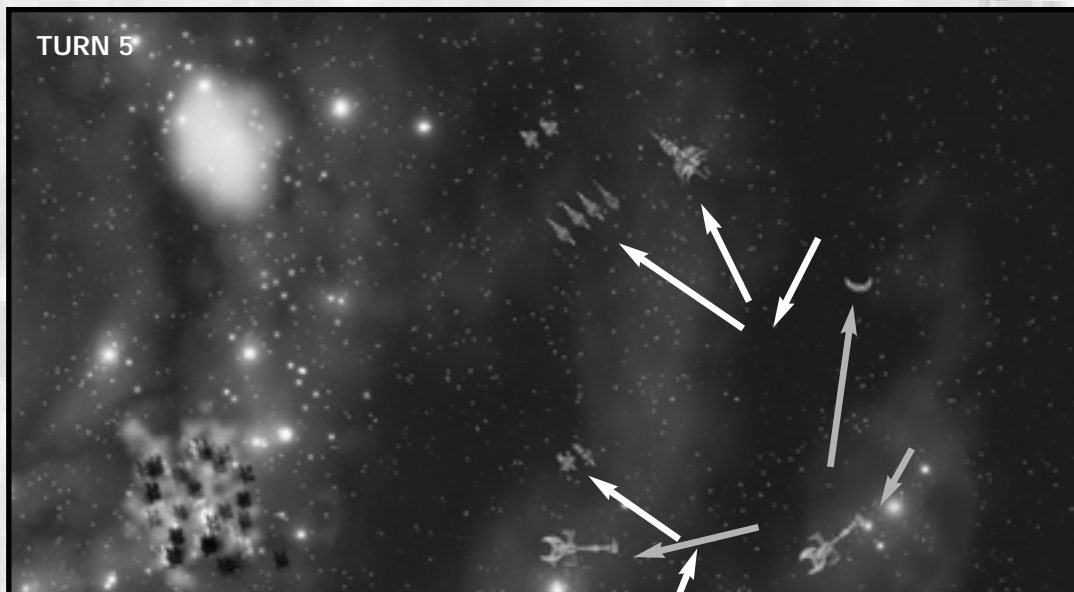
accompanied by the *Legacy of Eldanesh* although it was still braced. The pulsars of *Khaine's Dream* smashed one of the Jackals while the *Legacy* fired on *Fatal Embrace* and forced it to brace for impact, turning its awesome energies to self-repair. This was just the start though, a squadron of Nightshades led by an Aconite strafed *Dead Reckoning* which braced for impact. Its hull scoured by the Aconites batteries, sections buckled under the Nightshade's torpedoes. Despite its reactive hull *Dead Reckoning* took two hits one of which was a critical hit on its power core! A deathly quiet settled, this critical could do up to six extra hits and destroy *Dead Reckoning* outright. Neil took his time, if he was going to roll a six he was going to enjoy it. The dice flew, bounced and jiggled before ending up as a one. I gave myself a slap on the chest to get the blood flowing again and waited to see where my next bit of Eldar-induced trauma was going to come from.

The Hellebore-led squadron and Prince Dra'va'ul's Shadow locked on and massed their fire against *Apocalypse Bell*. The Shadows batteries inflicted seven hits but *Apocalypse Bell* saved them all by bracing. Sadly the Hellebore and Hemlocks found it an easy target and pounded it ruthlessly. Three hits penetrated *Apocalypse Bell's* defences and it like *Dead Reckoning* was on the verge of being crippled.

Fatal Embrace was treated to a massed bomber attack but fortunately for it, the Eldar Eagle waves flew into a swarm of Scarabs which disabled most of them although the remainder still inflicted one hit.

Their attacks launched, the Eldar fleet raced past the Necrons and headed back toward the





middle of the table. Knowing the Necrons could match them for raw speed they were concentrating on using their vastly superior manoeuvrability to make the Necrons turn.

It looked bad, three Scythes damaged, one Jackal destroyed and virtually everything braced for impact. On reflection we agreed that any fleet except the Necrons would have been utterly destroyed by the very powerful Eldar attacks. The Necrons though had just survived and now it was their turn to strike back.

Necron turn

The *Leveller*, ironically kept safe by its initial failure to all ahead full stormed into the battle firing its solar pulse. Both Eclipses were almost crippled so they braced, *Khaine's Dream* still took damage though. Both Escort squadrons were also caught in the blast and forced to brace. An Aconite and a Nightshade were consumed in the heat of the blast. *Leveller* was living up to its name and doing a great job of evening up the score. Its lightning arcs clawed at the *Legacy of Eldanesh* and its particle whips lashed out at *Khaine's Dream* inflicting damage on both.

The other Necron ships were braced and due to the crafty Eldar manoeuvring could not bring many weapons to bear. All they could target were the Eclipses, but it was fitting that the ships that lured them into this trap should not escape it themselves. The firing was not overly accurate but when combined with a few last swarms of Scarabs was enough to finish *Leveller's* work. Both were destroyed and both suffered plasma drive overloads. Clearly the Eldar must have rigged their ships in some way! The double explosion inflicted two hits on *Leveller*, rather spoiling its triumphant entry into the battle.

TURN 5

Eldar turn

Knowing that the Necrons would take some time to come about and form up took advantage and after much reloading of torpedoes subjected *Leveller* to a blistering salvo. *Leveller* took a further point of damage (it should have been more but Neil's torpedoes seemed to be suffering from a guidance malfunction). This was the moment for the next squadron of Eldar Escorts to arrive. An Aconite and three Nightshades arrived on lock on to fire on *Dead Reckoning* and the remaining Jackal doing damage to *Dead Reckoning*.

Necron Turn

It was now apparent to me that with most the Eldar on table my chances of making them break-off were very slim indeed. *Dead Reckoning* and *Leveller* were badly damaged so both of them faded out. *Apocalypse Bell* fired its inertialess drive to catch the most recently arrived Eldar Escorts, destroying one of them. *Fatal Embrace* followed its lead and destroyed another. The remaining Jackal took off after the Eldar flagship, inflicting two hits on the Shadow *Morrannon* only to see it brace and save them both.

TURN 6

Eldar turn

Numbers were really beginning to tell now and it was unlikely the Necrons would survive another pass like the one they had been subjected to. With this in mind Neil was careful not to overcommit. *Morrannon* wheeled around and absolutely smashed the impudent pursuing Jackal. A further squadron consisting of an Aconite and three Nightshades arrived on-



table. With the Eclipses gone Neil knew he would probably have to destroy all the Necrons to win. The new squadron locked on to *Fatal Embrace* and broke through its defences to inflict two hits before linking up with the rest of the Eldar fleet.

Necron turn

The two remaining Scythes kept their distance and sniped away with their particle whips, but the Eldar holofields did their job and no real damage was done.

TURN 7

Both sides spent this turn forming up and preparing for the final act. The Necrons were effectively surrounded and I was very tempted to phase out now, but I knew the scores would be quite close as the damage I had taken would convert into a lot of Vp's for the Eldar.

TURN 8

Eldar Turn

The Eldar swooped into the attack, most of the fire falling on *Apocalypse Bell*. As the Hellebore and Hemlocks fired it failed its brace for impact roll, I had used my one re-roll some time back and could only hope my basic self-repair would work. It took nine pulsar hits! Surely it would be destroyed, but no, I made five saves out of nine on a five or six. If Necrons could rejoice then this would be a date for their diaries. From being undamaged the *Apocalypse Bell* was now crippled. Follow-up attacks inflicted a further two hits leaving it hanging on two hits.

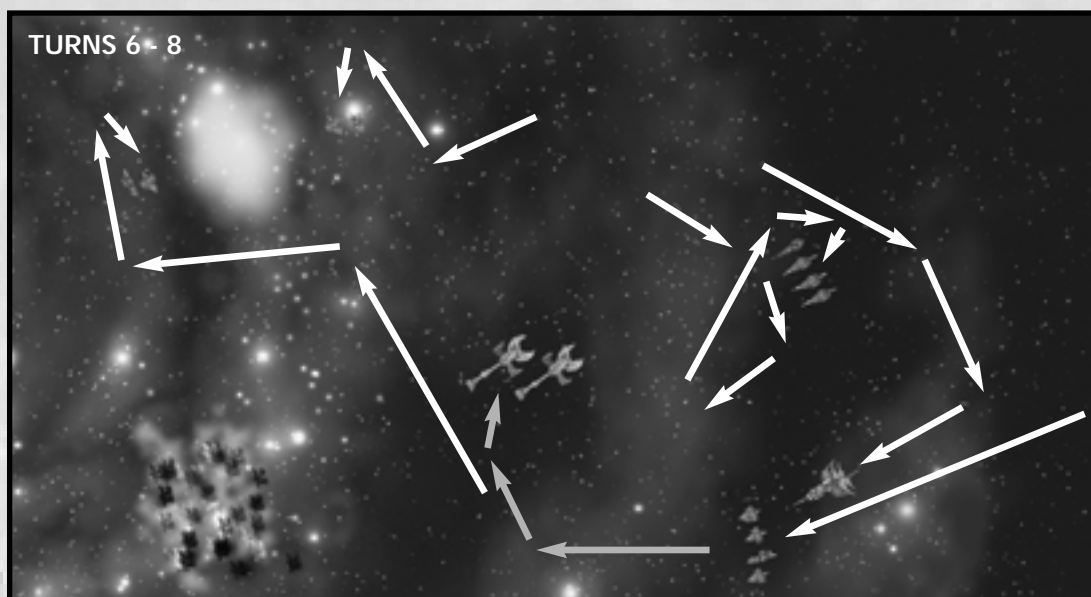
Necron turn

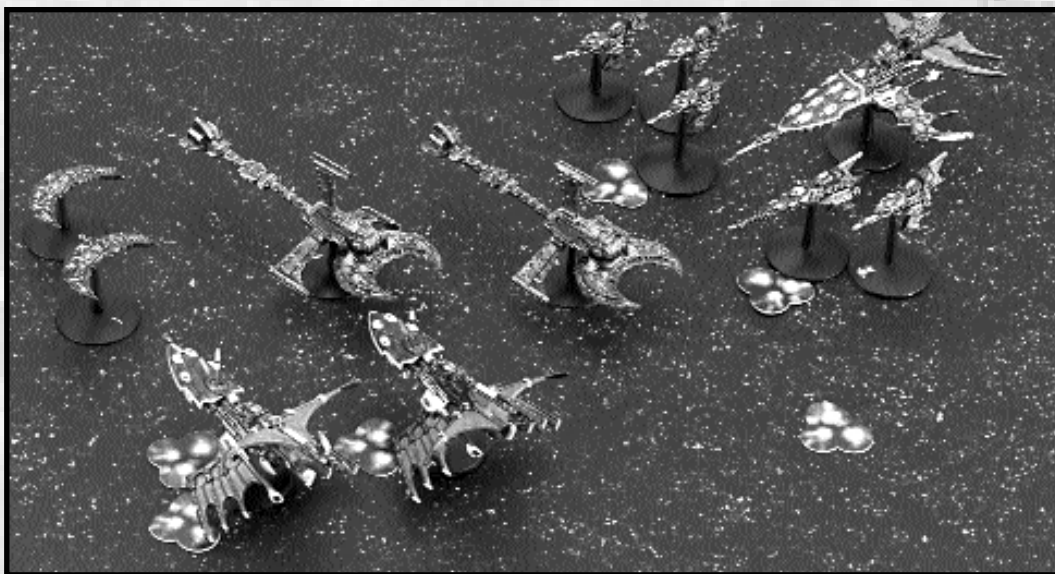
Well, that's what you get for hanging around for too long. *Apocalypse Bell* phased out without further ado, leaving *Fatal Embrace* alone. I considered disengaging with it as well but the Eldar were huddled together looking rather vulnerable in a bristling-with-lethal-weaponry kind of way and I can rarely resist this sort of temptation. So *Fatal Embrace* ploughed into them, it let rip with its solar pulse, its lightning arc and its particle whip. It unleashed waves of Scarabs and hurled warrior boarding parties at the nearest ships. Its attacks were extremely accurate and yet due to a combination of holofields and brace rolls it destroyed... a single Nightshade. Making a firm mental note that Eldar ships weren't quite as fragile as they pretend they are, I hid under the table for Turn 9.

TURN 9

Eldar turn

The Eldar ships made their attack runs, if nothing else the counter-attack of last turn had forced a lot of them to brace so there wasn't as





The decisive moment of the battle. The Eclipses swing round and go head-to-head with the Scythes, whilst the Morannon and its escorts swoop in from the port side before peeling off. It was the amount of damage inflicted in turn 4 as both fleets swept past each other that would be the major factor in the victory points total at the end.

much unpleasantness hurled at *Fatal Embrace* as there might otherwise have been. Three hits penetrated its defences before the ordnance phase, when veritable torrent of torpedoes slammed into it. At this point it was hanging on with a single hit and had no less than ten saving throws to make. By now I suspect I was past caring so there was no pressure (he lies!), as you might expect I suddenly became a saving throw machine making every last one of them. There was no need for a Necron turn as I heroically faded out to join the rest of the disengaged Necron fleet.

THE RESULT

Because Neil had committed all 1200 points of reserves I was 600 points up before anything else got added in. I had destroyed 2 Eclipses, 6 Nightshades and an Aconite for a further 805 points leaving me with 1405 Victory points.

In return I had lost 2 Jackals, had disengaged with 4 Scythes, three of them crippled, giving Neil 1062.5 Victory points.

This gave me a narrow victory. Every ship that escaped though was either on the verge of being crippled or the verge of being destroyed. If Neil had been able to inflict the last killer hit once or twice more then it would have been a different story altogether. As it was Prince Dra'va'kul's fleet had repelled the Necrons at a cost, which the dying Eldar could not really afford to pay. Their sacrifice may have saved millions of innocent lives though.

We were both agreed that Necron vs Eldar made an excellent match-up, as the more

conventional tactics based on lines and crossing the 'T' went completely out of the window and the two most advanced fleets in BFG rolled up their sleeves and fought tooth and nail. Neil commented that he really enjoyed being able to use the Eldar in a completely unrestrained way rather than having to hold back a little to make a good game of it, as he has to against more primitive fleets. Tactically, Neil didn't quite exploit his firepower to the max as he used the more conventional approach of firing batteries then pulsars when reversing it would be more effective. Even so the Eldar were quite deadly opponents and I am sure that if I had not dealt with the Eclipses then the combination of pulsars to force me to brace followed by waves of super-accurate Eagle bombers would have done horrendous damage. The Necron particle whips were not as effective as I had hoped, whilst capable of doing the odd hit I was unable to inflict significant damage at long range which meant the Eldar could take their time setting up their strafing runs.

During the post game discussion we both highlighted the destruction of the Eclipses as the real decisive moment. If they had concentrated on escaping rather than helping the ambushers on Turn four then it would definitely have been an Eldar win.

All in all though it had been a great game and both myself and Neil were left fermenting plans for the next encounter between the mightiest fleets in the universe.

Have Fun
Pete