

Hex-map variant keeps Mage Knight simple



by Bobby Goodman III As a gamer newly obsessed with Mage Knight (I dream in clicks and formations now), I've noticed most "house rules" for MK add complexity, in opposition to Mage Knight designer Kevin Barret's guiding principle, "Keep it simple, simple, simple." This variant was born of a desire to make things easy on my non-obsessed friends who, bless their hearts, play games with me so that I don't go through withdrawal.

This variant for MK play simply transfers the game from the tabletop to a map of 33mm hexagons. Cheap paper hex maps can be found at gaming stores which cater to miniatures and wargame players. There is also software out there for designing and printing custom hex maps (or a savvy computer user could find graphics programs up to the challenge). Probably the best options available are the soon to be re-released vinyl Battlemaps (22x34") and Megamaps (34x48") from Chessex, on which you can draw and erase with washable markers. I personally have also found that old BattleTech maps are perfect for Mage Knight.

Movement & Facing

To begin with, obviously, each figure occupies a hex (two, if mounted). When moving, entering an adjacent hex counts as one inch of movement. If a figure has a move of 8", you can simply move it 8 hexes. If the hex contains blocking terrain or another figure, you can't move into it.

Note that moving adjacent to another figure does not automatically mean you are in base contact. You must declare base contact when you place figures or end your movement. The 33mm hexes allow some room to press figures against one neighbor while leaving a gap between another, if desired.

Unlike normal Mage Knight play, where figures can face in any direction, when using a hex map, each infantry figure should face a hex corner. For most infantry figures, the hex sides on either



Infantry Figure Mounted Figure

side of the corner a figure is facing is its front arc, and the hex sides flanking the corner directly behind the figure is its rear arc.

Because of their double bases, mounted figures naturally face hex-sides, not corners. Also, their arcs and entire hex-sides are wider than infantry figures.

Range & Arcs

When determining range to a target, each hex counts as one inch. Do not count the hex you occupy, but do count the target's hex. (Note: A figure standing in a hex of hindering terrain is

protected, but its ranged attack is not hindered by the terrain, as per normal Mage Knight rules.)

Most infantry figures have a front arc of 90°. This does not translate perfectly to hexes, since they have facings of 60°. To make things simpler, I narrowed the arc a bit. On a hex map, the arc for these figures should extend straight out from the hex sides flanking the corner the figure is facing. If the target is in range and in this arc, with a clear line-of-sight, it can be attacked. Some infantry figures have a 180° arc that extends from the left and right sides of the hex.

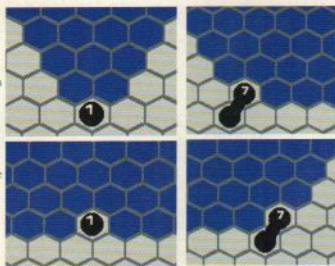
Mounted figures have 180° arcs, though some are off-set to represent right and left-handed warriors. Since they face hex sides and not corners, their firing arcs are different from infantry but still fairly straightforward.

Terrain

Using a hex map does not preclude the use of three-dimensional terrain, one of the coolest parts of Mage Knight games. The map can lay under your terrain items, providing a "grid" on which everything else is placed. Alternately, Geo-

Hex makes a system of interlocking terrain pieces called Battlescapes that have hexes printed on them. If you don't have any fancy terrain pieces and are tired of using Styrofoam cups for towers and construction paper for forests, you can draw terrain features directly on your hex maps (especially if they are vinyl Chessex mats). With this method, the terrain you can construct is limited only by your imagination and the colors of your washable pens.

With this hex-map variant, games move faster, because measuring is a snap. Also, the strategy level of the game is enhanced because everyone has a clear knowledge of ranges and terrain features. That is not to say that something isn't lost by going from the full 3-D Mage Knight play to hex maps, but certainly the lack of arguments over measurements, facing, and firing arcs makes up for the lack of realism.



Clockwise from upper left: Standard infantry firing arc, mounted firing arc, mounted firing arc offset for a left-handed figure, and infantry wide firing arc.



Battle for the Sacred Talisman A hex-map scenario for Mage Knight

by Bobby Goodman III For more than a century, the island of Rodesh welcomed pilgrims and welcomed pilgrims and wafers, vagabonds and fugitives, commoners and nobles — any who would accept the religion of the forefathers and pledge peace. But on the mainland, rebellion had come — bloodshed even the sea could not hold back. Erian donned his mail shirt and drew his crystal sword. Someone had defiled the Third Shrine. Now armies moved in the wilderness, toward the sacred place of his people ...

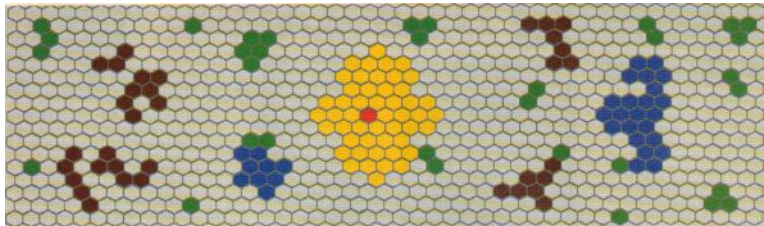
The Battle for the Sacred Talisman is a multi-player Mage Knight scenario using the hex-map variant rules printed in this issue of Scrye.

Map

A 33mm hex map is required for play, preferably longer than it is wide. One that measures 45 by 17 hexes is ideal. Terrain features should include a smattering of trees (hindering), cliffs (blocking), and water (see the Scenario Map). The most important terrain feature is an area of Holy Ground that covers about 50 hexes and is

protected by a powerful mystical aura. In the center of this shrine is the Sacred Talisman.

All figures entering or leaving the Holy Ground must perform a brief ritual to appease the gods, ending their movement as soon as they cross into or out of this special terrain. Figures can opt not to do this, but they take a click of damage as divine retribution. Furthermore, figures which perform the ritual on entering the Holy Ground before the Talisman is touched gain the Blessing ability. (Once per game, a figure with this ability may add either +1 to its Speed,



Map Key: Yellow hexes = Holy Ground; Red = Talisman; Blue = Water; Green = Forest (hindering terrain); Brown = Cliffs (blocking terrain).

Attack, or Defense rating for one turn. Owner must declare its use before any dice are rolled.) Finally, no attacks can be declared against any figure in the Holy Ground until a figure (from either army) touches the Talisman.

Setup

For a two or three-player game, players should use a 200-point army. For faster play or games with more than three players, 100-point armies are recommended. Players take turns placing figures one at a time, starting with those of higher point cost. Figures must be placed within eight hexes of the map edges furthest from the Holy Ground, but players may place figures on either or both sides of the map. Figures cannot be adjacent to opposing figures

when the game begins. Figures cannot attack or initiate base contact with opposing figures during the first turn of the game. Finally, place a small object, marker, or token in the center of the Holy Ground to represent the Sacred Talisman.

Victory Conditions

To win, you must either destroy all opposing forces or remove the Talisman from the map. A figure carrying the Talisman which ends its movement on one of the far edges of the map may leave the board as its next move action and win (although it may have to break away to do so).

Any figure ending its movement in a hex with the Talisman picks it up. A figure holding the Talisman cannot use Flight (the Talisman is too

heavy). At the beginning of any turn, a figure with the Talisman may give it to any friendly figure in base contact as long as there are no opposing figures in base contact with either. If a figure holding the Talisman is killed by a ranged combat attack, the Talisman is dropped in that hex. If a figure holding the Talisman is killed by a close combat attack, the attacker gets the Talisman.

When a figure holds the Talisman, it gains the Regeneration and Divine Favor abilities. (When a figure with Divine Favor is given a close combat action, it may make two separate attacks against two separate figures at its printed damage. Also, while a figure has Divine Favor, it and all friendly figures ignore Demoralized effects.)

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