The Port Maw Blockade

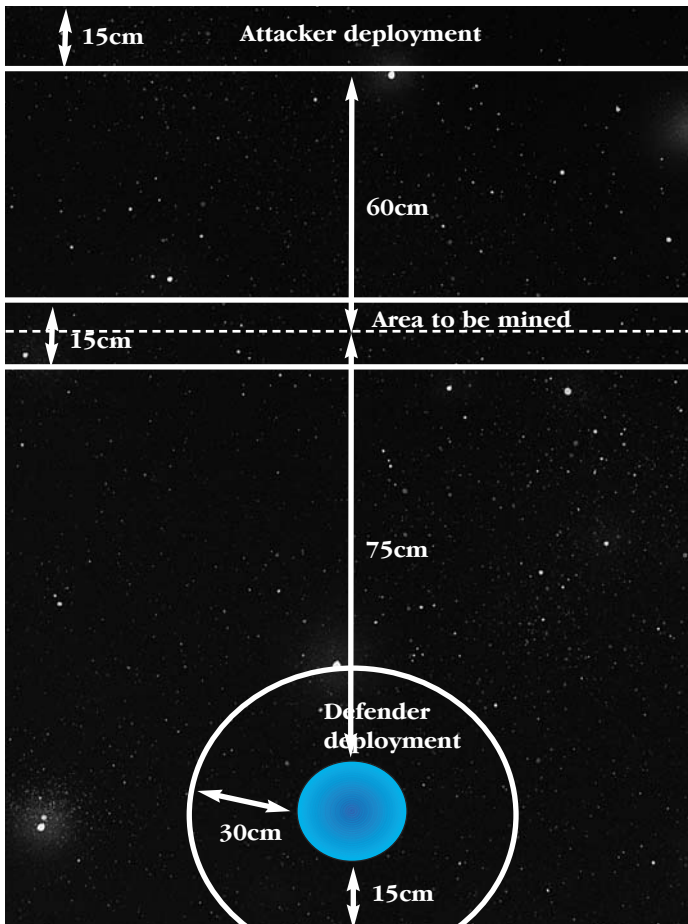*BFG Scenario Competition Winner*
By Alan Jackson

During the Gothic war Port Maw's substantial orbital defences and system defence fleets prevented the planet ever falling to the forces of Chaos despite numerous attempts. Instead, the Chaos fleets decided to blockade the planet to cut the Imperial forces off from its considerable dock facilities and to try to starve the planet into submission. Eventually the Chaos forces plan to break Port Maw by starvation failed despite the blockade lasting for almost seven years and the Imperium regained access to Port Maw's shipyards.

During the period of the blockade, the Chaos forces utilised modified Devastation and Styx class cruisers to make fast strikes into the primary biosphere to seed it with orbital mines in an attempt to further strengthen their stranglehold on the system.

FORCES

Both fleets are picked to an agreed points value. In addition the defender can spend an extra 2D6x10 points on planetary defences for every 500 points (or part) in his fleet, and if he wishes may spend up to 25% of his fleet points on additional planetary defences. For every 500 points (or part) in the attackers fleet he must include a devastation or Styx class cruiser, which will be upgraded to a minelayer at no extra cost.

BATTLEZONE

The battle takes place in the primary biosphere around Port Maw. Place a medium planet no more than 15cm from one of the short table edges to represent Port Maw, Port Maw has two moons which should be set up as normal, if one of the moons ends up off the table then it does not take part in the battle. The short edge nearest the planet is sunward. Set up an other celestial phenomena as normal

SET-UP

The defender's ships must be placed within 30cm of the planet and can be facing in any direction. The planetary defences must be placed either in the planet's gravity well or that of its moons. The attacker's fleet must be placed within 15cm of the short table edge opposite the planet.

FIRST TURN

The first turn goes to the attacker.

SPECIAL RULES

Minelayers: A ship upgraded to a minelayer has had its launch bays upgraded to carry orbital mines instead of attack craft. One orbital mine is launched per bay in the same way as attack craft squadrons, though orbital mines may not be formed into waves. For the rules for orbital mines see page 142 of the Battlefleet Gothic rulebook. Note that turrets can be used against either attack craft or torpedoes and mines in a single ordnance phase, not both. If a minelayer suffers a critical hit which affects the launch bays it will take an extra D3 damage as some of the mines detonate. Note: Battleships may not be upgraded to minelayers.

GAME LENGTH

The game lasts for six turns.

Attacker deployment
15cm
60cm
Area to be mined
15cm
75cm
Defender deployment
30cm
15cm

Situation at end of battle	Result
15+ mines launched and all minelayers survived	**Attacker's Major Victory** The attacking forces have succeeded in creating a substantial minefield in the primary biosphere and with the minelayers intact can launch further seeding missions when required
15+ mines launched but some minelayers destroyed, Or, 10-14 mines launched and all minelayers survived	**Attacker's Minor Victory** The mission has been a partial success, either a large minefield was created but cannot be replenished for some time or a smaller minefield was created but can be replenished soon
15+ mines launched but all minelayers destroyed	**Draw** While the attacking forces have created a minefield big enough to be a hazard to Imperial shipping they have suffered severe losses negating any gains from having the minefield in place
0-9 mines launched and all minelayers survived, Or, 0-14 mines launched and some minelayers destroyed	**Defender's Minor Victory** Either the defending forces have managed to fight of the attackers this time, but with all their minelayers left they could return at any time or a sizable minefield was created but the attacker's will not be able to return for some time
0-14 mine launched and all minelayers destroyed	**Defender's Major Victory** The attacker's were unable to create a large enough minefield to present a serious hazard and without any minelayers will not be able to try again for a long time

Note: *Only mines launched in the region marked on the map as 'Area to be mined' count towards the total*

VICTORY CONDITIONS

To determine the outcome of the battle consult the table above.

Historical Notes: Though the Port Maw blockade lasted for seven years during which time there were many encounters between the Imperial and Chaos fleets one particularly notable incident involved the infamous traitor vessel known as Unforgivable and the Imperial dominator class vessel Hammer Of Justice.

Imperial Forces:
Lux Imperator (Dictator) with Fleet-Admiral Hoshi
Retribution (Lunar)
Hammer Of Justice (Dominator)
12th Destroyer Squadron (4 Cobras)
Port Maw Patrol Squadron Alpha (3 Swords)
Port Maw Patrol Squadron Gamma (3 Swords)
3 Orbital Weapons Platforms
2 Orbital Torpedo Launchers

Chaos Forces:
Death Bringer (Styx, minelayer) with Warmaster Ferrix
Unforgivable (Devastation, minelayer)
Monstrous (Murder)
Damnators (3 Infidels)
Bloodied Claws (6 Iconoclasts)

The Chaos raiding fleet sped into the primary biosphere from the outer reaches of the system, hoping to find the area around Port Maw unprotected ready for their seeding mission. However as the raiders advanced it became clear that the planet's defenders were not as unprepared as they had hoped. At this range though the Chaos forces could do nothing about the defenders and so went to All Ahead Full to try and reach their target before the defenders could respond to their attack.

As the fleets closed they began to engage each other with the Chaos fleet of Warmaster Ferrix initially faired better than the Imperial forces with the destruction of the whole of the 12th Destroyer squadron and the release of a full round of mines from both the Death Bringer and the Unforgivable.

'Sir the traitor carriers are launching orbital mines,' said Admiral Hoshi's flag lieutenant.

'Damn!' shouted Hoshi, 'This is Fleet-Admiral Hoshi to all vessels, concentrate fire on the carriers; we cannot let them further disrupt shipping with a minefield.' Then privately he commended the souls of the cobra crews to the Emperor. With the Chaos vessels now in range of the Imperial guns the Retribution and Hammer of Justice unleashed a hail of fire on the Death Bringer, causing Ferrix to order Brace For Impact in an attempt to prevent his vessel from being too heavily damaged. Meanwhile the Lux Imperator launched fighters to intercept a salvo of torpedoes launched by the Damnators and then with the two Sword squadrons fired on the squadron of Iconoclasts destroying three of the traitor vessels.

Cursing the Imperial fleet heavily, Warmaster Ferrix manoeuvred the Death Bringer to take it out of firing range of most of the Imperial guns though the ship was unable to maintain maximum speed due to the damage caused by the bombardment from the Imperial fleet. The Unforgivable also moved away from the Imperial fleet while launching another set of mines and destroying one of the Swords from patrol squadron Alpha with its lance decks. Under orders from Ferrix the Damnators moved to cover the rear of the Death Bringer and the remainder of the Bloodied Claws moved to intercept patrol squadron Alpha and succeeded in taking down another of the frigates. At the same time the Monstrous bore down on the Retribution opening fire with its gun batteries, inflicting horrendous damage on the cruiser and crippling the majestic ship.

'At least we have the traitorous carriers on the run,' said Admiral Hoshi, 'Helmsman bring us about towards that Murder class.'

'Captain Grenfeld take the Hammer and pursue the Unforgivable with patrol squadron Gamma, do not let it escape,' ordered Hoshi, 'Captain Thalius contain the damage on the Retribution and engage the rear of that Styx, and Captain Jerl keep those Iconoclasts occupied.'

The Lux Imperator, the Retribution and the last Sword from patrol squadron Alpha engaged the main part of the Chaos fleet, crippling the Monstrous and hounding the Death Bringer, while on the Hammer of Justice Captain Grenfeld was taking to his bridge crew, 'Right do you want the sacrifices of our fellow sailors to be in vain.'

'NO!' shouted the crew in unison.

'Then lets get after those traitorous scum!' the captain said forcefully, 'Patrol squadron Gamma go ahead of us and see if you can slow the enemy down.'

Patrol squadron Gamma locked onto the cruiser, which was dead ahead of them and opened fire on it, inflicting some damage on the Unforgivable but not enough. Then however a series of secondary explosions bloomed out of the side of the ship leaving it crippled.

'One of the shots must have penetrated the launch bays and detonated the mines inside,' mused Captain Grenfeld, 'Prepare the nova cannon to fire. Let's send those traitors back to hell.'

The nova cannon on the prow of the Hammer of Justice let rip and the giant explosive shell struck the rear of the carrier square on, detonating in an inferno hot enough to burn right through feet of hull plating. Then the plasma drives of the once mighty cruiser blew their containment fields, shattering the ships hull and sending debris in all directions.

Seeing the destruction of the Unforgivable Warmaster Ferrix knew that the battle was lost and ordered the Chaos fleet to disengage leaving the Imperials to their celebrations. Though with the substantial losses on their side and the sizable minefield that would need clearing up it was only a minor victory for the Imperial forces.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alan Jackson is the winner of the Battlefleet Gothic Scenario competition. This lucky chap can now pick a fleet of his choice as his prize.