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MECHWARRIOR® 2

THE OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE

JOE GRANT BELL

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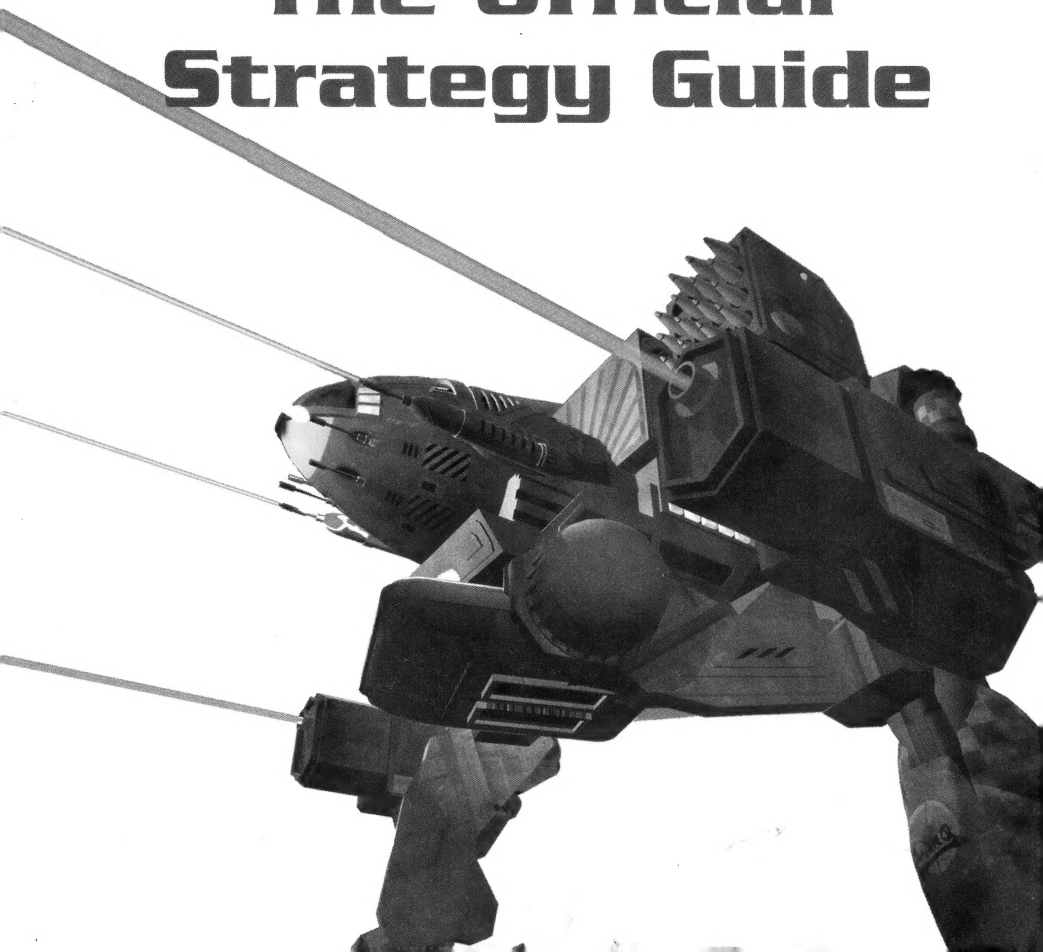
MECHWARRIOR® 2:

The Official Strategy Guide



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Foreword

Not to mangle the cliché too much, but what a longer-than-expected and intriguingly strange trip its been. *MechWarrior 2* is finally here (as you undoubtedly know since you're reading this book.) Has it been worth the wait? We certainly think so, and hope you will too.

For BattleTech, it's another step on what remains a very long and strange road. Back when Ross Babcock and I created BattleTech as a seat-of-the-pants kick-the-crap-out-of-each-other table-top game over a decade ago, we'd always hoped to see the game in all its glory on different media. That's not to say that there isn't more to BattleTech or *MechWarrior 2* than moving and shooting. Far from it. In addition to a keen eye, BattleTech is a game of planning and management. Ammunition has to be tracked, heat has to be managed, and above all tactics have to be employed expertly in order to defeat your foe quickly and efficiently. Shoot and think, those are keys to BattleTech.

Now, with home computer games like *MechWarrior 2*, virtual reality centers like Virtual World, the classic board game, the animated televisions show, the novels, and eventually even a movie, you can experience BattleTech however you like whenever you like. BattleTech on demand, as some would say.

But right now *MechWarrior 2* for the PC-CD ROM is your media of choice. If you've already played you know (and if you haven't you're soon to find out) that MechWarrior 2 maintains that same a seat-of-the-pants kick-the-crap-out-of-each-other feel that we've always wanted for BattleTech, and clearly illustrates the resource (ammunition and heat) management that's the heart of the game. Sure, some things have changed between the board game and the computer screen, but those changes were needed for a real-time, first-person rendition of the game: different media, different set of requirements for fun. (Imagine a first-person point-of-view game that was a strict translation of the turn-based BattleTech board game. We're talking truck-loads of fun.)

And though *MechWarrior 2* is a great time solo, where it's going to shine is in network play. The game ships with a demo version of the network software that allows multiple 'Mechs to fight within the same battle. As good as the computer artificial intelligence is for the 'Mechs, nothing compares to good old human gray matter, and nothing will for a very long time. Set it up via modem or across a local area network and suddenly everything you think you know about tactics in the game goes right out the window. Your opponent thinks as fast as you do, reacts as fast as you do, and wants to kick butt as badly as you do. And regardless of whether you're running on a pushed-to-the-extreme 486/DX75 or state-of-the-art virtual reality hardware, it's that multiplayer aspect, the human-versus-human interaction, that's the key.

That's not to say that playing *MechWarrior 2* against the computer is any less fun. Far from it. You may be playing against and with the computer artificial intelligence, but in a very real sense you're playing with and against every person at Activision who contributed effort and time to this project as well as every person at FASA Corporation and elsewhere who over the years helped build BattleTech into what it is today. So when a mix of Timber Wolves and Summoners is closing in on you, your ammo's low and your heat's up, and you've just spotted a Dire Wolf cresting the hill flanked by a Star of Elementals, you're not out there alone. Well, on second thought, I guess you are. Good Luck!

Jordan Weisman
Chicago, August 1995

Acknowledgments

Thanks to...

Brian, for putting this book together so quickly even when all the pieces didn't quite seem to fit.

My parents, for helping me out when I was trying to move, finish this book, and get my car fixed all at the same time.

Susan, for being patient while I spent most of the summer in front of a computer screen.

Dan, for helping out despite being the worst MechWarrior in the whole wide world.

The Evolution of *MechWarrior 2*

One summer evening several years ago I got my first taste of Battletech, the miniatures game that was the inspiration for *MechWarrior 2*. I had never played the game before and didn't know the rules, so as a handicap I was given a very powerful BattleMech called a Warhammer IIC, while the other two players got smaller units.

My 'Mech would face off on an abstract game board against two principal opponents, each of whom controlled two small 'Mechs, I learned in a brief description of the game. One of these mechanized warriors was the Locust, at a mere 20 tons more of a scout than a fighter. Another, the Hunchback, was a medium-sized 'Mech. Its dreaded AC-20 autocannon could deliver 20 points worth of damage—enough to destroy the smaller 'Mechs or cripple the larger ones.

With a roll of the dice the game began. The Locust sprinted off into the distance, probably to harass the third player's 'Mechs. It disappeared behind the game's

level-three terrain that signified a large hill, well outside of my Warhammer IIC's view. I decided to concentrate on the Hunchback, which stood vigil just outside the effective range of my twin Particle Projection Cannons (PPCs). Despite its AC-20, the 'Mech was smaller than mine and should have been easy prey.

I marched forward at a leisurely pace. I knew that my PPCs would generate tremendous heat inside my 'Mech when fired, and any additional activity would only increase the risk of an automatic shutdown or even a thermal explosion. Besides, running would only decrease my chances of hitting the Hunchback. Remarkably enough, the Hunchback did not flee or even adjust its position; it simply waited there, as if it knew something I didn't. I continued to advance, firing a few ineffectual PPC blasts.

Dead ahead lay on the conceptual game board lay a small lake. It was mostly shallow water, but it held a couple of deep spots where my 'Mech could completely immerse itself to cool off. I plunged in, knowing that if I waded in waist-deep I could fire my PPCs with reckless abandon while the water kept me from overheating. In response, the Hunchback began to run forward—unusual behavior, I thought. Runnning was a good evasive action, but I had expected it to scurry away from the inevitable PPC barrage, not toward it.

Once comfortably in the water I began to fire. One or two PPC shots hit the advancing Hunchback, scoring its armor but not damaging its vital internal components. Curiously, the Hunchback pasued at the water's edge instead of plunging in as I'd expected it to. The player who controlled it announced his next toss of the dice would detemine whether a blast from the Hunchback's powerful AC-20 would hit or miss me. The dice were cast: a hit! Now my opponent's next roll would determine the location. Instead of the usual two dice, however, he only picked up one.

"Umm, why exactly are you rolling only one die?" I asked.

"Because you're in the water, and only the upper half of your 'Mech can be hit."

"Hold on. You're saying that only a couple areas of my 'Mech can be hit while I'm in shallow water?"

"Yep."

"Would one of those areas be the head?"

"Yep."

"Nobody told me this before we started."

"Oh, well." With a shrug, he rolled the dice. "Head shot."

The AC-20 struck my Warhammer IIC's head with full force. I could imagine the blow ripping the cockpit off and killing the pilot, and then my beautiful 'Mech sinking beneath the choppy waves to be seen no more.

I'm surprised I didn't end my Battletech career right then and there—but instead I was hooked. Battletech is an exciting and challenging game that requires strategy, forethought, and a good dose of luck. I continued to play the board game, and am glad to say that in later battles I triumphed spectacularly.

About This Book

MechWarrior 2 is an extension into cyberspace of the Battletech miniatures universe. *MechWarrior 2*'s digital environment is very different from that of the original, but it retains many of Battletech's distinctive characteristics. Like the miniatures game, *MechWarrior 2* has its share of surprises. And like Battletech, *MechWarrior 2* lets you test many different strategies, which is one reason why it's so much fun to play. In the following pages you'll learn how to avoid the game's pitfalls, understand its quirks, exploit your enemy's weaknesses, and much more.

This book is a strategy guide and a companion to *MechWarrior 2.* It isn't meant to be all-inclusive; no book on the subject can be, and anyway, no self-respecting MechWarrior would rely on textbook learning over his own experience and expertise. Still, it offers scores of invaluable hints, tactics, and strategies that will make your sojourn through the Inner Sphere easier, more interesting, and more entertaining.

Part I explains the basics of 'Mech navigation and control—techniques such as running about, using jump jets, and mastering the 'Mechs' informational displays and fighting capabilities.

Part II is an introduction to combat. Besides strategies for different missions and opponents, you'll also learn the best ways to use your computer-controlled allies.

In Part III you'll find a complete discussion of each 'Mech type, including vital statistics, strengths and weaknesses, and peculiarities of design.

Part IV deals with the modification of 'Mechs, whether you're planning on completely rebuilding a 'Mech or just substituting one weapon for another.

Part V will help you through *MechWarrior 2*'s two distinct career paths. Each mission of the Jade Falcon and Wolf clans is listed here, along with vital statistics and hints for completing the mission successfully.

Finally, Part VI discusses the free-form battles of the Trials of Grievance, convened to resolve conflicts among MechWarriors or invoked simply out of envy of a rival's performance or rank within the Clan.

Tip: You'll also find Notes, Tips, and Cautions provided throughout the book—like this one: Part VI also divulges *MechWarrior 2*'s cheat codes and secret options.

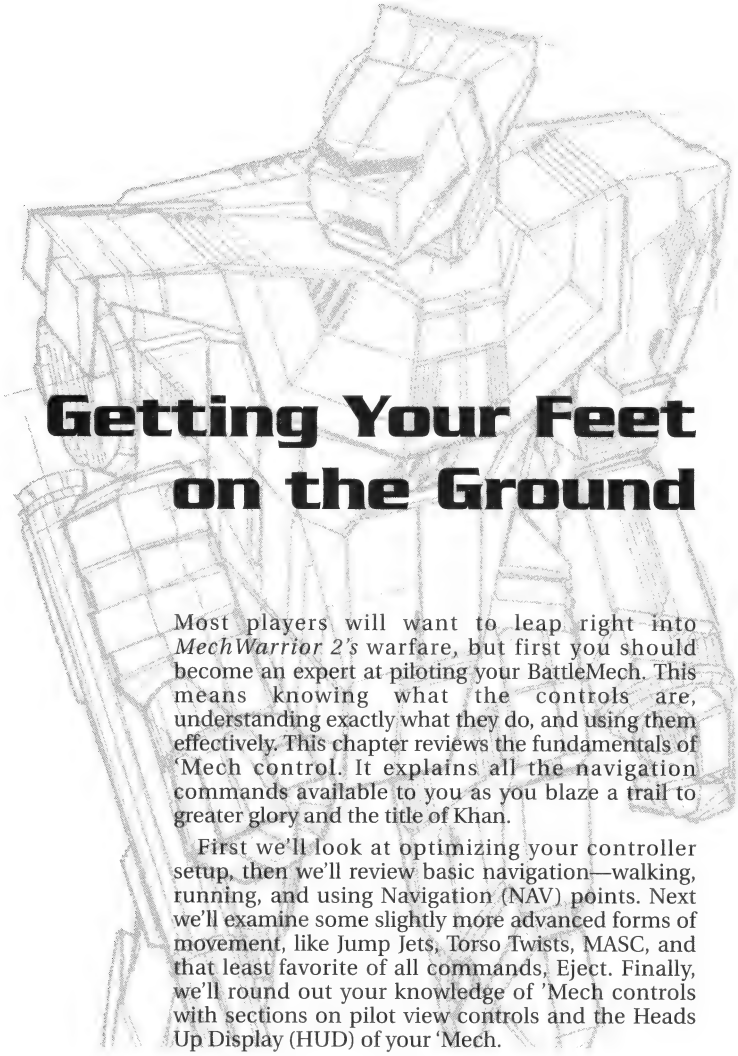
Let's get on with it, then. The Clans can be unforgiving masters, and you'll need all the help you can get.

Throughout this book we'll also follow the 31st century exploits of Gregor Pyre, one of the most unusual MechWarriors ever to have flourished in the harsh environment of the Clans. He is said to have had at least 10 'Mechs shot out from under him because of his faulty grasp of tactics and utter lack of fear, but his remarkable dexterity, unusual techniques, and extraordinary luck have always saved him from dishonor. He somehow manages to win battles, especially Trials, when it is most crucial.

Gregor's unique career demonstrates the most common mistakes—and the most remarkable maneuvers—that you can anticipate in your own career as a MechWarrior. If you learn from his blunders and emulate his successes (even the most unusual ones), you'll find your quest for the title of Khan proceeds much more smoothly.

PART I

Navigation and Pilot Controls



Getting Your Feet on the Ground

Most players will want to leap right into *MechWarrior 2's* warfare, but first you should become an expert at piloting your BattleMech. This means knowing what the controls are, understanding exactly what they do, and using them effectively. This chapter reviews the fundamentals of 'Mech control. It explains all the navigation commands available to you as you blaze a trail to greater glory and the title of Khan.

First we'll look at optimizing your controller setup, then we'll review basic navigation—walking, running, and using Navigation (NAV) points. Next we'll examine some slightly more advanced forms of movement, like Jump Jets, Torso Twists, MASC, and that least favorite of all commands, Eject. Finally, we'll round out your knowledge of 'Mech controls with sections on pilot view controls and the Heads Up Display (HUD) of your 'Mech.

Each section of this chapter contains hints and observations, not just bare-bones descriptions of 'Mech commands. Even if you have a good handle on the basics of piloting, then, you still might want to scan these pages for new insights.

Optimizing Controls

MechWarrior 2 is a game of fast-paced combat. Unlike purely strategic simulations, it requires you to react quickly in a real-time environment. Also, unlike pure action games, you'll need more commands than will fit on the average joystick; you can't get too far in *MechWarrior 2* with just a throttle and a Shoot button. Therefore, your first challenge is twofold: First you must figure out which commands are most critical during battle. Then you must find a game controller that can handle most of those important functions. Otherwise, you'll always be hunting for the keyboard in the middle of combat—and that can be both bothersome and deadly.

Isolating the Critical Commands

There are several critical commands in *MechWarrior 2*, but not all of them require constant use. Many commands initiate events that only occur once in a game. For example, you can only eject once during a mission, so even though bailing out can save your life, you shouldn't remap your joystick so that Eject is one of the primary buttons. Other commands, like toggling your NAV points, are used more frequently but aren't needed in combat.

Tip: As a rule, vital combat commands are the ones you'll have to execute fastest, so they're the ones that should be assigned to your primary game controller.

You can remap just about every command in the game, so once you've found the most important commands, you'll want to assign them to the most accessible buttons on your controller. Pilots can differ about which commands are most vital, but most will agree that the following commands should be placed where you can always find them in battle:

- Weapons Fire
- Weapons Advance (to fire the next next weapon in a group)
- Throttle (speed controls)
- Torso Twisting
- Jump Jets (on those 'Mechs that can accommodate them)
- Targeting

Right-click your mouse button anywhere in the menu-driven section of the game (when you're not in combat) to bring up a menu leading to the Cockpit Controls screen. From there you can select the type of controller you'll be using and reconfigure the buttons to optimize your combat capabilities.

On joystick controllers, at a bare minimum you should have a Fire button, a Targeting button, and a Weapons Advance button. Obviously, this means that two-button joysticks aren't very useful in *MechWarrior 2*.

Figure 1-1 The Cockpit Controls screen displays possible modifications.

Choosing a Controller

There are many controllers available to the aspiring MechWarrior. Most are useful but several are not. Probably the least useful controllers are two-button joysticks, which limit you to performing just one other function as you steer your 'Mech and fire. This is not overly helpful, because it forces you to perform several critical functions with the keyboard. Still, some pilots will undoubtedly prefer to use a two-button joystick rather than no joystick at all, simply because the feel is more appropriate than that of the keyboard.

Speaking of the keyboard, it's not a half-bad controller by itself. Of course, the arrow keys and space bar are poor approximations of a 'Mech's controls, and the keyboard doesn't allow the variable-speed turns that an analog joystick provides. Still, the keyboard has several assets: It's available to everyone, it's easily reconfigured in the Cockpit Controls screen, and (perhaps most important) all the controls you'll ever need are right there in front of you. Even if they are a little awkward, there's no need to look to another controller.

The mouse is not too useful when playing *MechWarrior 2*. Most pilots agree that it's just not suited to a simulation of this sort. However, some pilots (especially those with two-button joysticks) like to use the mouse because it's a source of extra buttons—large and easily accessible extra buttons.

A four-button joystick like ThrustMaster's Pro Flight Control System is a better bet, giving you a couple of extra options with your joystick and a coolie hat (a four-directional switch) to let your pilot glance in different directions or swivel your 'Mech's torso. The keyboard is still necessary, but it's less obtrusive in the heat of battle.

If you have the money, a full-featured weapons control system like ThrustMaster's Weapons Control System Mark II or Advanced Gravis's Phoenix can handle just about every command you could ever want. Refer to the *MechWarrior 2* documentation for details on loading the default setups for these weapons control systems.

The Bottom Line on Controllers and Controller Setups

It really doesn't matter which controllers you use or how you configure your buttons, just so long as you're comfortable with the controls and can access them quickly. If you can execute every combat maneuver you need without having to stop and search frantically for the correct button, your current configuration should work just fine.

The Basics of Navigation

MechWarrior combat is interesting for many reasons, not the least of which is movement. If your BattleMechs didn't move at all—if they functioned as stationary gun emplacements instead of walking or running units—the game would be quite boring. Just imagine it: two huge 'Mechs completely rooted to the ground. The winner of every fight would be the heavier 'Mech, the one with the most weapons and armor.

The destructive force you can marshal against your enemy isn't the only measure of success in *MechWarrior 2*. Movement is absolutely critical as well, and a pilot who ignores that is doomed when he reaches a genuinely difficult mission.

Walking and Running

Most 'Mechs don't have jump capability, so they're limited to ground-based maneuvers, like those of the Firemoth in Figure 1-2. Any tactician will tell you, though, that that's where wars are won or lost—on the ground. The following movements are available to all ground-based 'Mechs. You may customize your controls from the from the default keystrokes listed, but the essential commands will be the same.

Figure 1-2 A Firemoth on the run.

1 through 0, +, -

The keys 1 though 0 control your 'Mech's throttle speed: 1 puts your 'Mech at a full stop, while 0 makes it run its fastest. 5 is the middle of the road, an easy cruising speed.

Another way to change speed is to use + to increase throttle, - to decrease it. I highly recommend ignoring these keys and using 1

through 0 instead. They're quick, easy, and you always know exactly what speed you're selecting. With + and -, you always have to check your speed indicator.

You should get used to running as fast as you can in most battles. Stationary targets are extremely vulnerable, and unless you're in a city or other environment that provides ample cover, you'll find that standing still only gives your enemies a better chance to shoot you. If you try to turn when your 'Mech is stationary, it will automatically throttle up.

Backspace

This key toggles you into reverse and back out again. If you're running forward at full speed, hitting Backspace puts you in full reverse. This is good when you want to get a little distance between you and your opponent but maintain a weapons lock.

←, →, ↑, and ↓

The default way to turn your 'Mech is by using the arrow keys, although most pilots prefer a joystick. Always remember that your speed directly affects your turning radius: A small, fast 'Mech can hardly turn at all when it's running at full speed. Many pilots like to slow down (to speed 2 or 3, usually) while turning, then speed up again once they're lined up in the desired direction.

NAV Points

Each mission has several preprogrammed Navigation (NAV) points. They're invaluable because they let you get where you need to go without fiddling around with maps, compasses, or any calculations whatsoever. N and A are the default keys that toggle the NAV points.

N

Pressing N toggles through the available NAV points. Each point represents an important location in your mission. A selected NAV point appears in your targeting camera; it will disappear from the screen if you target another object such as an enemy 'Mech.

If you have selected a NAV point that isn't visible on-screen, a red arrow will appear along the edge of your HUD (Heads-Up Display, the computer image overlaid on your view of the world), indicating which way to turn to get it on-screen.

The NAV point itself appears on your HUD as an amber dot, while the point's name appears at the bottom left-hand corner. If you've been to that point already, the color of the text will darken.

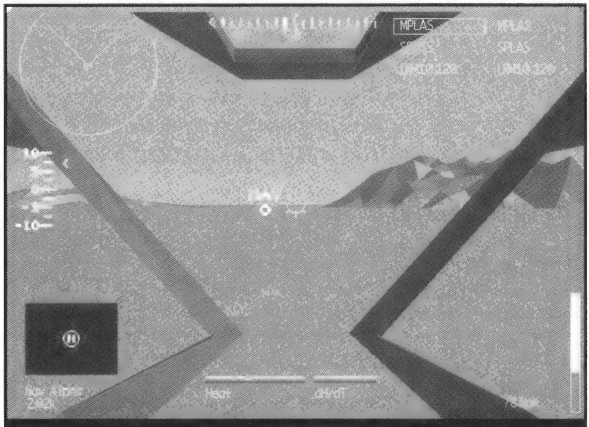


Figure 1-3 Selected NAV points are displayed on the HUD.

NAV points can be deceptive. They appear on your HUD at their precise altitude and direction, and sometimes it seems that they're right in front of you when in fact they're hidden behind a hill or building. Look at the distance gauge beneath the NAV point's name for a better idea of exactly where that NAV point is.

Finally, don't get so caught up with pinpointing NAV points that you forget to check your targeting computer for enemies. It's good policy to cycle through the NAV points, line up with the one you want, and start toward it, then cycle through your other targets as you proceed. Don't just leave the NAV point up on the HUD during your whole trip—there's sure to be trouble along the way, and you'd best be ready for it.

[A]

This engages the Autopilot if you have a NAV point selected. The Autopilot can guide you directly toward the current NAV point while steering you around obstacles. Still, you should seldom if ever use Autopilot because it can give you a false sense of security. If you do use it, be sure to scan the radar screen and Satellite Uplink dutifully. Autopilot is best activated when you're reasonably sure you've cleaned out all the enemies on a mission and you just have to get back to the dustoff point where you'll be picked up at mission's end—but even then, be careful.

MechDate 02.05.3055

Gregor Pyre sat back in the Nova's cockpit chair and smiled. His primary and secondary missions had been completed and the horizon was clear, so he punched in NAV point Epsilon and activated the Autopilot.

It had been a particularly difficult mission: A trio of Firemoths had harassed him all the way to the chemical depot, scarring his Nova with laser fire while he stalwartly blew the target to bits. Now the 'Moths had fled, and the dustoff point was in sight.

The sudden chime of the missile-warning system broke his reverie. What was this? He punched up the rear camera on the HUD just in time to see a deadly flight of Long-Range Missiles slamming into the weakened back armor of the Nova. The cockpit burst open and the eject mechanism blasted him skyward; the world spun and twisted around him while the smell of ozone and hot metal assailed him.

As he floated above the wreckage like some wayward battle spirit, Gregor decided he didn't like the Autopilot any more.

Advanced Piloting Controls

Well, okay, they're not too advanced, but these commands will take your ground-based 'Mechs beyond the basics of walking and running. They are extremely useful, so don't ignore them as you go sprinting off into the sunset looking for enemy 'Mechs to maim.

Jump Jets

Jump Jets allow some pretty smooth moves, as well as a highly risky combat maneuver called Death from Above (see below). The following jet commands can help you evade enemy fire and get into a better fighting position.

Ins, Pg Up, Home, End

These keys will blast your 'Mech left, right, forward, or backward, respectively. You don't get much altitude from these maneuvers but your speed increases immensely, approaching 370 kph in some 'Mechs. You'll rarely run faster than 170 kph without them.

The forward and backward acceleration of Home and End is great for getting into and out of combat quickly, and even for Death from Above (if you manage to land on your enemy's head). The lateral jumps, Ins to the left and Pg Up to the right, provide an excellent way to dodge incoming missiles without changing your heading. If you've got Jump Jets, use them! You'll avoid a lot of excess damage.

Pg Dn, Del

These keys will lift you a few meters from the ground and rapidly spin you clockwise (Pg Dn) or counterclockwise (Del). This is often a handy maneuver when your 'Mech is big and slow, or when you've been running and you don't want to slow down to make a sharp turn. It's a good example of how even the heaviest BattleMechs can make good use of Jump Jets.

J

The J key blasts you skyward. If you're running when you press this key, you'll continue moving forward. If you're stationary, you'll just fly straight up and land where you began. This sort of jump is best for leaping over those pesky mountains and buildings so you can get a clear shot with your Long-Range Missiles (LRMs).

Death from Above (DFA)

A note on Death from Above is probably in order here. In essence, Death from Above is akin to the art of kamikaze: you jet into the air and land on the enemy 'Mech's head, damaging your 'Mech's legs in the process but, if you're lucky, destroying the enemy. This maneuver is best used with the down-view camera (discussed later in this chapter) in effect so that you can see what you're aiming for. It's also nearly impossible against small, agile 'Mechs.

Caution: Explosions in MechWarrior 2 damage everything in their radius, so you risk additional damage to your 'Mech if you perpetrate DFA and cause an ammo explosion.

Despite its drawbacks, I suggest you at least attempt DFA in a Trial of Grievance some time. It's not the most efficient way to win a fight, but it's certainly one of the most entertaining.

Torso Twists

Torso twisting is the ability to walk in one direction and aim your 'Mech's torso (and weapons) in another (see Figure 1-5). 'Mechs can torso-twist up to 90 degrees, so they can fight with an enemy squarely on their flank without changing direction. This might sound frivolous, but it is actually quite useful for all 'Mechs, and absolutely essential for the smallest and fastest. Note that the Nova cannot torso-twist.

Figure 1-4 A Nova demonstrates the heights you can reach by typing J.

M.D.03.15.3055

Gregor's Nova was in dreadful shape. He had been toying with the Firemoth for almost five minutes, leaping about with his Jump Jets in hopes of executing the legendary Death from Above maneuver. He was unable to connect with the tiny 'Mech, however, and finally realized his efforts were hopeless. The enemy 'Mech was just too fast; he would need incredible luck to hit it.

A pair of Stormcrows appeared on the edge of his radar screen. It was time to leave, no two ways about it. He set his sights on the dustoff point and keyed up a forward blast of the jets. But instead of the 370 kph ride home he'd expected, the jets emitted a tiny burst and then gave out, depleted from his earlier antics.

The Nova blasted forward a half kilometer, then came crashing earthward. As if by some insane deity's intervention, the Firemoth happened to sprint underfoot just as Gregor neared the ground. A crash and the sound of twisting metal gave way to the dull roar of ammo explosions as the Firemoth erupted into a roiling fireball. Shaken, Gregor evaluated the damage to his 'Mech and started to limp back toward the dustoff site. He never attempted DFA again.

Figure 1-5 A human contortionist might envy this Timber Wolf's Torso Twist.

[and]

These two keys initiate torso twisting, [to the left and] to the right. Initial attempts at torso twisting will probably confuse you; instead of using these two keys to fine-tune your shots, you'll tend to ignore torso twists and turn your whole 'Mech instead. Practice them in the Clan training areas and you'll learn to differentiate between the direction you're walking and the direction you're actually facing.

/ and M

The / key snaps your 'Mech's torso back to face the same direction its legs are moving. The M key is often more useful, swiveling the legs to meet the torso direction. That way, if you see a small 'Mech that you'd really like to close in on and pound, you can change direction and approach it without losing your targeting lock.

MASC

MASC stands for Myomer Accelerator Signal Circuitry. Translation: Press the button and you run real fast. Which button, you say? This one: V.

Only the Firemoth has MASC in its primary configuration, but hey, you can throw it onto any 'Mechs you want while you're customizing them. MASC only adds about a 20 percent speed increase, and it comes with a built-in risk of leg actuator failure, which causes a serious loss of speed. For this reason you're probably better off with Jump Jets. But sometimes you just want a temporary burst of speed, and in these cases MASC can prove beneficial.

Eject and Self-Destruct

You have a good deal of control over when you eject from your 'Mech and when your 'Mech blows up. Of course, so do your enemies . . .

Ctrl-Alt-E

By pressing Ctrl-Alt-E you eject from your 'Mech and you're treated to a delightful aerial view of the battlefield. Of course, you also fail your mission, but there's a trade-off for everything.

Pilot View Controls

You can modify your viewpoint in a variety of ways, from changing your in-cockpit view with tools like Enhanced Imaging to changing your perspective entirely with the External Camera. *MechWarrior 2* features a variety of environments, light levels, and battlefield conditions that make all these tools useful at one time or another. Don't hesitate to use these controls when your view is less than optimum.

In-Cockpit Viewpoint Alterations

There are several ways to get a different look at the world outside without resorting to alternate perspectives or fancy technology. These methods are scorned by some pilots but embraced by others; after playing a few missions you'll get a good idea of which viewpoint alterations work best for you.

Glances: 7, 9

These keys (on the numeric keypad, not the standard keyboard) let you cast a quick glance to the left and right, respectively. Figure 1-6 shows a leftward glance executed with the 7 key. Many pilots prefer to use this sort of visual confirmation when dealing with opponents on their flank. Others scorn this method, instead relying on their radar and the visual cues on their HUD to locate enemy 'Mechs. Use these keys if the visual-confirmation method works best for you.

Zooming: Z, Shift-Z, Ctrl-Z

Z zooms your perspective out a bit every time you press it, while Shift-Z zooms you back in. Ctrl-Z resets the zoom to default (no zoom). The overall effect of zooming is to magnify the world outside and make you feel as if you're occupying a space somewhat ahead of your actual 'Mech. The benefits of this are obvious, especially in long-range battles. Most pilots would do well to zoom out a notch before their battles and leave the settings just like that through the entire mission—the extra visibility can really help.

Figure 1-6 Tap 7 on the numeric keypad for a glance to the left.

However, zooming out too far can cause a sense of dislocation when combat gets close. You start to misjudge the position of enemy 'Mechs and can even overlook those that are very close. Therefore, zoom is a function that should be used only in moderation.

Light Amplification: L

The L key turns on low-light amplification, shown in Figure 1-7. This makes the world look green, and it's really quite useless unless it's dusk or nighttime. 'Mechs stand out quite well in the dark when you're using

this feature, so don't hesitate to press [L] when things get gloomy. However, when it's daylight and conditions are hazy or cloudy, you're much better off using Enhanced Imaging.

Figure 1-7 Light Amplification is best reserved for dusk and darkness.

Enhanced Imaging: [W]

Enhanced Imaging, toggled with the [W] key, makes *MechWarrior 2* look like Battlezone, an ancient coin-operated game of tank warfare. Battlezone rendered tanks (and the landscape, and everything else) with unfilled wire-frame graphics. The disadvantage of these graphics was that the lack of filled polygons made it seem like you were looking through everything; indeed, if a tank got so close to your face that you lost sight of its edges, you might not realize that there was anything in front of you at all. On the plus side, though, the wire-frame graphics were crisp as could be, and the edges of objects were always crystal clear.

Enhanced Imaging is a little better than those Battlezone graphics, and the wires are colored so that objects don't blend into one another at all. The result, as seen in Figure 1-8, is perfectly crisp and it makes enemy 'Mechs easy to target, so you should use it any time that viewing conditions are less than optimal. It's just a question of resigning yourself to those Battlezone graphics instead of the attractive, texture-mapped surfaces you've come to expect from *MechWarrior 2*.

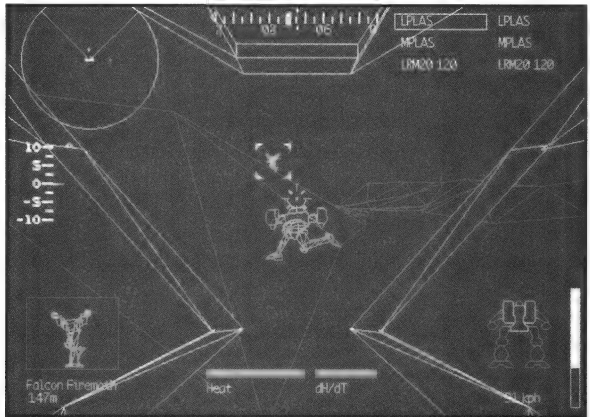


Figure 1-8 Enhanced Imaging

Internal Cameras: F4, F7, F8, F9, F10

With the exception of F10, these commands don't alter the basic view from inside your 'Mech. Instead, they open up a little window on your HUD and let you see a miniature view from various angles. We'll discuss these here instead of later, in our discussion of other HUD systems, because they affect the way the pilot views the world just as much as Enhanced Imaging or any other viewpoint manipulations do.

The targeting camera toggle F4 changes your view of the targeted object or 'Mech—you can see a wire-frame representation of your target or a fully texture-mapped one. The texture-mapped view may look better, but it's much less informative. The wire-frame view lets you see exactly which parts of the 'Mech are damaged, helping you choose your shots more carefully.

The rear view F7 is the BattleMech equivalent of the rearview mirror. Its usefulness is limited. Engage it primarily when you're running away from a conflict and you want to dodge missile fire that might scathe your back armor.

The down view F8 is useful when you're trying Death from Above, but otherwise should be ignored.

The weapon view F9 on your pilot view controls follows a just-fired projectile to its destination. This can be cool when you've just emptied two LRMs on a hapless Firemoth and you want to see the

explosion up close. It's not of great tactical use, however, since you can just look at your targeting camera instead to see what effect those missiles had.

The full-screen weapon camera F10 essentially offers the weapon view, but it takes up the whole screen. It's even more fun to watch, but even less useful in actual combat, than F9.

Figure 1-9 The full-screen weapon view is eye-catching but impractical.

External Camera: C, Ctrl-←, →, ↑ and ↓

By pressing C, you toggle your viewpoint from the standard view from the cockpit to one outside your 'Mech, as Figure 1-10 shows. This is not terribly realistic and, frankly, not too useful in most situations. When you're in combat you really need to be inside the 'Mech to use its targeting systems, and when you're navigating you're better off inside the 'Mech or looking at the Satellite Uplink (see next entry). Still, the external view is fun to play around with, and it's occasionally useful when you're navigating though a patch of rocks, closely placed buildings, or other obstacles. In those cases it can be helpful to look at the 'Mech from a short distance back so you can work your way through.

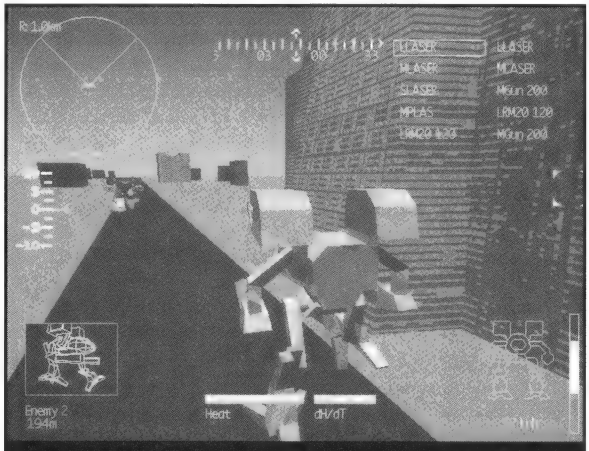


Figure 1-10 The external camera seems like an out-of-body experience.

Swiveling the external camera with Ctrl-←, →, ↑ and ↓ is of even less use. The behind-the-'Mech view you start out with is the only one that matters for navigation, and if you really want to see what's to your sides or behind you, you're better off glancing left or right from within the cockpit, using the back-view camera, or just glancing at your radar screen.

Satellite Uplink: F3, X, Shift-X

The Satellite Uplink, toggled on and off with F3, shows you a perfectly accurate, up-to-the-second overhead view of your surroundings as depicted in Figure 1-11. X and Shift-X can zoom you in and out, but this view is actually most useful in its default setting, the one farthest back. With this you can scan the surroundings for enemies, look at the local topography, or just cruise along from an elevated perspective as you go from one NAV point to the next.

Use the Satellite Uplink a lot when you're in rough terrain. It's great for picking out the exact location of targeted foes, so you can see whether they're just over the next hill or protected by two or more ridges.

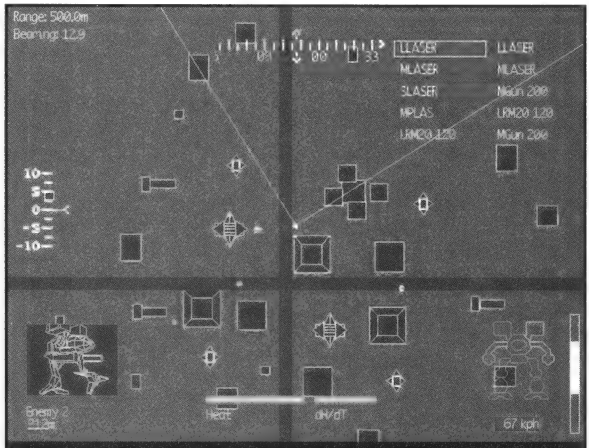


Figure 1-11 Satellite Uplink provides an overhead view.

HUD Displays

While not technically a navigation tool, your HUD is certainly an important part of what you see in *MechWarrior 2* (see Figure 1-12). It affects your piloting in many ways, some obvious, some subtle. If you don't believe me, you can toggle off the HUD by pressing F11 and you'll soon realize how much harder the game has become. Understanding the displays featured on your HUD is absolutely vital. We've already touched on the different camera views, including the all-important targeting camera, all of which are a part of the HUD. Here are some other important HUD functions.

Passive Displays

These are the displays that you don't have any control over unless you turn off the HUD entirely. They are generally easy to understand and often useful.

Heading Indicator

This shows your 'Mech's heading in degrees. A green bar above this display indicates your angle of torso twist, and red arrows indicate the direction of a targeted object that is currently off-screen.

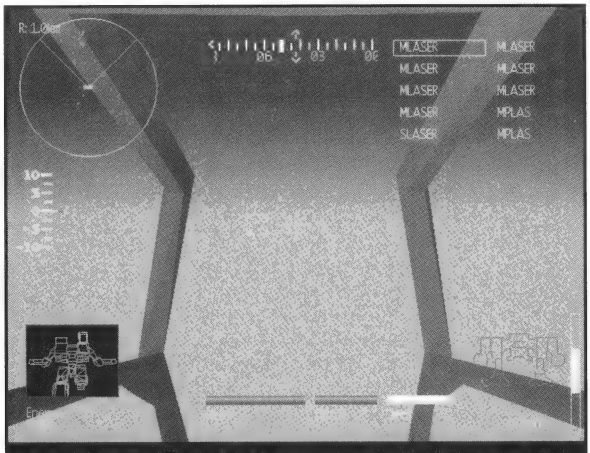


Figure 1-12 The HUD elements are graphically displayed in this screen shot.

Weapons Display

This is a list of all weapons on board your 'Mech. The currently selected weapon is outlined in green; all inoperative weapons are shown in red. The color of the weapon name also indicates which weapons group it belongs to. Default is group 1 (green), but you can also select group 2 (white) or 3 (yellow). I'll provide more information on grouping weapons in Chapter 2.

Altimeter

This vertical yardstick shows your 'Mech's elevation in meters. Several colored ticks indicate the level of various objects: The yellow tick represents sea level, the blue tick shows current ground level beneath your 'Mech, and a red tick shows the level of targeted objects. I rarely use the altimeter. Its only real use is when you're performing Death from Above.

Throttle Indicator

This bar shows approximate 'Mech speed, and a numerical readout to the left shows your exact speed. The bar is more useful in combat, while the numerical readout is better for gauging the speed-boosting effects of MASC and Jump Jets. The bar is green when it indicates forward movement, blue for reverse movement.

Targeting Reticule and Brackets

The targeting reticule is circular, while the targeting bracket is, well, bracket shaped. The reticule is always at the center of your screen, and it shows exactly where your weapons will go when you fire them. The reticule is green when your current weapon is ready to fire; yellow when your current weapon is recharging; and red when your target is ready, within range of your current weapon, and more or less in your sights. With homing weapons, the reticule glows red when they're locked on their target.

The targeting bracket appears around the object you have targeted, and indicates its relation to you. Green brackets frame friendly objects; blue brackets signify neutral objects, and red ones denote enemy objects.

Heat Tracking Indicator

The leftmost bar shows how much heat you've built up, while the small bar to the right shows your current rate of heat change. You should mainly pay attention to the left bar. When it's blue you're in great shape; yellow means you're in decent shape; and red means you need to lay off the energy weapons or you'll shut down real soon.

Jump Thrust Indicator

When you have Jump Jets on your 'Mech, this display appears to show you how much jump power you've got left. Your jump energy slowly recharges over time.

M.D.03.27.3055

Gregor keyed the radar to full screen just as a Jade Falcon Summoner crested a nearby hill. Suddenly he was assaulted by a hundred blips of color—blue, red, and green. He spun to face the Summoner, then frowned. Was that his targeting reticule or a radar blip? Hard to say . . .

A Long-Range Missile salvo crushed his right torso armor. Growling in frustration, Gregor flipped the radar back to partial screen and engaged full throttle. Some pilots swore by the full-screen radar, but Gregor decided it just wasn't for him.

Radar

The radar display offers only two options: You can toggle F2 to switch from the small default display to one covering your whole HUD.

Your 'Mech is always at the center of the display, with a large green *V* representing your current angle of view. Radar shows friendly objects as green, neutral objects as blue, and enemy objects as red. NAV points appear as yellow dots.

Zooming with [X] and [Shift]-[X] can increase or decrease the level of magnification. It's generally best to be zoomed out a good distance, otherwise the radar won't tell you anything you couldn't figure out by just looking around.

Systems Status

The Systems Status menu is an alternate way of accessing some of your 'Mech's options. Press [U] to get this menu:

Low-Light Amplification	On/Off
Enhanced Imaging	On/Off
Heads-Up Display	On/Off
Pilot Auto-Ejection	On/Off

MultiFunction Display

The MultiFunction display is found on the bottom right-hand corner of your HUD, and shows the following sorts of information. Most of it is not terribly helpful; you'll probably do best to leave it on the wire-frame damage display all the time.

Wire-Frame Damage Display

This is the default setting of the MultiFunction display, and it's generally the most useful. It shows a wire-frame schematic of your 'Mech, representing damage levels by different colors. A blue section of your 'Mech is virtually untouched, while a yellow section has been somewhat damaged. Red indicates severe damage, and a black area has been destroyed (an arm may have been shot off entirely, for example).

Camera Views

We covered camera views a little earlier in this chapter. When you select a camera view it appears in the MultiFunction Display area.

HTAL (Head Torso Arm Leg) Display

This shows you essentially the same information as the wire-frame display. Instead of a picture, though, each vital 'Mech area is represented as a letter with a bar next to it, the bar representing how much armor is left on that part of the 'Mech. There are separate bars for front and back armor, so this display is a little more detailed than the wire-frame representation. However, in the heat of battle most

pilots don't have time to look at little graphs—they'd prefer to just glance at a picture and get a general idea of the situation. If you're capable of making sense of the HTAL display in combat, however, you should use it.

Briefing Summary

This extremely useful little display, toggled on and off with F12, shows you the primary, secondary, and tertiary objectives of your mission and the current status of those objectives. It also shows you how much time remains for you to complete the mission.

Practice, Practice, Practice

Navigating a 'Mech isn't the easiest thing in the world, so give yourself some time to practice. You'll find that the ease with which you control your 'Mech has a direct impact on your success in battle. Play training missions, like the one in Figure 1-13, in the Jade Falcon or Wolf Clan areas to improve your navigating skills.

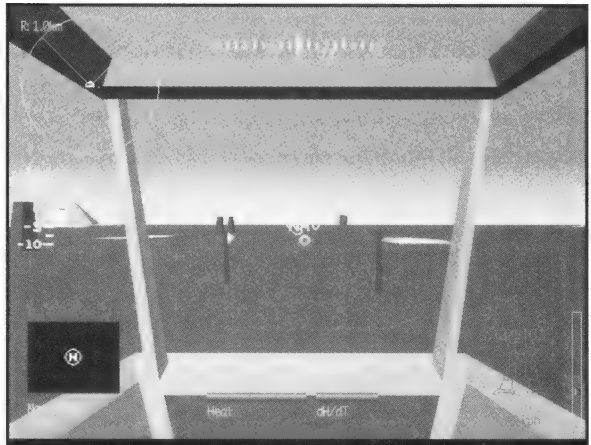


Figure 1-13 You can safely practice on the slalom course in your clan area.

Conclusion

Now that we've looked at the basics of 'Mech piloting, it's time to move on to everyone's favorite pastime—shooting things! A basic understanding of the weapons systems in *MechWarrior 2* is necessary in your first few missions, and a thorough understanding is vital in the later, harder missions. In Chapter 2 we'll look at weapons systems and gunnery in detail. I'll disclose information unavailable in the *MechWarrior 2* instruction guide, and I'll explain some simple but effective ways to improve your fighting skills.

CHAPTER 2

The Basics of Destruction

In Chapter 1 I said that maneuvering is a vital skill that *MechWarrior 2* players overlook too often. However, it is also true that fancy footwork alone won't help you if you cannot destroy your enemies. If you can't take out the opposing forces, you'll just be prolonging the agony by dancing around and evading their shots.

Conversely, and just as in real life, in *MechWarrior 2* your knowledge and experience can compensate for a lack of dexterity. This chapter will provide the information you'll need to defeat most of the enemies you'll encounter. Additional combat information will also appear in subsequent chapters, especially Chapters 5 and 6.

Controlling Your Weapons Systems

There are several factors involved in gunnery. Besides needing good reflexes, you have to be able

to target your enemies while leading them (taking their movements into consideration). You must also know your weapons like the back of your hand. You also have to be as familiar with your opponent's weapons as you are with your own; that way you'll know what you can and cannot evade.

Once you've mastered all this, you'll be ready to learn advanced techniques such as modifying the firing sequence of weapons systems, targeting specific locations on enemy 'Mechs, and dealing with damaged or inoperative systems.

Targeting

Your BattleMech tells you an enemy is in your sights when the targeting reticule turns red. This doesn't mean, however, that the shots you fire will necessarily hit their mark.

If you're only achieving momentary locks as your reticule sweeps back and forth across the target, there's a good chance your reticule won't be precisely on target when you pull the trigger. Move the reticule in a slow, controlled fashion and you'll achieve more stable locks.

This principle is especially important if you're firing the less guided missiles, such as long-range lasers (LRMs), or entirely unguided weapons. Initially you'll tend to swing your 'Mech around rapidly in the heat of battle, veering this way and that to see what's going on. Try to fight this habit and concentrate on making controlled turns. You'll find that a slow cursor movement will eventually catch up with the target, and when you do get a lock it will be much easier to maintain.

Tip: If you're armed with guided missiles, you can fire away when the reticule turns red. Streak short-range lasers (SRMs) are extremely tenacious and will usually hit home even if the enemy 'Mech takes evasive action after you fire. Still, be sure that you have a real lock before firing missiles, even Streak missiles.

Another way to simplify targeting is to get close to your target, as shown in Figure 2-1. This is obviously a dangerous ploy when you have a smaller 'Mech, so if you often have trouble aiming, I'd suggest choosing a heavy 'Mech and gearing up for close-quarter combat.

Finally, don't neglect the zoom option. The [Z] key will enhance your view quite a bit, providing a bigger and clearer picture of enemy 'Mechs at long or medium range. Remember, though, not to zoom out too far, or at least remember to zoom back in during close combat. Otherwise you might lose your sense of perspective, which makes it much harder to get a stable lock on your enemies.

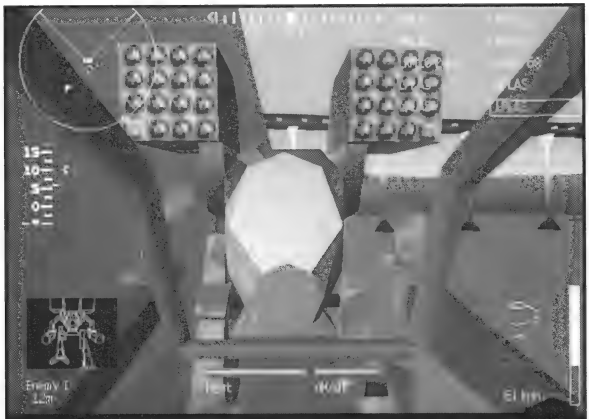


Figure 2-1 This should prove to be a very easy shot.

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After circling the Jade Falcon Mad Dog for almost five minutes, Gregor wiped the sweat from his brow. They were firing constantly but seldom hitting each other, though the smaller Mad Dog seemed to be getting the better of it. Gregor's Timber Wolf was bigger and stronger, but his timing was off today. He couldn't seem to hit a thing.

A laser blast melted the armor on the Timber Wolf's right arm, turning it yellow on his glowing wire-frame display. Enough of this! Gregor slammed the throttle forward and straightened out the 'Mech, aiming directly for the enemy pilot and apparently catching him off guard. The 'Mechs collided with a mighty, grinding crash, and Gregor began to empty his lasers into the looming form of the Mad Dog. It was easier to aim, he reflected, when the battling 'Mechs were physically connected.

Leading the Target

Unless you're using Streak short-range lasers (SRMs), a weapons lock is merely a tool, not a sure thing. Enemy 'Mechs are always in motion, and if you aim for their present location you can bet they'll have run past it by the time your ammo gets there. Therefore you'll usually have to lead your target a little.

Leading depends to a large extent on the weapons you're using. If you try to launch a long-range missile salvo at medium range, you'd better lead the target a lot because the missiles take a while to get there. On the other hand, laser weapons are quite fast and require almost no leading at all. We'll look more closely at these issues when we inspect each weapons system in detail later in this chapter.

There are several things you can do to make it easier to lead your target. Your best bets are to be familiar with your weapons and aware of your target's distance. If you know how your weapons system behaves you won't have to guess at how fast it works. And if you always note the range of your target (either by rough estimate or by checking the distance gauge under the targeting camera), you'll soon develop a good sense of how much leading is required at various distances.

It's a good idea to work with one weapons system at a time when you're practicing the art of leading your target. If you're using medium lasers and then switch to short-range missiles, your timing will be thrown off. Stick with one system until you've learned it thoroughly, then move to another.

Choose Your Weapon

Anyone familiar with BattleTech or other precursors of *MechWarrior 2* will recognize the terms used here—the rest of you will catch on soon enough. Basically, heat and damage are discussed in terms of points. For example, the particle projection cannon, which generates 15 heat points, may be too hot for some of the more sensitive 'Mechs to handle; they're better off with an small extended-range laser, with what we call its 2 heat points, or 2 heat.

Extended-Range (ER) Lasers

The extended-range laser comes in three varieties: small, medium, and large. Lasers require very little leading because their beams travel so quickly. However, there is a slight pause between the time you press the Fire key and the time the laser fires, so a little leading is often necessary.

Extended-range lasers produce slightly more heat than pulse lasers, but they weigh significantly less. ER and pulse lasers do approximately the same amount of damage, but extended-range lasers deal all damage in a single burst instead of a longer pulse. Some pilots prefer pulse lasers because the long-lasting burst gives you a slightly better chance to hit your target, but I believe that extended-range lasers are definitely superior. (You'll find more on the pulse vs. extended-range trade-off in the section on pulse lasers.)

Table 2-1 Weapons Systems Chart

Weapon Type	Heat	Damage	Range	Tonnage	Critical	Ammo
ER Laser (Lg)	12	10	1019	4	1	—
ER Laser (Med)	5	7	510	1	1	—
ER Laser (Sm)	2	5	255	0.5	1	—
ER PPC	15	15	746	6	2	—
Pulse Laser (Lg)	10	10	815	6	2	—
Pulse Laser (Med)	4	7	408	2	1	—
Pulse Laser (Sm)	2	3	204	1	1	—
Gauss Rifle	1	15	1820	12	6	8
LB 2-X AC	1	2	800	5	8	45
LB 5-X AC	1	5	700	7	4	20
LB 10-X AC	2	10	600	10	5	10
LB 20-X AC	6	20	450	12	9	5
Machine Gun	0	2	175	0.25	1	200
Ultra AC/2	1	2	700	5	2	45
Ultra AC/5	1	5	600	7	3	20
Ultra AC/10	3	10	500	10	4	10
Ultra AC/20	7	20	400	12	8	5
SRM-2	2	2/missile	497	0.5	1	50
SRM-4	3	2/missile	497	1	1	25
SRM-6	4	2/missile	497	1.5	1	15
Streak SRM-2	2	*	497	1	1	50
Streak SRM-4	3	*	497	2	1	25
Streak SRM-6	4	*	497	3	2	15
LRM-5	2	1/missile	1000	1	1	24
LRM-10	4	1/missile	1000	2.5	1	12
LRM-15	5	1/missile	1000	3.5	1	8
LRM-20	6	1/missile	1000	5	4	6

The small ER laser is extremely efficient, a truly incredible deal. It weighs just half a ton, generates only 2 heat when fired, and does 5 damage. However, the 12-weapon limit on BattleMechs hampers the usefulness of light lasers on bigger 'Mechs. In a 'Mech of 60 tons or greater there's no reason to use small ER lasers—use medium lasers instead.

The only limiting factor of the small ER laser is its short range. On a mobile 'Mech that can get close to its target, though, this isn't a problem. Small ER lasers are perfect for a small or medium 'Mech that can dart in close to its target for a quick and damaging hit, then run away.

Medium ER lasers are very useful weapons. At first glance it may seem that they're worse than the small ER lasers because they generate much more heat for only marginally more damage. However, their superior range makes them well worth the cost.

To understand their true value, compare two fire-linked medium extended-range lasers to a single extended-range particle projection cannon. The PPC can shoot a little farther than the lasers. The PPC does 15 damage, generates 15 heat, weighs six tons, and takes up two critical slots. Furthermore, it has a longer recharge time than the lasers and its projectile is rather slow. The ER lasers deal 14 damage (almost as much), generate 10 heat (significantly less), weigh two tons (a heck of a lot less), take up two critical slots (same as the PPC), and the laser beams travel much faster than the PPC projectile. Just think of all the weight and space you'll be saving by using the lasers instead—not only weight and space from the weapons themselves, but from the extra heat sinks you'd need to support the PPC's tremendous heat production.

Large ER lasers are a pretty bad deal. They do significantly less damage than a PPC but generate almost as much heat, thus requiring lots of heat sinks. They have great range and weigh considerably less than autocannons that do comparable damage, but ultimately they're just a slightly larger and much less heat- and weight-efficient version of the medium laser. Any weapon with such a poor damage-to-heat ratio has to give you pause.

Pulse Lasers

The small, medium, and large pulse lasers are roughly equivalent to their ER cousins, so I won't bore you by looking at all three models separately. Suffice it to say that they're like the ER versions except they produce a little less heat, have slightly less range, and weigh significantly more. I never use pulse lasers. I consider their benefits to be largely illusory, while their drawbacks are very real.

It's true that the two beams spread the damage, increasing the chances of internal critical hits. But the effect also diffuses your weapon's power, forcing you to sustain a perfect lock on the target longer to deliver the full impact.

Pulses generate only a little less heat than ER lasers, and their weight and space consumption reduce the easy-to-carry efficiency you'd expect in a laser.

MechDate 03.03.3055

Gregor was proud of his custom-fitted Hellbringer. He had made several trade-offs to fit six large ER lasers on board, and he had linked them all together for a devastating punch.

Cresting a hill, he spotted his target: an ore processing plant with no defenses in sight. He sidled close in his Hellbringer and brought the lasers to bear on the circular building. A single blast wiped out a large section of wall, but it also spiked his 'Mech's heat gauge into the upper yellow range. Most unusual.

A red blip on the radar warned him of an approaching menace. Spinning quickly, he came face to face with a Jade Falcon Warhammer IIC. He aligned the targeting reticule and fired his lasers. They lanced the Warhammer IIC with white-hot beams, burning a satisfying hole in its left leg armor. As Gregor prepared to fire again, the computer spoke quietly into his ear: "Shutdown sequence initiated."

That was ridiculous—he had only fired once! He slapped the manual override. The Warhammer IIC was immobile, as if its pilot were stunned. This was too good an opportunity to pass up; he had another clean shot at the damaged leg. He triggered the lasers again and again, shearing armor and internal components from the Warhammer IIC. A loud rumbling sound from beneath him indicated a dangerously overheating 'Mech, possibly an ammo explosion . . .

Earth and sky converged into a tumbling, windy backdrop as Gregor was rudely ejected from his 'Mech. When he finally stopped spinning and twisting, he gazed down at the world below and saw flames engulfing his Hellbringer. The Warhammer IIC, which had never fired a shot, had turned and was lumbering back down the ridge.

While floating down to earth on his standard-issue parachute, Gregor decided to avoid large lasers in his future 'Mech designs.

Extended-Range PPC

The Extended-Range (ER) PPC is not an efficient weapon when it comes to heat. However, it is significantly better than a large laser, with an even damage-to-heat ratio of 15 to 15. Like the other beam weapons, this one takes up a minimum of weight and space and requires no ammunition. The PPC shoots a relatively slow projectile, but it's a big projectile that's hard to avoid.

If you have a 'Mech with lots of heat sinks but little room to spare, PPCs are a solid choice. Autocannons and their ammo are much

heavier and bulkier, missiles are less predictable, and large lasers are woefully inefficient. Medium lasers are a good alternative on most 'Mechs, but on the very heaviest 'Mechs you'll want weapons with more offensive punch—the PPCs.

Gauss Rifle

The Gauss rifle is a curious weapon that uses a series of magnets to propel large nickel-ferrous slugs. The slugs aren't prone to ammo explosions, but the rifle itself can explode if a critical hit occurs.

The Gauss rifle does almost as much damage as a PPC but generates almost no heat. Furthermore, it can fire over an almost ridiculously extended range. Its drawback is its tremendous weight and bulk; Only the biggest 'Mechs can comfortably accommodate the Gauss rifle.

LB-X Autocannons

Autocannons as a class produce very little heat. The small models have very good range and lots of ammunition but lack punch; the big ones have shorter ranges and less ammo per ton but can be absolutely devastating.

The LB-X autocannons boost the chances of critical internal hits, just as the pulse lasers do.

The LB 2-X and LB 5-X carry lots of ammo and have excellent ranges. However, they take up lots of space and weight for the amount of damage they inflict. Small 'Mechs need lightweight weapons, and these little autocannons weigh several times as much as lasers that inflict comparable damage. The only reason you'd want to use cannons is if you're piloting a small 'Mech and your marksmanship allows you to make use of their extended range.

The LB 10-X's damage is comparable to that of a large laser, and it generates far less internal heat. If it's a choice between a large laser and a LB 10-X, then, the autocannon is probably a better bet. Unfortunately, its extreme weight and space requirements make it viable only on the larger 'Mech designs.

If you're going to use an autocannon, why not use the biggest one? The LB 20-X does massive damage (20 points worth at a time) and generates a reasonable amount of heat. Of course, you'll never find a bigger and bulkier weapon, or (except for the Ultra AC-20) one that chews up as much ammo.

Note: Weight, size, and heat all help determine which weapons to load on your 'Mech. A PPC's excessive heat generation and compact size put it in a class by itself, while a Gauss rifle and Ultra AC-20 have similar weight and space demands and both require lots of ammo.

- The AC-20 is generally a slightly better bet if you've got the room.
- If you have a penchant for brutal long-range gunnery, a Gauss rifle should be your weapon of choice.
- If you have heat sinks to spare but very little space, a PPC is the obvious choice.

Ultra Autocannons

These are similar to the LB-X class autocannons, but instead of providing a shotgun effect they deliver all their damage to a single point. As with the LB-X series, the smaller Ultra autocannons are usually a poor second choice to a laser, especially since the Ultra autocannons have a shorter range than the LB-X series.

If you're looking for a huge autocannon, however, I recommend the Ultra over the LB-X models. The whole point of any large autocannon is to do as much damage as you possibly can in a single shot, preferably to a single area of your target (hence increasing the chances of a critical hit or a kill). The LB-X autocannons diffuse that power, defeating the whole purpose of a massive gun. Unless you really doubt your aim, I strongly encourage use of the Ultra autocannons instead.

Machine Guns

Machine guns are unlike most other weapons. They have extremely limited range and they deal only minimal damage. Also, you must fire them continuously to achieve any real results, so you can't link them in systems with weapons with more concentrated blasts.

It's easy to discount the machine gun's effectiveness, then. Don't! A 'Mech outfitted exclusively with machine guns, as shown in Figure 2-2, can be devastating at close range. Such 'Mechs are best deployed in close-quarter combat areas favorable to smaller weapons. Even there they must have enough speed to close with enemy units quickly.

Caution: I don't recommend combining machine guns with any other weapons. You'll end up neglecting your bigger guns if you're busy delivering the sustained bursts of fire you need to get the most out of your machine guns.

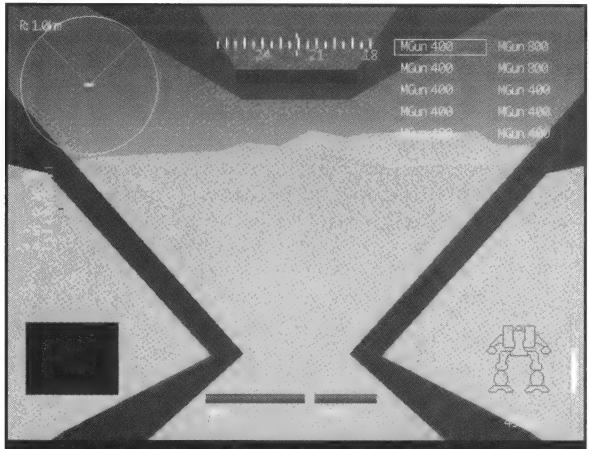

Figure 2-2 This 'Mech Has a Full Complement of Machine Guns

Short-Range Missiles (SRMs)

The SRM comes in three flavors: SRM-2, SRM-4 and SRM-6. The SRM-2 shoots two missiles, the SRM-4 shoots four . . . you get the idea.

Each SRM inflicts 2 points of damage, so a SRM-6 that connects with all six missiles can deal more damage (12) than a large laser () and almost as much as a PPC or Gauss rifle.

SRMs are fairly efficient in space and weight requirements, so they're a good substitute for other short- to mid-range weapons. The missiles fire in a stream instead of one concentrated blast, however, so it's hard to connect with all of them when your target is moving laterally.

There's no guarantee that every missile will find its target, but the barrage does increase the chance of scoring critical internal hits.

The only real problem with SRMs lies in aiming. Any weapon that fires a stream of projectiles instead of a single shot requires you to maintain an excellent lock over a period of a second or two, while single-fire weapons only require an instant of target acquisition. The Streak SRM system, which homes in on an acquired target, is an excellent alternative.

Streak SRMs

These are essentially standard SRMs with computer guidance. If you fire them while you've got a missile lock (a red targeting reticule) on your target, they will home in tenaciously, even hitting 'Mechs that use Jump Jets for evasive maneuvers. They cost twice as much in tonnage as the regular SRMs, but they're definitely worth it if your 'Mech can handle the extra weight.

Tip: If you are a god of targeting or your 'Mech is extremely light, use regular SRMs. Otherwise, I think you'll find that Streak SRMs make most combat missions significantly easier.

Long-Range Missiles (LRMs)

LRMs do 1 point of damage per missile. This might make the LRM seem inferior to the SRM. However, the extreme range of the missiles, combined with an elementary guidance system and the ability to fire up to 20 missiles at once from a single launcher gives the LRM a definite edge in long-range confrontations.

LRMs come in arrays of five, 10, 15, and 20 missile-packs. The LRM-5s and -20s are probably the most efficient. If you opt to use four LRM-5 batteries instead of a single LRM-20, you'll generate a little more heat but save on tonnage.

LRMs are without question the most specialized weapons in the game. An LRM-20 is extremely light, compact, and heat-efficient when you consider the massive firepower it packs. But LRMs take a long time to reload and are impractical at shorter ranges. Their effectiveness, then, depends almost entirely on where you're fighting. A flat plain is ideal, while a city or mountainous area is a poor LRM battleground.

As with the pulse lasers and SRMs, LRMs' barrage fire increases your odds of landing internal critical hits.

Advanced Gunnery

Advanced gunnery entails three specialties: the way you fire your 'Mech's weapons, targeting specific areas on enemy 'Mechs, and dealing with your weapons systems when they've been damaged.

Changing the Way You Shoot

When you first begin a mission, your targeting computer always starts in the same default system. All your weapons are shown in green, meaning they belong to weapons group 1. The top left weapon is highlighted, so that's the weapon that will fire the first time you press [Spacebar]. The next weapon in the default sequence will fire each additional time to press the space bar, or you can hit [Enter] to skip to a later weapon in the sequence.

That's no way to perform 'Mech gunnery—It's inefficient. The very first thing you should do after descending to a new battleground is to reconfigure your weapons so they make more sense. The two examples that follow will demonstrate why.

How Not to Handle Your Weapons

You start off your mission in a 60-ton Mad Dog's basic configuration: two large pulse lasers, two medium pulse lasers, and two LRM-20s. You head toward your first mission objective and soon spot several enemy 'Mechs in the distance. You have to hit the [Enter] key repeatedly to advance to those LRMs—the only weapon with sufficient range at first.

While you were skipping through your sequence, though, your enemies have been closing in; now your LRMs are pretty useless. The cursor is now highlighting the top of your weapons list again, so you fire away, shooting your large pulse lasers and your medium pulse lasers as fast as you can considering the time it takes to aim each laser.

After you've shot your four lasers your LRMs are highlighted again. Since you only get six shots per LRM on the Mad Dog's standard configuration, you don't want to waste those LRMs at close range. So while you're trying to evade enemy fire you reach up and tap the [Enter] key a couple of times to get back to the laser part of your weapon sequence.

How to Handle Your Weapons

Here's the same scenario with the same 'Mech, but this time with a customized configuration.

You land planetside in your Mad Dog and alter your weapons configuration the instant you hit the surface. You leave all the lasers alone, instead moving down to the LRMs with your [Enter] key. You press [Shift]-[3] while the LRMs are highlighted to add them both to weapons group 3. Then you start toward the first NAV point.

When some enemy 'Mechs appear on the horizon, you target a Firemoth and press [*] on your numeric keypad, firing weapons group 3. Both LRMs now fire simultaneously, and a second later the Firemoth explodes into a heap of charred debris. That's one less 'Mech to worry about.

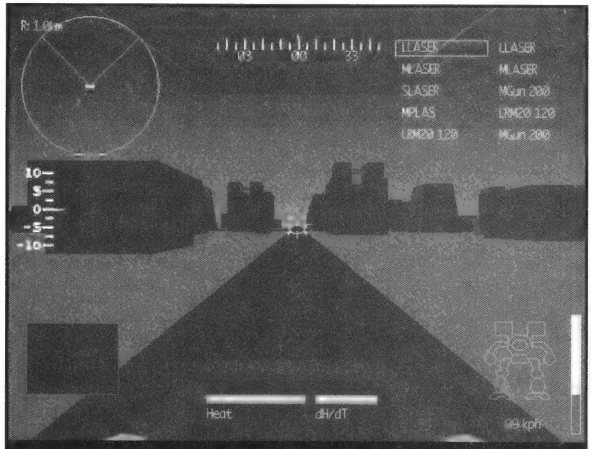

Figure 2-3 Unmodified Firing Sequence

You still have enough time to shoot another LRM volley, scoring the armor of an enemy Nova while you continue to advance(?). Now you're in the thick of things, and your lasers will be of the most use. You target an enemy 'Mech and press Num Lock on your numeric keypad. All four of your lasers fire simultaneously, carving a deep hole in the enemy's armor . . . Another minute or two of this and you're victorious; you stride past the wreckage toward your NAV point.

Chain Fire vs. Group Fire

Pressing the space bar unleashes chain fire—that is, you fire your weapons once for every time you press the bar. This usually keeps you from building up too much heat, but it also means you have to lock your target many, many times if you want to get a kill. Group firing, on the other hand, allows you to fire every single weapon in a predetermined group simultaneously.

Group fire has several advantages over chain fire. For one thing, you only have to get a few good weapons locks to defeat an opponent, because every time you do get a good shot you really make it count. You can fire a strong burst, take evasive action while you wait for your weapons to recharge, and then fire another burst.

Equally important is the fact that group fire yields *concentrated damage*. If you're only doing 2 to 5 points of damage at a time and spreading your shots all around an enemy 'Mech's frame, you'll never really hurt it;. you'll shoot off some armor and cripple some subsystems.

You're always better off attacking one single area of the 'Mech. Group fire ensures that all your damage will go to one specific area of your enemy 'Mech because all your weapons will be reaching the same point simultaneously. Concentrated damage is better than random damage, and group fire will let you achieve concentrated damage quite easily.

Figure 2-4 These weapons systems could be reconfigured in new groups

Using Group Fire

Unless you modify your groupings as the pilot in Figure 2-4 did, all weapons default to group 1. In default, when you hit the Num Lock key that controls group 1 fire, your 'Mech will unload every single weapon it possesses simultaneously. This is sometimes called an *alpha strike*. The alpha strike is sometimes desirable as we'll discuss in Chapter 3, but it isn't always.

More often you'll want to divide your weapons into two or three separate groups through the following commands:

Shift-1. Adds highlighted weapon to group 1 (which is unnecessary at the start because that's where all your weapons are by default).

Shift-2. Adds any highlighted weapon to group 2; the highlighted weapon turns white on the HUD.

Shift-3. Adds any highlighted weapon to group 3; the highlighted weapon turns yellow on your screen.

After grouping your weapons you can do one of two things. Firing with the space bar still fires one weapon at a time, but you keep cycling through the group you're currently in instead of cycling to the next group.

It's more useful, though, to fire a whole group's weapons simultaneously, using the commands below. It doesn't matter which weapon is currently highlighted—its whole group will fire as long as its weapons are ready. Num Lock fires all group 1 weapons.

/ fires all group 2 weapons.

* fires all group 3 weapons.

Linking Weapons

You should always group similar weapons systems together. In fact, it's best when all the weapons in a group are the same. That way they all behave exactly alike, and if one weapon hits the target all of them probably will. So it's great to have four medium ER lasers linked together, or two LRM-20s.

Don't put the ER lasers and the LRM-20s into the same group, though. You'll never be able to hit anything with both weapons systems at once, and you'll only be wasting your missiles.

Caution: Group fire has one big drawback: It can lead to heat problems in a 'Mech prone to thermal trouble. However, a legitimate 'Mech design should be able to handle all (or most) weapons systems firing simultaneously without shutting down—if you don't do it over and over, that is.

Concentrating Your Attacks

In the BattleTech miniatures game I have seen 'Mechs destroyed with a single powerful shot. I have also seen 'Mechs that have been damaged over and over again but that simply refuse to die. Their armor has been completely destroyed, their internal structure shredded, but somehow all the vital systems manage to stay intact.

This same range of effects is also seen in *MechWarrior 2*: Sometimes the bad guys sometimes fall down easily, and sometimes they need a lot of convincing. When your enemies stick around after sustaining several volleys of powerful shots, you know it's going to be a difficult battle. However, you can usually avoid this sort of unpleasantness by aiming your attacks.

A pilot needn't always be carefully aiming, especially in a fast-paced battle when any hits at all are hard to come by. Similarly, if you have much more firepower than your enemy, you can often get the job done by firing indiscriminately. Aiming, though, can certainly make life easier.

Many pilots start a fight with a few ranging shots, just aiming at the enemy 'Mech in general and not trying to target any specific location. After a few hits they look at the targeting camera to see which parts of the enemy 'Mech have been weakened, then they make a concerted effort to shoot for that location again.

Smaller 'Mechs can be blasted without too much thought, but try fighting a hundred-ton 'Mech without picking on one specific area. That's a lot of armor to shoot off!

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Gregor decided to link his weapons into several groups. He put two SRM-6 systems and a medium laser into group 1, and an SRM-6 and two machine guns into group 2. Satisfied with his handiwork, he engaged the throttle and sped off toward NAV point Zeta.

Turning a corner suddenly, he stumbled upon a silent Storm Crow. Its engine had been shut down so it was invisible to his radar. The enemy 'Mech sprang to life and broke into a jolting run past his cockpit. Gregor aimed and keyed the command to fire group 1 weapons. The laser spat out a thin white beam and traced the armor of the Stormcrow, but the SRM-6 missiles shot well behind their mark.

Swearing, Gregor fired group 2, this time leading the Crow to account for the SRM-6's delay. The missiles slammed into the Stormcrow's left side, damaging the 'Mech but not killing it, while the machine guns that could have delivered a crippling blow spattered harmlessly on the wall in front of it.

After the Crow had fled, Gregor eyed his weapons groups in disgust. The SRMs, machine guns, and lasers all required him to lead his target differently: shooting two different systems at once almost ensured the failure of one weapon. He quickly remapped his targeting computers to consolidate all three SRM-6 launchers in group 1, the laser in group 2 and the machine guns in group 3. Now he felt ready for his next opponent.

Tip: The key to targeting your attacks is to pick one location and keep working at it; otherwise you'll just be peeling away armor in several places, and that's pointless.

Group firing is a very easy way to target specific parts of the enemy 'Mech. A bunch of similar weapons, when fired as a group, will hit your target in the same location automatically. This often disables smaller 'Mechs and opens large holes in the bigger ones.

The arms are generally the least useful target, even though it seems like you always end up hitting them anyway. Arm wounds will sometimes cause enemies to lose weapons; occasionally they'll even cause an ammo explosion, but they won't kill the 'Mech.

Leg hits are better. Shearing off a leg will sometimes cause a fatal ammo explosion, and at the very least it demobilizes the 'Mech so you can finish it off at your leisure. Torso hits are good if you can fix on one particular part of the torso, which is not as easy as it sounds.

Head shots, like the one lined up in Figure 2-5, are the best of all, but don't be dismayed if you aren't getting too many in. They're really quite difficult unless you're dealing with the biggest, slowest 'Mechs.

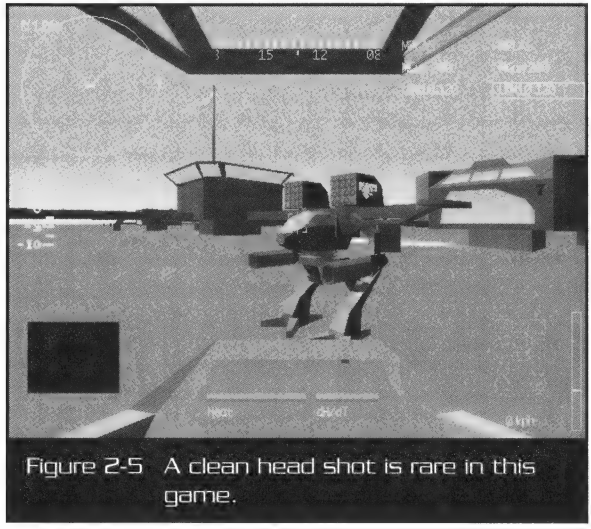

Figure 2-5 A clean head shot is rare in this game.

Dealing with Damaged Systems

When you lose parts of your 'Mech or any of its weapons systems, you should always adjust accordingly. The two main things to remember: remap your weapon groups to reflect your current situation, and eject any useless ammo.

Remapping Weapon Groups

Let's say you have two weapon groups, each of which contains three medium lasers. Suddenly your 'Mech's right arm gets blasted off and your second group loses two of its lasers. Remap your weapons to incorporate the lone laser from group 2 into the first group to boost its overall firepower And don't worry about thermal buildup; since you've just lost two lasers (or four[?] weapons slots?) it's unlikely your 'Mech will be overheating any time soon.

Ejecting Worthless Ammo

If a weapon gets destroyed, you should make sure to eject its remaining ammo as soon as it's convenient. Ammo explosions are a big factor in *MechWarrior 2*, so you might save your life later on by dumping that useless ammo now. The K key will eject unwanted ammo.

CHAPTER 3

Heat: Your Second-Worst Enemy

Battles in *MechWarrior 2* are a dynamic struggle between two or more 'Mech pilots, each wrestling to gain the upper hand. Right? Well, sort of. In reality they're also a struggle between each pilot and his own 'Mech, and a key element in that struggle is heat.

Each 'Mech has a certain number of heat sinks, devices to rapidly dissipate the internal heat that builds up. All 'Mechs generate heat in a variety of ways—by firing weapons, and even by simply running around. As a pilot, you must constantly balance your heat level with your firepower needs. Your success as a pilot will hinge upon your ability to strike a good balance, never firing so much that your 'Mech shuts down in combat, and not letting your fear of shutdown prevent you from firing as much as you need to.

Some Thoughts on 'Mech Design and Heat

'Mech design plays a large role in heat dissipation. Some designs are so inherently heat prone that you'll have a difficult time keeping them under control. Customized 'Mechs run this risk more than factory models: As you strive for more firepower, it's tempting to pile on those light, powerful energy weapons and skimp on heat sinks. On the other hand, 'Mechs with few energy weapons and a large supply of heat sinks avoid the issue altogether.

Note: 'Mechs bearing Gauss rifles as their primary weapons will encounter fewer heat problems. You can fire your weapons over and over, as fast as you possibly can, and never shut down.

However, it's a bad idea to worry about heat too much when you're designing a 'Mech. As a rule, it's better to have a 'Mech with massive firepower that has the potential to overheat than a conservative 'Mech that will never overheat but features only a few weapons systems. Conservative 'Mechs are easier to pilot when the battles are simple, because there's less for you to keep track of. But when the going gets rough and you're about to be toasted, it's nice to have explosive power at your disposal (like the 'Mech in Figure 3-1), even if it means overheating and risking shutdown or explosions.

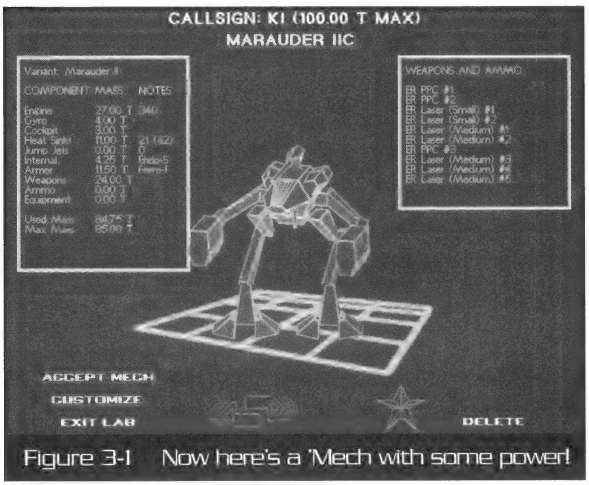

Figure 3-1 Now here's a 'Mech with some power!

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Gregor had thought long and hard about the matter of heat. His instructors had hammered the issue home: Heat must be budgeted, heat was a MechWarrior's constant companion, rising heat levels could never be ignored. But Gregor preferred not to deal with heat at all; he had his hands full fighting enemy pilots.

Gregor had developed his own solution to the heat dilemma. His new Marauder IIC sported twenty double heat sinks and only a few beam weapons, with several small autocannons rounding out the BattleMech's arsenal. Here was a 'Mech that would never overheat, a 'Mech that was practically worry free! As he drove his Marauder IIC down the narrow city streets, escorting the consul's sleek black hover-limousine, he wondered if they would name this design after him. The Pyre? No. Perhaps the Gregorian? An alarm interrupted his reverie: An enemy Marauder IIC was powering up on a darkened side street, evidently up to no good.

Gregor slammed the throttle forward and steered right, smiling faintly at his good luck. Now he could prove the superiority of his new design against a standard-issue Marauder IIC. Gregor would be firing continuously, shredding his enemy to bits as the other pilot waited for his 'Mech to cool off!

A menacing black shape emerged from the shadows: The enemy was making his appearance. Gregor raised his 'Mech's mighty arms and fired his chain-linked weapons into the enemy's side. The other pilot responded by blasting Gregor with twin PPCs, scorching his torso armor and knocking him back into his seat. Strange, thought Gregor—his own weapons hadn't done much damage.

The Jade Falcon pilot maneuvered his 'Mech forward, blasting with beam weapons all the while. Gregor kept expecting him to pause and cool down, but the pilot was pacing himself well. He ran hot but not too hot, dancing on the razor's edge just as Gregor's instructors had been him taught to. Meanwhile Gregor had loaded his 'Mech with too many heat sinks to leave room for any serious firepower. After another brief exchange it became clear that Gregor was getting the worst of it. He ducked behind a building and radioed for help.

Budgeting Heat

The key to budgeting your heat is to be familiar with your 'Mech. If you've never been in a particular 'Mech before, or if it's a new custom design, you can still guess how it will perform by evaluating its weapons and heat sinks. Lasers and PPCs are the biggest heat generators by far; large lasers don't produce quite as much heat as a PPC, but their damage-to-heat ratio is abysmal.

Tip: If your 'Mech design has serious heat problems, the first things you'll want to get rid of are large lasers.

Once you're out on the field, link up your weapons in the configuration you want. Fire your energy weapons several times consecutively (don't do this with projectile weapons, though; you'll just be wasting ammo). See how many shots you can get off before you shut down. Don't bother to override the shutdown when it comes; just sit there and see how long it takes to cool off. That will be valuable information later.

You should be able to fire your primary weapons group three times consecutively when you first start a battle. After a slight pause, fire them again twice consecutively, wait a little while . . . you get the idea. If you can't get this sort of rapid fire out of your weapons without overheating, you'd better have some pretty darn powerful gunnery to compensate for all that cooling-off time.

Shutdowns and Explosions

You should be able to override a shutdown sequence and start shooting again in a few moments—on a limited scale, of course: Just slap the O key. Overriding the sequence and firing a few lasers should not cause your 'Mech to explode. If, however, you load your 'Mech down with beam weapons and it overheats after you fire your primary group just twice, you'd be well advised to avoid enemy fire as best you can and cool off for a while.

Note: Regardless of your 'Mech's design,, you aren't going to blow up if you just override the shutdown sequence and run around for a while. Running does generate heat, but never enough to put you over the top and initiate an explosion if you aren't firing weapons. So if your enemies are still alive, never accept a shutdown passively. Override it and take evasive action.

If you ever do overheat to the point of explosion—well, better luck next time! Fast 'Mechs should be able to hightail it out of the action and cool off for a while, so there's little excuse for their blowing up from excessive heat. Larger and slower 'Mechs, however, must either take a beating as they cool off or try to return fire. I personally prefer to return fire on a limited basis. I'd rather go out in a blaze of glory, as in Figure 3-2, than sit there like an overgrown punching bag.

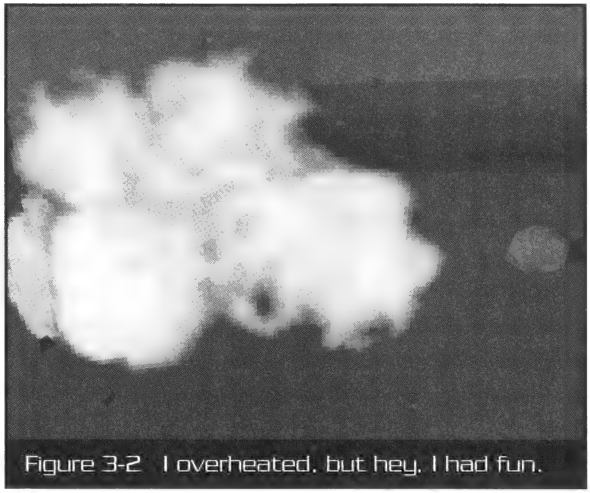

Figure 3-2 I overheated, but hey, I had fun.

Heat Costs of *MechWarrior 2* Weapons

Here's a synopsis of *MechWarrior 2*'s weapons and the heat they produce. They're listed in order of lowest to highest heat.

Machine gun	0	Streak SRM-4	3
LB 2-X AC	1	Medium pulse laser	4
LB 5-X AC	1	SRM-6	4
Gauss rifle	1	Streak SRM-6	4
Ultra AC-2	1	LRM-10	4
Ultra AC-5	1	Medium ER laser	5
Small ER laser	2	LRM-15	5
Small pulse laser	2	LB 20-X AC	6
LB 10-X AC	2	LRM-20	6
SRM-2	2	Ultra AC-20	7
Streak SRM-2	2	Large pulse laser	10
LRM-5	2	Large ER laser	12
Ultra AC-10	3	ER PPC	15
SRM-4	3		

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Gregor's Kit Fox sported a radical weapons configuration: six medium lasers chain-linked in a deadly sextet. He had never tried the design before and was anxious to see its effects. After his disastrous outing with the underpowered Marauder IIC, he was glad to field a 'Mech with potent guns at its disposal.

Two Firemoths ambled across his radar screen, slowly picking though the ruins of a destroyed Wolf dropship. Gregor was invisible to them, powered down and sitting in a deep valley.

Sensing that the time was right, Gregor twisted the double keys that stoked the 'Mech's immense engine and set off at a jolting run. As he crested the lip of the valley he discovered both Firemoths still scanning the debris, oblivious of the new dot on their radar screens. He charged down the sloping plains toward the nearest one, firing his chain-linked barrage again and again. The first Firemoth disappeared in a brilliant explosion.

Veering sharply away from the flaming debris, Gregor ignored a heat warning and set his sights on the other Firemoth, which was just breaking into a run. He fired off another alpha strike, then watched, horrified, as his 'Mech powered down. The HUD shrank into a tiny dot and vanished, leaving him instrument-blind and motionless as a statue on the open field.

The enemy Firemoth was dashing away,but it turned when it noticed Gregor's Kit Fox standing immobile. Hesitant at first, it soon angled back for the kill. Gregor hammered the controls, but to no avail. Once the 'Mech had shut down he was completely at its mercy and could not speed the reactivation process.

Meanwhile the Firemoth had begun to carefully pick at the Kit Fox's left leg. The armor values quickly degraded from blue to yellow, from yellow to red . . . Gregor keyed the radio, opened the widest possible frequency, and roared at the enemy pilot in a howl of pure fury and frustration. The Firemoth actually stopped for a moment: Gregor had startled the pilot.

A click and a hum indicated that the Kit Fox was back online. Gregor slapped the throttle forward three notches and spun the Kit Fox around, shielding the damaged left leg from further attacks. The Firemoth pilot sensed his opportunity had vanished and sprinted away, doubtless calling in reinforcements even as he ran.

Gregor turned his 'Mech and headed back for the dropship. He would think twice before allowing his 'Mech ever to shut down again.

As you can see, the weapons available to *MechWarrior 2* pilots follow some pretty basic guidelines. Energy weapons such as lasers, though extremely light, are apt to produce fierce heat—especially the biggest models. Projectile weapons, particularly machine guns and Gauss rifles, are much less heat intensive. But you end up paying for these weapons in a different way because they're a lot heavier and bulkier. See the 'Mech in Figure 3-3 if you don't believe me. Missiles are a good in-between weapon, offering substantial damage for a very moderate heat cost.

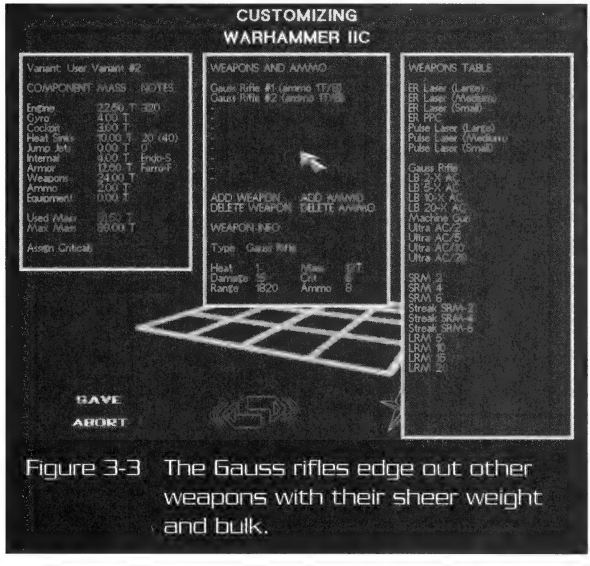


Figure 3-3 The Gauss rifles edge out other weapons with their sheer weight and bulk.

Note: The PPC might look like the worst offender on the heat list, but in fact the large ER laser is significantly less efficient. The large laser is the only weapon that actually produces more heat than damage, so it should be avoided unless you're some sort of masochist! In Trials of Position, where you cannot select your 'Mech's weapons, I recommend grouping your 'Mech's large lasers into an unused group and ignoring them unless you really need the firepower.

Ambient Temperature and Heat

The ambient temperature of the world you're fighting on will have some impact on your rate of heat dissipation, but not too much. If you wish to test this theory, remove but one or two heat sinks from a 'Mech and take it onto an icy world. Blast away until your heat is well into the red zone, then watch what happens.

You'll see that the Delta Heat indicator very quickly turns blue, but your actual heat remains red. This is very bad! Delta Heat indicates any changes in your rate of heat transfer, that is, any changes in how quickly or slowly your 'Mech is gaining or losing heat. Blue in this case means that your 'Mech is losing heat at a constant rate: very, very slowly. It might take a full minute for you to get back to an acceptable heat level.

Heat sinks, therefore, cannot be removed or skimped on just because you'll be fighting on a cold world. Even if you're using weapons that generate very little heat, you'll find that once your heat *does* spike up into the red area you will have to wait far too long for it to come back down unless your heat sinks are adequate. Consequently, the 'Mech in Figure 3-4 would be inappropriate in *any locale.*

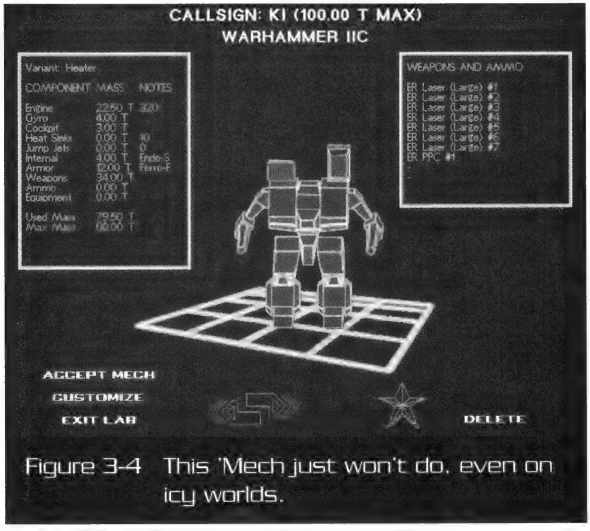


Figure 3-4 This 'Mech just won't do, even on icy worlds.

Hot Tips on Heat

Though it may seem easier to use a 'Mech that generates little heat, you'll eventually find that the compact design of heat-intensive weapons (like lasers) are necessary to give you an edge in battle. Use 'Mechs that might overheat and push them to the limit, letting them cool down to moderate heat levels before firing another salvo.

Never accept a shutdown when you're in the midst of a battle. At the very least, avoiding a shutdown will give you a chance to evade enemy shots, something you cannot do when your 'Mech is just standing there inoperative.

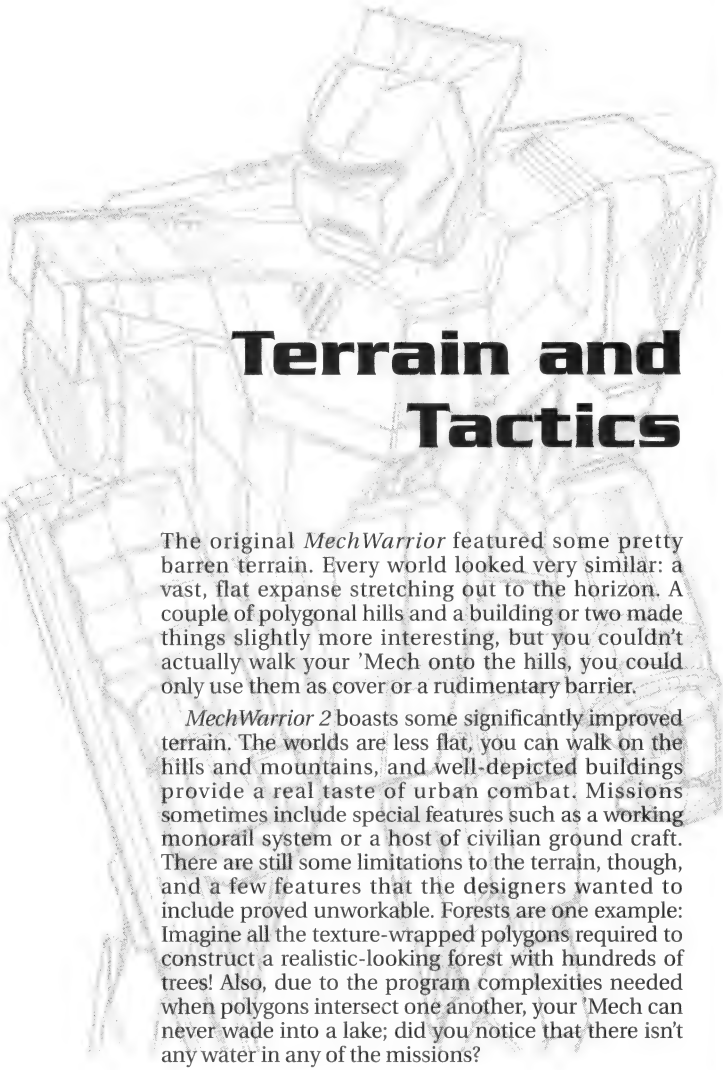
Finally, understand the trade-offs between heat-intensive weapons and heat-efficient weapons. Neither type of weapon is inherently superior, it's just a question of balancing weapon types against the amount of space and number of heat sinks available in your chosen 'Mech.

Out of the Frying Pan

Now that we've examined heat and its consequences, it's time to take a close look at another often-overlooked but very important aspect of the *MechWarrior 2* universe: terrain.

Tip: On desert worlds it's a good idea to pace yourself in combat. If you can, try to dispatch your enemies one at a time and then take a cooling-off break before moving to the next NAV point and a new set of foes.

CHAPTER 4



Terrain and Tactics

The original *MechWarrior* featured some pretty barren terrain. Every world looked very similar: a vast, flat expanse stretching out to the horizon. A couple of polygonal hills and a building or two made things slightly more interesting, but you couldn't actually walk your 'Mech onto the hills, you could only use them as cover or a rudimentary barrier.

MechWarrior 2 boasts some significantly improved terrain. The worlds are less flat, you can walk on the hills and mountains, and well-depicted buildings provide a real taste of urban combat. Missions sometimes include special features such as a working monorail system or a host of civilian ground craft. There are still some limitations to the terrain, though, and a few features that the designers wanted to include proved unworkable. Forests are one example: Imagine all the texture-wrapped polygons required to construct a realistic-looking forest with hundreds of trees! Also, due to the program complexities needed when polygons intersect one another, your 'Mech can never wade into a lake; did you notice that there isn't any water in any of the missions?

Still, there is a fairly wide variety of terrain for you to ramble across, and many different temperatures, light levels, and landscape features to explore. In this chapter we'll look at a range of terrain and environmental conditions, and I'll explain how they affect the game, and how you can best adapt to them.

Components of a World

There are many different worlds in *MechWarrior 2*, and each of them has a distinctive look and feel. However, in terms of warfare there are really only four important elements in each world: light, heat, speed, and cover. A world's overall effect on combat is created by a combination of these four variables.

Light

Light is perhaps the simplest environmental factor because it's very easy to deal with. Each battle takes place in a specific level of lighting: sometimes it's night, sometimes it's day, and sometimes the light levels change as you proceed through a mission. Haze and limited visibility can also be a factor, but we'll lump those into the "light" category because you can deal with them in the same way you'd deal with lighting problems.

Every time you start a mission you'll have to evaluate the lighting situation and decide whether you need computer-enhanced visuals. Light Amplification and Enhanced Imaging are the two basic ways you can improve your vision.

Light Amplification

Light Amplification, as depicted in Figure 4-1, is quite useful when it's dark outside. However, if it's only partially dark, or the ground color is very light, 'Mechslight,'Mechs and buildings often stand out fairly well without Light Amplification. Furthermore, since Light Amplification makes everything look rather green, sometimes it actually makes visibility worse. Toggle it on and off a few times and compare with normal vision—preferably at the beginning of a mission, so you don't get thrashed as you're playing with the view controls.

Enhanced Imaging

Enhanced Imaging is much more versatile than Light Amplification. You can use it when it's dark, and it actually delivers a considerably crisper view of the world than Light Amplification does. You can also use Enhanced Imaging when conditions that have nothing to do with light are limiting your visibility—haze, for example.

Figure 4-1 Low-light enhancement helps if the battleground is very dark.

Because of Enhanced Imaging's extreme strength and versatility, bad lighting should never cause problems in *MechWarrior 2*. If visibility is poor, switch on enhanced imaging and the battlefield will become perfectly clear. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, the main drawback to Enhanced Imaging is its unattractive "Battlezone" appearance. Forget about appearances! Enhanced Imaging is a useful tool that shouldn't be ignored.

Tip: Explosions appear as triangles when you're using Enhanced Imaging, so if you're getting peppered by enemy missiles you might want to turn it off or you'll be looking at big triangles throughout the battle.

The main problem with Enhanced Imaging occurs when you're in an urban area or a place with lots of structures in a close grouping, as in Figure 4-2. In these cases, the seemingly transparent wire frame of the buildings can leave you confused about what you're actually seeing. It gets disorienting when you must look at several buildings, all of which appear transparent, and try to determine where the solid walls really are. Flip back and forth between normal view and Enhanced Imaging to get a better fix on the architecture.

Figure 4-2 Enhanced Imaging can create an extremely confusing scenario.

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The Falcon Jenner II-C ducked into a narrow alley. Gregor reached up and flicked the switch that activated Enhanced Imaging: Suddenly the world became a complicated tangle of wires and lines. But at least it was less dark than before.

Gregor wheeled his Rifleman II-C and approached the alley from the other side. It was difficult to determine which walls connected at which corners; his Enhanced Imaging turned the world into a perspective drawing gone awry. He checked his radar to confirm that the enemy was still lurking in the alley before proceeding any farther.

Turning a corner, Gregor slammed the throttle forward and unleashed a torrent of beam weapons. The Jenner II-C reeled from the impact and spun around, but not before triggering a volley of Streak SRMs. The missiles smashed into the Rifleman II-C's torso, and the explosions appeared as huge, solid triangles that blocked Gregor's view. He flipped off Enhanced Imaging and turned on Light Amplification instead. When the Jenner II-C was destroyed he would use Enhanced Imaging once again.

Heat

The temperature of a world is always announced right after you drop in. Pay attention! A world's ambient temperature has an effect on your 'Mech's heat dissipation abilities. Cold worlds help cool 'Mechs down, providing a friendly environment for high-energy models. Hot worlds, like the desert of Figure 4-3, slow down the cooling process, taxing the capacity of 'Mechs that are already apt to overheat.

Note: A world's temperature isn't as crucial as good 'Mech engineering. Mechs with too few heat sinks can overheat even on ice worlds; conversely, 'Mechs armed with low-heat beam weapons can still fight the good fight on hot ones. Ambient temperature is a fairly subtle factor—important, but hardly pivotal.

Figure 4-3 A typical desert world has very high heat levels.

Speed

Each world has a different effect on your BattleMech's speed. Rolling hills or plains have little effect; your 'Mech will traverse them at the speeds listed for its engine type. Some worlds, however, can drastically speed up or slow down a 'Mech.

Unlike ambient temperature, this speed factor is not always a subtle one. Some worlds force your 'Mech to plod along at little more than half its potential speed, while other environments allow it to cruise almost twice as fast as it normally could. This has a huge effect on the game. All 'Mechs, both yours and your enemies', will be affected by the speed modifier, so it's not as if one side gets the advantage because of it. However, if you know how a given world affects speed you can plan accordingly in the 'Mech Lab.

For example, if you know that your next mission takes place on a frozen wasteland that cuts 'Mech speeds in half, you should compensate somehow for this lack of mobility or you'll be plodding along forever. Add Jump Jets or a bigger engine for more speed. On the other hand, if an upcoming battle will take place on a moon with low gravity, you can cut corners with your engines and add some extra firepower to your 'Mech.

Speed is in many cases a matter of personal preference. Even wide-open worlds with minimal terrain can accommodate a slow, heavy 'Mech with short-range weapons; it's just a matter of using what cover there is very carefully. Your slow 'Mech will take some extra hits from LRMs and PPCs before it gets close enough to do its damage, but that's to be expected.

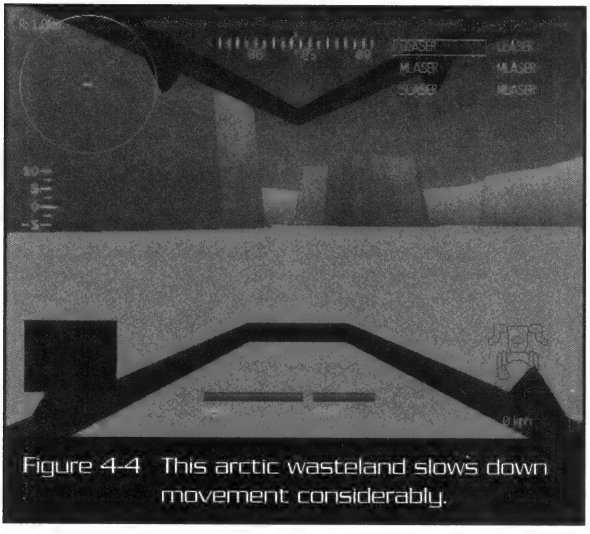

Figure 4-4 This arctic wasteland slows down movement considerably.

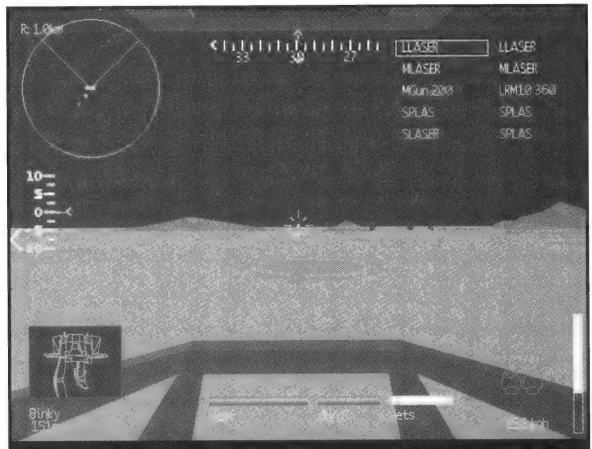

Figure 4-5 Speed picks up on this low-gravity moon.

Remember, the race isn't always to the swiftest. Plodding from one NAV point to another in a slow 'Mech can be dull, but you often have to balance your desire to move faster against your need for power.

For example, in one particularly difficult mission I tried again and again to beat the enemy 'Mechs, but every time I found that my weapons systems were insufficient. The battle took place on a frozen, empty tundra that cut all 'Mechs' speed by half. Every time I replayed the mission I had to add more weapons and cut down on engine power. Victory, when it finally came, was incredibly boring. I was piloting a very slow 'Mech on rough terrain, and my top speed was about 50 kph. I had little trouble cutting down enemy 'Mechs with my autocannons as I trudged from battle to battle, but I can hardly say it was fun. Still, a win is a win.

Cover

Some worlds provide a lot of cover, like the one shown in Figure 4-6. Mountainous areas, canyons, and cities all give you plenty of terrain to hide behind. Urban settings are perhaps the most interesting, because the sheer volume of buildings makes it easy to hide.

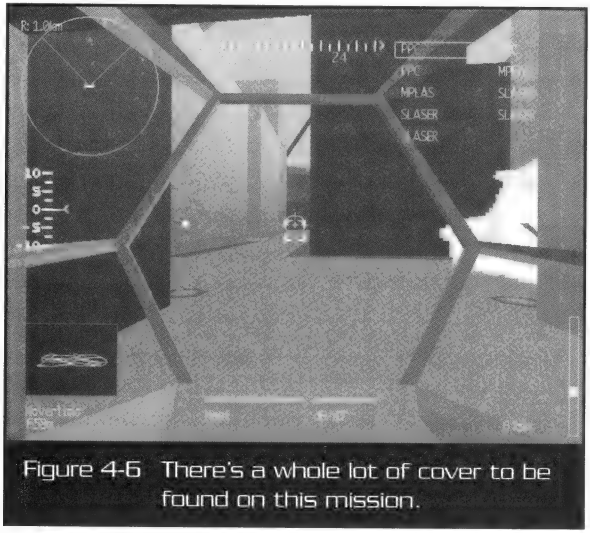

Figure 4-6 There's a whole lot of cover to be found on this mission.

If an upcoming battle has a lot of cover, speed generally won't be quite as important. You'll be traveling slowly to navigate through all the obstacles, and you can hide instead of running at full throttle to avoid enemy shots. This isn't always the case, of course. Some particularly tough missions require you to destroy heavily guarded targets in areas with lots of cover, and in those situations your 'Mech needs to be fast if you want to survive.

The main effect that cover has is on your weapons systems. For example, AC-20s' already formidable power becomes even more potent in areas with extreme cover. You can wait for enemies to come around a corner and hose them down point blank. This method can kill even the biggest 'Mech in a second or two.

LRMs are another matter. They're positively useless at close range. You'll want to avoid sending LRMed 'Mechs to battlegrounds with a lot of cover because you just won't get the opportunity to use them. Conversely, LRMs can be great on flat worlds with minimal terrain features. Short-range systems are by no means useless on these wide-open worlds, but they are a little less effective.

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Gregor Pyre slogged forward in his heavily armed Warhawk, grumbling at the shifting sand underfoot that had slowed his 'Mech to a miserable crawl. He had sacrificed speed for power in this design, thinking that this mission would be more difficult than usual. With his huge batteries of SRMs, however, it had been easy: He simply shot down his enemies as soon as they appeared, and then proceeded to the next NAV point.

It was the waiting that had proved his most formidable foe. The 'Mech's already slow 55-kph top speed had dropped to 33 kph on the accursed terrain, and he proceeded from point to point with a weary resignation. He should have brought along a book.

His final target was drawing near, a hardened headquarters. Languidly, he targeted each gun emplacement in turn, firing off a missile salvo and destroying it immediately. Then he set his sights on the headquarters and unleashed five missile batteries at once: it collapsed into a flaming pile of rubble.

Gregor wearily turned toward the last NAV point, the dustoff zone. It was four kilometers away. With a sinking feeling, he checked his mission time. Curses—only a minute or so remaining! He yelled at his 'Mech and beat on the dashboard, all in vain. It did not respond, but continued its slow grind forward.

The dropship finally came into view, a great black beetle hovering half a kilometer overhead. Relief washed over Gregor—he was nearly there. Suddenly a loud tone sounded from somewhere within his navigation computer: his mission time had elapsed. The dropship immediately rose, turned slightly, and hissed away at an unfathomable speed, leaving Gregor behind. He stopped dead in his tracks and stared at the empty sky. It would be a long mission indeed.

Making the Most of Terrain

A good 'Mech design will be good regardless of the terrain. For most missions, there's no real need to create new 'Mechs just to suit the environment. It's only on the very hardest missions that you'll want to micromanage your 'Mechs in accordance with the terrain.

For example, you might substitute several small lasers for a medium laser on a world where there's lots of cover and relatively short distances. On a high-temperature world you might add another heat sink or two. Basically, you want to adapt your tactics to different terrain features, as the following examples suggest.

Hills

When your enemies are at long range, get on top of a hill and fire some LRMs or other long-range weapons at them. Then kick the engine into full reverse and slide down the back side of the hill so that their return shots go over your head. Run back up the hill and fire again. You can often repeat this process several times before your enemies get near. When they finally do close in, don't charge over the hill to meet them. Prepare a strong volley and aim for the top of the hill, blasting them when they reach the crest.

Computer-controlled 'Mechs like the one in Figure 4-7 don't have much trouble aiming on a hillside, but many humans do. The steep angles of a hill force you to continually adjust your targeting reticule, and that will often throw off your aim. If this is the case you should simply fight on level ground whenever it's feasible. Even the most bumpy battlefield has plenty of flat terrain, and that's where you should stay. Don't let enemies lure you up to fight on a mountainside. Instead, stay at the bottom and fire from where you are.

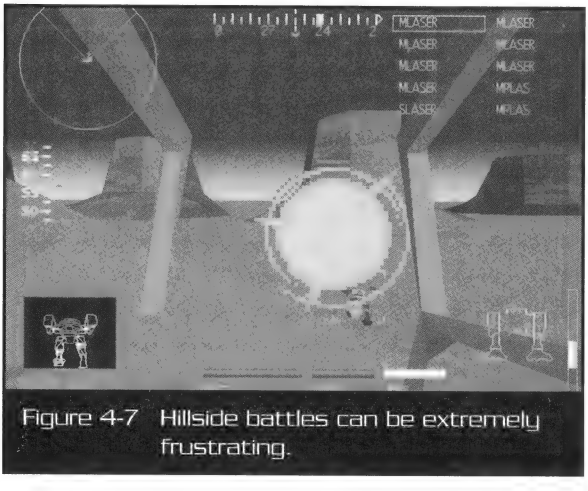


Figure 4-7 Hillside battles can be extremely frustrating.

Urban settings

In urban situations, don't always follow the roads just because they're the easiest path. Use the satellite view frequently to pinpoint where enemy shots are coming from, then work your way through the buildings so you can't be shot from behind.

Computer-controlled 'Mechs have lots of trouble with uneven walls and ledges, and they can take a long time to work their way around the edge of a ragged mountainside. Use this fact to your advantage and place yourself around a corner or in an indentation in a cliff wall. You'll have lots of time to prepare for them, and if you have multiple enemies you can limit the number that approach you at once.

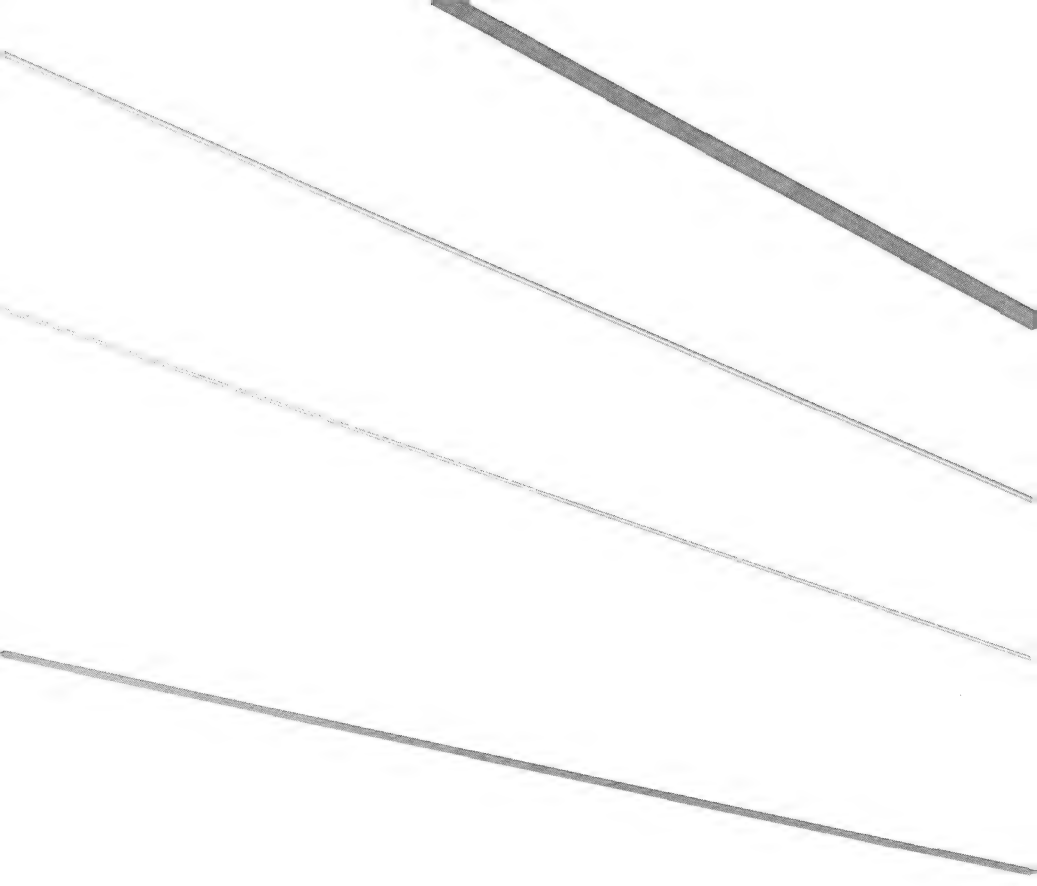
Be careful of long-range weapon locks when there might be something between you and your target. Some weapons have such extreme range that you can shoot at your target before you actually see it. In these cases you'll sometimes get a missile or weapon lock even if the target is behind a barrier. Wait until you can actually see your target if you're low on missiles. If you're using laser weapons you can just blast away and nothing will be lost.

Enemies with Jump Jets, such as the Rifleman II-C in Figure 4-8, tend to keep jumping right over your head, blasting you all the while. They're hard to hit when they're in the air, and their own shots are highly accurate. When faced with jump 'Mechs it's sometimes useful to get your back to a wall so they can't leap into your rear arc.

Figure 4-8 This Rifleman II-C likes to jump over your head and pelt you with laser fire.

Conclusion

Now that we've looked at terrain and its effects, let's consider more broadly what your combat strategy should be. The next two chapters will explore the subtle nuances of combat in *MechWarrior 2,* proving that this isn't just a game or reflexes and luck.



PART II

Fighting the Good Fight

CHAPTER 5

Single-Player Strategies in Combat

War is hell, and *MechWarrior 2* combat isn't exactly a walk in the park. Well, maybe it's a little like a walk in the park—after dark, *alone*. You know you're going to have trouble, so you have to plan for it. We'll start your strategic training by looking at combat from the perspective of the lone MechWarrior, setting out to perform a mission against overwhelming odds.

Your combat strategy should be flexible enough to change with your opposition. Different situations require different tactics, and if you try to use the same old approach against every 'Mech you'll have a hard time completing your missions. Tried-and-true methods work up to a point, but eventually you face a superior pilot who makes you change your strategy a little, or a predicament where the same old ploys just won't work. When this happens you have to

evaluate the situation carefully and figure out what you're doing wrong. Sometimes the problem is merely one of execution—missing your targets too often, for example. In that case you can go back and try again without rethinking your whole approach to combat. But if you get pounded repeatedly, it's likely that a different tactic (and a different 'Mech) will help immeasurably.

Dealing with a Single, Small Opponent

Small opponents can be deadly, especially at high speeds. A good example of this is the Elemental, a genetically engineered giant in power armor similar to that of a 'Mech. An Elemental is considerably smaller than a 'Mech, and a few square shots with even the smallest weapon will often destroy him.

But the remarkable agility of the Elemental makes him a force to be reckoned with: While you're busy dealing with other threats, he leaps about on his Jump Jets and nicks away at you with laser fire. Hitting him is difficult because he's almost always in the air or running at full speed.

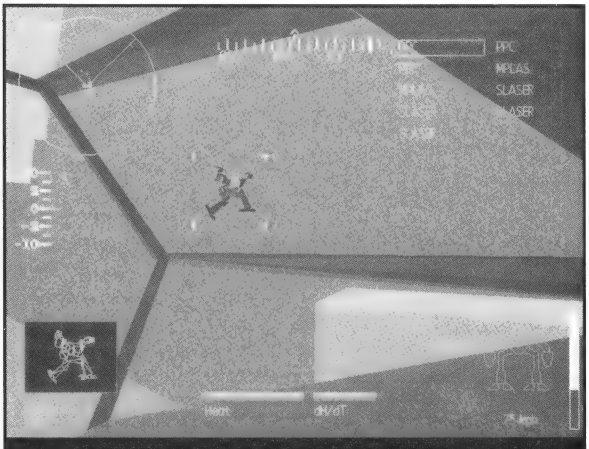


Figure 5-1 The Firemoth is an annoying if insignificant opponent.

If a single, small opponent can be deadly, imagine facing off against a swarm of them. You will often face superior numbers in your missions, and if you encounter small enemies once you can bet there will be a lot more of them later. Simply destroying a small foe isn't enough—you must destroy him without sustaining much damage in return. After all, if you blow up a 20-ton Firemoth with your 100-ton Dire Wolf, but only *after* it has knocked several parts of your 'Mech into the yellow on your wire-frame display, that Firemoth has effectively won the battle. It couldn't hope to destroy you entirely, but it has done its part by damaging you significantly.

Destroying small opponents is often a matter of dexterity and luck, but the following pointers should help you avoid major problems with them.

- Stay on level ground if your opponent is very fast. You'll have enough trouble leading a sprinting opponent without compensating for slope as well.
- Do not try to target specific areas of a smaller foe if you're having trouble scoring hits. Any damage against a 20- or 30-ton 'Mech will add up quickly, unlike damage against a 100-ton 'Mech, which must be concentrated.
- If you're a decent shot, aim for the arm. Arm hits are very useful against small 'Mechs. They usually have endo steel structures and Ferro-fibrous armor, which saves on weight but takes up space. Therefore their weapons tend to be in their arms, which have the room to hold them. Since only a few hits will sever a smaller 'Mech's arm, this is a good way to limit the little guy's effectiveness.
- Smaller 'Mechs should be dealt with at long range if at all possible. They don't have the capacity or heat sinks to carry many long-range weapons like Gauss rifles, PPCs, or LRMs. Instead, they tend to emphasize medium lasers and SRMs. So if you can deal with them before they get close, they won't be able to bring their weapons to bear.

Tip: A pair of LRM-20s or similarly tough distance weapons can often destroy a small 'Mech flat-out before it gets within its effective range.

- Group fire is especially important against small 'Mechs because it can destroy them in a single shot.
- Don't try lots of quick moves and torso twisting if you're facing a faster opponent who's peppering you with laser fire. Just concentrate on getting off that one lethal shot. Of course, if you *can* take serious evasive action and still hit an agile little 'Mech consistently, then by all means do so.

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With a smug grin, Gregor eyed the approaching Kit Fox. It came dashing through the snow, eager to engage its puny weapons against the hulking mass of his Hellbringer. He leveled his LRM battery . . . too late. The Fox had disappeared momentarily behind a ridge. Perhaps he should have moved out a little for a clearer shot at long range. No matter; it would get there soon enough.

The Kit Fox crested the hill, emerging into the circular frame of Gregor's targeting reticule. Gregor squeezed the trigger, unleashing a torrent of LRMs along with the glowing ion sphere of a PPC projectile.

The Fox suddenly darted sideways, twisting to avoid the PPC shot and most of the LRMs, which didn't have time to home in. They hissed past the little 'Mech, leaving a few minor flash marks on its otherwise pristine armor.

Now the Kit Fox veered sharply toward Gregor, blasting forth a devastating alpha strike comprised of four medium lasers and several SRMs. The volley took Gregor by surprise, peppering his right arm and immediately knocking it into the red.

Gregor threw the throttle back, sending the Hellbringer into reverse. He lined up a shot with his AC-10 and fired away, tearing a smoking hole in the Kit Fox's left leg. A distant popping noise indicated actuator failure, but the Kit Fox continued to advance. Once again it unloaded all its weapons, and once again they struck the Hellbringer's right arm. Hissing in annoyance, Gregor squeezed the autocannon's trigger and sheared the leg from the Kit Fox's body, causing a deafening explosion that toppled the 'Mech.

Gregor congratulated himself on a good shot but stopped short when he noticed his wire-frame display. His right arm and the PPC it contained had been completely severed. But he had little time to reflect on this now—an enemy Marauder IIC had just appeared on radar.

Handling a Bigger Opponent

It's never much fun to be out-gunned, especially during a prolonged mission when you know that the heavyweight you're fighting now is only one of many adversaries you'll have to face. Bigger opponents are slower, it's true, and they make bigger targets so they're usually easier to hit. However, you have to move around more when confronting bigger opponents, because if you're stationary you'll take the brunt of their attacks.

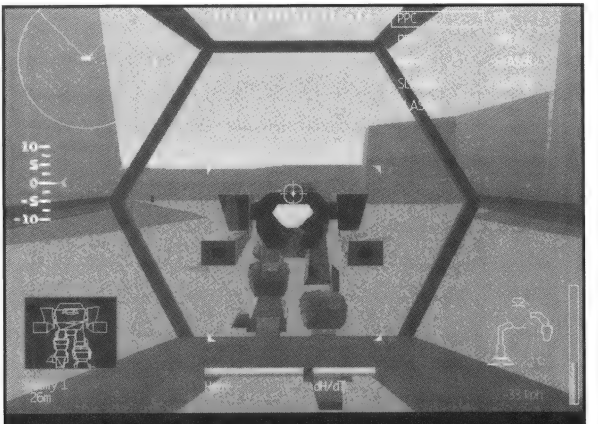

Figure 5-2 The Dire Wolf is someone you really don't want to mess with.

One of the most crucial keys to handling large enemy 'Mechs is to choose your ground carefully. For example, hide behind a wall and get your shot lined up perfectly before they come around the corner. Or use a 'Mech with incredible short-range capabilities and try to overwhelm a more well-rounded 'Mech from close in, where its LRMs and Gauss rifles are hard to operate.

Here's some advice for battling the monster 'Mechs.

- Targeting is all-important against a huge, lumbering assault 'Mech. There's so much armor on that 'Mech that shooting indiscriminately will not work. Choose a location (legs are very good) and pick on it until it it's gone.
- When you're facing an overwhelming opponent at close range, there's only one weapons system that can consistently negate it in a matter of seconds, without even giving it a chance: an AC-20, preferably an Ultra AC-20. If you can carry one, save that ammo for the big guys.
- Since your 'Mech is probably quite fast and the bigger 'Mechs are likely to be slow, you'll be able to run circles around them—literally. Do it! Twist your torso 90 degrees inward—toward your target—and you'll be able to blast away while avoiding a good portion of those devastating return shots.

The Circle of Death Maneuver

Sometimes a battle takes the form of a circle. Two opposing 'Mechs close with each other, then run in a circle with their torsos twisted inward so they can constantly fire at each other. This is called the Circle of Death, and you'll encounter it often. When you're facing a big 'Mech, you often create a variant—sort of a half-Circle of Death—where you're the only one running in circles and your enemy stays roughly in the center, torso twisting and firing back at you. This maneuver happens naturally when your 'Mech's torso is twisted 90 degrees, because to keep your enemy in view as you pass him you must keep turning inward, hence creating a circle.

If one 'Mech is stationary and its opponent runs circles around it, the running 'Mech has the advantage. It is generally easier to hit a stationary 'Mech while you're running than it is to hit a running 'Mech while you're stationary. If you can manage to run in circles around computer opponents, a good portion of their shots will miss. This is because you're always presenting a side profile as you run around your enemy and because you're always maximizing your lateral speed relative to the enemy 'Mech.

If you're fighting a Circle of Death or semicircle battle and you start to get lots of critical hits on the side facing inward, it's very important to reverse your torso twist so you are circling in the opposite direction. This is extremely key because when you're circling your opponent, the side of your 'Mech facing inward will naturally take the brunt of the damage. By twisting the other way and reversing your direction, you present your relatively undamaged side to your foe and shield your weak side.

Facing Multiple Targets

Most of the time you won't have the leisure of battling a single enemy at a time. Instead you'll be swarmed with foes. This presents a number of problems, not the least of which is target acquisition. Who should you shoot first? How should you decide which 'Mech presents the worst threat? Will the others tear you apart if you ignore them? Ideally, your first action should reduce the number of enemies you have to deal with. There are a variety of ways to do this; let's look at some of the most effective ones.

Limiting Your Foes

Sometimes combat with multiple foes is inevitable, but usually you can limit the number of 'Mechs you fight. The following tricks will help you winnow down the attacking forces.

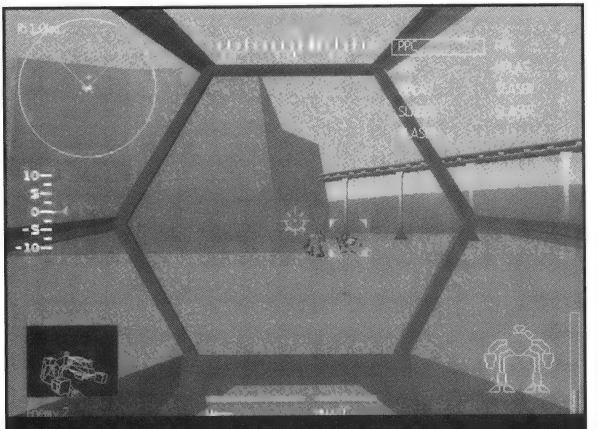

Figure 5-3 Multiple foes—a deadly situation.

Full Reverse

Very often you'll be on the open plains when an enemy power-up will reveal several 'Mechs at a distance of one or two kilometers, all ready to descend on you at once. The 'Mechs are almost always a diverse lot, including some big, slow ones and some smaller, faster types. Instead of running toward them with reckless abandon, why not run away for a little while? Put your engine in reverse and back up at full speed, targeting the closest 'Mechs with your long-range weapons as you back up.

The point of this is to force the 'Mechs to take longer to reach you. Small 'Mechs run very fast, so they'll get to you well before the bigger 'Mechs can bring their full firepower to bear. That gives you a chance to attack the little 'Mechs before the big ones get close.

Using Obstacles

Enemy 'Mechs often have problems dealing with obstacles. The rough, jagged wall of a canyon, mesa, or bluff will give them lots of trouble, while the smooth edge of a building will at least slow them down a little. If you must fight several foes, sneak into a crevice in the mountainside or sidle up to the edge of a building, then watch the radar. Your enemies will eventually get around the mountain or building, but they'll do so one by one. This gives you a few moments to deal with them individually, before the others start charging in.

In an urban setting you can carry this tactic to extremes. Hide behind one building and wait for the bad guys to appear, shoot at the first few you see, then go hide behind another building. If you have a 'Mech with powerful short-range weapons, you'll find that this hide-and-seek approach is particularly devastating.

Get Behind the Target

On missions where you must defend something, try to run or jet behind the enemy 'Mechs and attack them from the rear. Sometimes they're so intent on destroying their target that they won't try to deal with you until it's far too late.

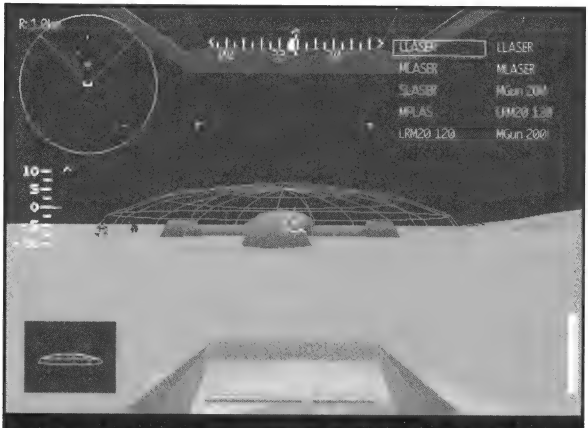

Figure 5-4 This base needs to be defended. Good luck!

More Tips for the Lone Warrior

Your piloting skills will be tested to their maximum as you face multiple opponents. Here are several extra strategies that should help you survive—but don't be discouraged if a group of 'Mechs manages to take you down. Even the best MechWarrior needs a little luck when he's outnumbered.

- Movement is crucial when fighting multiple opponents. Run at a fairly good speed during the whole battle, turning continuously to evade shots from all angles. Sometimes it's best to remain torso-twisted throughout the conflict, thereby ensuring that you'll have to

turn a lot to keep your targets lined up. It's an easy way to make yourself turn if you have a tendency to run in straight lines.

- Alpha strikes (shooting with all or most of your weapons simultaneously) can often disable an enemy 'Mech with one shot, and you need to disable enemies as fast as you possibly can or the sheer inequality of tonnage and weapons systems will guarantee your failure. I strongly recommend alpha strikes when you are outnumbered.
- If you can destroy a small 'Mech with a single, deadly alpha strike, go ahead and target the pest before dealing with your larger foes. If you aren't sure you can finish it off quickly, ignore it and target the biggest, meanest enemy 'Mech first.
- Aim for the legs. If you manage to blast a leg off a 'Mech, position yourself on its rear arc and carry on the fight from there—or run away and let the remaining enemies come to you. If you repeat this process several times you'll end up with a bunch of legless 'Mechs scattered throughout the battlefield, and all you'll have to do is go back and finish them off one by one.

When Combat Isn't the Primary Goal

On many *MechWarrior 2* missions, your goal is to attack a stationary target, defend a friendly target, or escort something from one place to another. This sort of mission calls for some creative thinking. You'll have to look carefully at your objectives and decide what your battle plan should be. Here are a few things to consider when your mission requires something more than just destroying all enemy 'Mechs.

- Does your mission require you to destroy any enemy 'Mechs at all? If you must defend a target, the answer will be yes. However, some missions only require you to blow up an enemy target such as a heavily guarded building. If destroying enemy 'Mechs isn't part of your mission requirements, customize a 'Mech for pure speed, adding only enough weapons to destroy your target with relative ease.
- When you need to defend a target, bear in mind that the target is more fragile than your 'Mech. While it's true that you'll achieve nothing if you're reckless and get blown up, it's very frustrating to fight a good, careful battle only to learn that your mission failed because you neglected to save your target. Charge in and fight, don't play defensively—or you'll soon be overwhelmed and unable to defend the target at all.
- If it seems like you're facing impossible odds, review the mission goals and think about all the 'Mechs you'll be facing. Ask yourself whether you really need to fight all of them, or whether you can survive by simply eluding them or running to a more advantageous spot and fighting from there.

Tip: When you're fighting you need to use the standard, in-the-cockpit view. But when you're running away, sprinting toward a target you need to destroy, or trying to get to an important object you need to defend, use the satellite view liberally. It's extremely useful for dodging enemy shots while running, and it helps you get a fix on targets in cluttered urban scenarios.

Fighting Human Opponents

When you're using the network or modem version of *MechWarrior 2* you'll have to deal with human opponents. Human opponents are lots of fun because they give you a chance to really test your combat skills against deadly opposition. There are no hard-and-fast rules for dealing with human opponents because their strategies differ widely; that's part of the fun!

Caution: Remember that your enemies won't act predictably, like the computer opponents do. They won't always charge right at you, especially if they have lots of long-range weapons. They will sometimes power down and hide, unlike computer foes.

Here are some thoughts to get you started in multiplayer battles.

- Human opponents like to target specific parts of your 'Mech, so it's more important than ever to hide your damaged side when fighting them.
- Depending on whom you're fighting, speed and evasion might be all-important or absolutely worthless. If your opponent is keen on dodging all the time, load up on Streak SRMs and render all that footwork useless.
- Human opponents will actually overheat and shut down, unlike computer-controlled enemies. Be alert for shut-down foes, and if your enemy is using his energy weapons far too much don't be afraid to press the issue and close in for more. You might force him to overheat.

Fighting as a Team

Now that we've looked at the basics of combat, it's time to move on to team strategies. While you don't often need to use teammates on your missions, they can be a useful addition when they're handled properly. In the next chapter I'll show you how teammates change the basic single-'Mech strategies mentioned here, and how they add new possibilities to your missions.

CHAPTER 6

Star Combat

After performing all those solo missions, you're probably itching to take a commanding role. After all, who wouldn't want to have an assistant—someone to cover your back, someone to do the grunt work, *someone to boss around?*

Well, you're in luck. You can indeed give yourself computer-controlled teammates, called starmates in *MechWarrior 2*, for many of your missions. You'll have to wait until you've succeeded in a few solo missions, though, to earn the opportunity to take a sidekick into battle. This chapter deals with the strengths, weaknesses, and general tendencies of your starmates. I'll explain what you can do to maximize your efficiency when fighting in a team and show you how the other members of your team, called a Star, can affect your performance in *MechWarrior 2*.

Acquiring Friends

How do you recruit allies? While you're in the Mech Lab, click on the star-shaped icon on your dashboard. That gets you to the Star Configuration screen, pictured in Figure 6-1. The screen tells you:

- How many tons of 'Mech you get to use on the mission.
- How many starmates you can have on the mission.
- Whether you've currently got anyone else on your team.
- Which 'Mechs are being piloted by which MechWarriors.

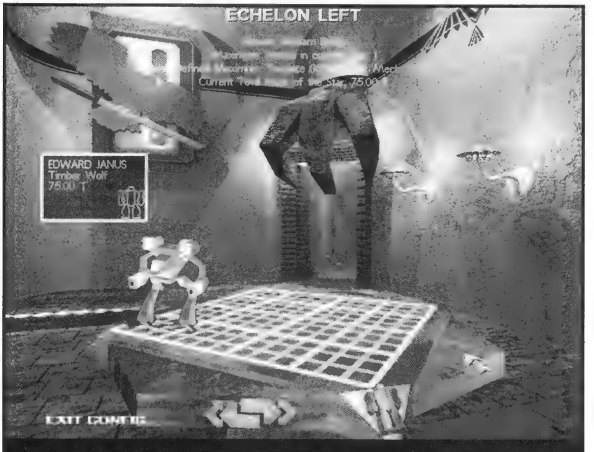

Figure 6-1 The Star Configuration screen lets you review the parameters of your mission.

You can add or delete starmates with the big arrow keys, change any pilot's BattleMech by clicking on the little 'Mech next to the pilot's name, or even change the names of your underlings by clicking on them and typing in new ones. And you can deploy your 'Mechs in one of six Star formations. More on those later.

Bear in mind that a maximum tonnage of 100 means that both you and your starmates can pilot hundred-ton 'Mechs: The limit doesn't apply to the total weight of the Star but to the size of each individual 'Mech. Also, note that starmates and their 'Mechs don't affect your

honor rating, other than decreasing it if they get killed during a mission. If the recommended tonnage is 60 and you're piloting a 40-ton 'Mech, you'll get more honor for piloting the little 'Mech even if your starmates are all driving 60-tonners.

You won't always get to use starmates, even in the later missions when you're a Nova Captain or similarly high-ranking warrior. Some missions allow starmates and some don't. But it's crucial to look at the Star Configuration screen before every mission so you know what your options are.

Once you've got everything configured to your liking, you can quit this screen and launch your mission.

The Value of Computer-Controlled Allies

Before we plunge into team strategies and tactics, a word of caution is in order. I have never discovered a mission where having a computer-controlled friend gave me a tremendous edge. You might think having twice as much firepower would make your missions a snap, but you'll quickly discover that your starmates aren't as capable as you are. In fact, it's entirely possible to win the game without ever using starmates, though the last few missions the Clan assigns you will be considerably more difficult to complete without them.

Your teammates might get a much-needed intelligence boost in future releases of *MechWarrior 2*. But as it stands now you'll basically be going it alone. Just remember: You, the human player, are craftier and better than any computer-controlled opponent.

Still, it can be great fun to use starmates (who are also sometimes referred to as Star members or Points). They will help you out in minor ways that sometimes add up to a victory. Use them for that little extra edge rather than counting on them finish your missions for you or bail you out of trouble. Starmates do indeed have their uses, and they can be quite amusing if you're in the right frame of mind. Furthermore, when they actually *achieve* something you'll be amazed and delighted. Go ahead, give your starmates a chance!

Giving Orders

When you start out on your first mission with a starmate at your side, you'll probably be anxious to see how well he performs. What techniques will he utilize? What sort of strategy will he employ? Is he any good at all in a fight?

To begin with, let's go over the orders you can give your allies. These orders are given in combat via menus accessed by F1, F2, and F3. The menus are small and unobtrusive, as you can see in Figure 6-2.

F1 lets you give orders to both starmates if you have more than one, or it just commands the single starmate you have. F2 and F3 give individual orders to starmates 2 and 3.

Change Formation

This command lets you change the formation of your Star (we'll discuss those formations shortly). Your starmates will promptly respond to this command unless they're busy fighting an enemy 'Mech, in which case they will cheerfully ignore it.

Your starmates will keep their distance when you're all walking in formation. This means you won't be crowding one another, which is good, but it also means your teammates will be liable to run into obstacles while you're marching down narrow alleys or through winding canyons.

Attack Target

Give the Attack Target order after you lock your targeting reticule on a suitable quarry, then watch your starmates scurry off to attack it. If they're already fighting something else they will not listen, preferring to finish the job they've started.

This command is the single best way to force your starmates to actually do something useful. The Engage at Will command (described below) is much more nebulous; if left to their own devices, you never know what mischief your starmates will get into. Sometimes they won't get into any mischief at all, they'll just run around in circles like dogs chasing their tails.

Tip: Starmates are fairly good at destroying static targets such as turrets, which can be very helpful. Put them to work on these immobile threats while you deal with moving targets.

Engage at Will

This command allows your starmates to think for themselves, so to speak—a frightening thought indeed. They generally look for the nearest enemy and attack, though they sometimes appear to wander aimlessly. This command isn't recommended unless you like to turn on the Satellite Uplink and watch your starmates' antics for the entertainment value.

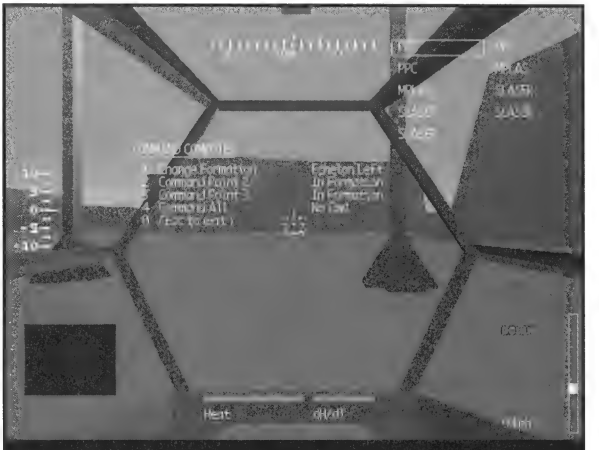

Figure 6-2 Punch F1 to bring up this combat menu, then decide whom you want to order around.

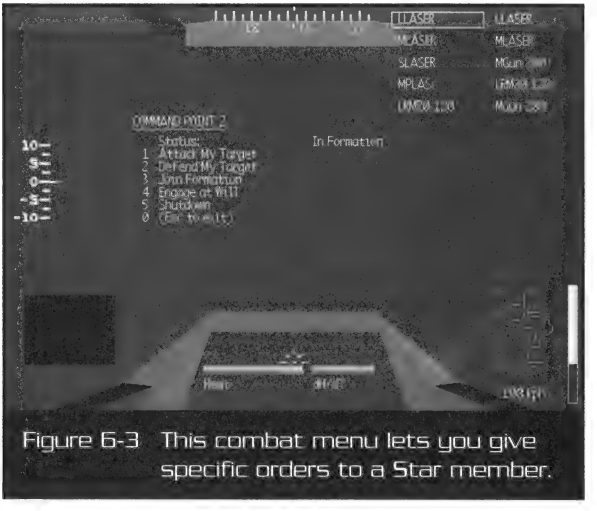

Figure 6-3 This combat menu lets you give specific orders to a Star member.

Defend Target

This tells your starmates to wait around and defend a particular target. It can be useful if the thing they're supposed to defend moves around (for example, if it's a mobile command center, a hover-limousine, or something of the sort). Otherwise this order is tantamount to Engage at Will, except that your starmates will wait to attack until there's a real threat to their target. And by that time it might be too late.

Join Formation

This order calls straggling teammates into formation, though it is seldom needed. When teammates aren't in formation they're usually fighting, and when they're fighting they ignore this command. You might use this command if you told them to defend a target and then changed your mind. Figure 6-4 shows the popular Wedge, one of six possible formations.

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"Engage at will!" bellowed Gregor Pyre, leader of the Gleaming Crescent Star. He buried the throttle and his Marauder IIC lunged into the teeth of the enemy Star, cutting brilliant swaths through the Falcon 'Mechs with blazing PPCs and lasers. Wheeling the Marauder IIC and preparing for another pass, he stopped short. Droggo and Cyril, his erstwhile starmates, were not backing him up at all! Cyril had loped off into the distance to engage an enemy Firemoth that Gregor hadn't even noticed, and Droggo. Well, Droggo was nowhere to be seen. Gritting his teeth, Gregor started his second pass. It looked like he'd be going it alone.

When the battle was done, the Falcon Star lay in smoking ruins. Gregor stumbled away in his crippled Marauder IIC, satisfied with the hard day's work. Well into the long journey back to the dropship, Cyril's Jenner II-C finally caught up with him. Cyril's voice crackled over the half-broken radio, resonant with obvious pride.

"I finished the Firemoth, sir. It was a long battle, but eventually I killed it."

Gregor sighed. "Good work, Cyril. And what about Droggo?"

"I don't know, sir. Last I saw he was stuck in a cliff. Shall we look for him?"

"No, he'll be all right. Let's get back to the ship."

Gregor decided that in the future he would give his starmates more specific orders; they were hopeless when left to their own devices.

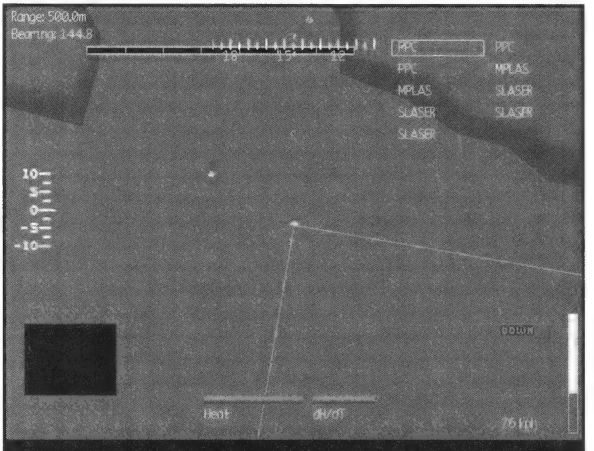


Figure 6-4 The Wedge, as seen from the Satellite Uplink, is one of the more popular formations.

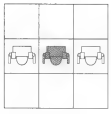
Shutdown

Here's a command you probably won't use. One of the primary virtues of starmates is their value as punching bags, absorbing damage and distracting attention while you do all the real work. Ordering them to shut down is only useful if you want to lure opponents into an ambush.

Formations

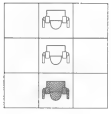
Formations are nice in theory, but in practice they have relatively little impact on the outcome of battles. In combat, formations are only useful if everyone's 'Mech travels at roughly the same speed. If your Star's 'Mechs are different sizes and speeds, you'll often want to cut loose your starmates so everyone can use their speed to best effect. And there's another disadvantage to moving in formation: enemy 'Mechs tend to target and attack the Star leader more than other 'Mechs. Most formations place your starmates somewhere behind you, and this only adds to the likelihood that your pals will be ignored while the bad guys rush in to pick on you.

Every so often you will want to use formations, however, so we'll conduct a brief review of them now.



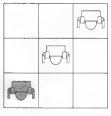
Line Abreast

This is a decent formation that keeps your starmates close to you when you're traveling. In combat it's fairly useful because it presents enemy 'Mechs with two or three targets instead of one, and you might buy yourself some extra time as they shift back and forth between shooting at you and shooting at your pals.



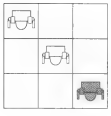
Line Astern

This is probably the best traveling formation, especially in battlefields filled with obstacles. Your starmates are right behind you and will seldom get lost. In combat it's usually less effective because you'll definitely bear the brunt of enemy attacks.



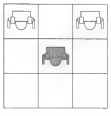
Echelon Left

This diagonal formation strings your starmates out behind you at a 45-degree left angle. It's of little use traveling across the battlefield because your starmates tend to get hindered by difficult terrain, and in combat it virtually ensures that you'll take the heat.



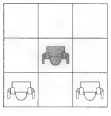
Echelon Right

This is the same as Echelon Left except that your teammates follow you at a 45-degree angle to your right.



Wedge

The Wedge formation places your starmates behind you, to either side. Once again, this is not a terrific formation for traveling or for combat. The idea behind this formation is that your starmates will provide you with maximum backup, but 'Mech combat is rarely so organized that backup in the literal sense (having allies somewhere behind you) is desirable.



V-Formation

This formation inverts the Wedge, placing your starmates ahead of you. This is the single best combat formation because it encourages your enemies to attack the weaker members of your group (your starmates) and ignore the strongest member (you) until you've had a chance to give them a good thrashing. This formation also lets you keep an eye on your starmates. I highly recommend the V-Formation.

Problems with Your Starmates

Don't be shocked when you discover that your starmates are seldom up to speed. If you tell them to do something they'll try to do it—try their very hardest—but they can be awfully slow. Why is this? Well, I hate to break it to you, but your starmates are extremely quirky individuals. They have a number of bad habits that prevent them from performing their jobs well. Let's examine these idiosyncrasies so you'll be prepared for them.

The Bruised-Forehead Habit

Your computerized pals have difficulty with mesas, canyon walls, buildings, and other large obstacles. In fact, they almost seem to gravitate toward these landmarks. Often you'll order them into battle but they'll get stuck along the way, leaping into the side of a wall with great fervor in a vain attempt to challenge the distant enemy. Figure 6-5 shows a starmate engaging in just such an activity.

Figure 6-5 This eager starmate is having difficulty with a wall.

A fairly easy way to avoid this situation is to keep your starmates in formation. If you do intend to let them roam free, make sure they have a direct path toward their target before cutting them loose. Once they're actually involved in a fight they're less likely to get stuck, though it does happen occasionally.

Another way to avoid or minimize this situation is to give your starmates relatively fast 'Mechs. This is beneficial for reasons we'll discuss later, but it also seems to help them maneuver. If nothing else, it takes them less time to bump their heads into the wall from a variety of angles and finally work their way out.

Tip: Remember, use the Line Astern formation when traveling in a group across the battlefield. If you keep your ducks in a row, so to speak, it's easier for your starmates to avoid buildings or other obstacles.

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The enemy Star lay just around the mesa. Gregor knew it and so did the Falcons: They were waiting as well, wondering who would make the first move. Gregor gnawed at his lower lip and came to a quick decision. It would be him.

"Shall we attack, sir?" It was Droggo, obviously excited by the prospect of combat.

"In a moment." Gregor carefully targeted the nearest enemy unit, a Nova that was slowly working its way forward. It would be visible in mere moments. "Engage that target."

Droggo's Hellbringer lurched forward at full speed, closing the distance to his enemy in mere seconds. In a moment they would engage.

Instead of charging forward with his starmate, Gregor broke with tradition and watched his young protégé initiate the attack. But as Droggo approached the mesa's edge for that last, pivotal turn, he failed to execute it in time and smashed his Hellbringer squarely into the solid rock. The metallic clang could be heard for miles around, doubtless alerting other Falcon units that a battle had just commenced.

Gregor rubbed his forehead in disbelief. The Trials were supposed to weed out incompetence, not promote it. How, then, could he explain Droggo?

A Taste for Punishment

Starmates are useful when they distract enemy fire, but they're a liability if they actually get killed because you lose points from your honor total. It's often hard to figure out when enough is enough—after all, you're busy targeting your foes, not monitoring your starmates' status. There are, however, a few strategies that can help your allies help themselves.

First and foremost, realize that maneuverability keeps starmates alive. Putting your pals into huge, heavily armored monstrosities is usually disastrous. Starmates in Firemoths and similarly small but speedy 'Mechs will often live longer than starmates in lumbering, heavily armored gunboats.

Another important rule is to only order your starmates to perform tasks they can probably finish. Otherwise they are destined to fail and might imperil you, too, as you struggle to clean up their mess. Sending them after much larger 'Mechs, for example, will only get them killed unless you're right there to help them.

Aside from these tips, there isn't too much you can do for your starmates. They are usually good about staying out of trouble, but every so often one will die on you. That's a risk you'll just have to accept.

The Plague of Depleted Ammo

Do not—repeat—*do not* give your computerized friends 'Mech designs that are ammunition-intensive unless those 'Mechs contain a heck of a lot of ammo. Your pals fire their weapons frequently, and they often miss their mark. Furthermore, they seldom attack with grouped weapons, preferring instead to plink away with one gun at a time. This means they fail to inflict the sort of 'Mech-rending concentrated damage that makes AC-20s and similar guns worthwhile. So although it may be very tempting to give your starmates formidable autocannons and damaging missile batteries, resist that temptation! A 'Mech that's run out of ammunition is essentially just a big hunk of scrap metal. Give your allies beam weapons they can fire indefinitely.

Keeping Starmates Alive and Well

There are many ways to keep your Star members alive and well, some of which have already been hinted at. Understanding the basic tendencies of your starmates helps a lot. If you adapt your strategy and 'Mech assignments to your allies' strengths, you'll make your missions a whole lot easier.

Matching Starmates and 'Mechs

When designing for your pals, bear in mind that they don't pilot their 'Mechs the way you do. They will not shoot weapons as a group, at least not very often. They won't hide behind corners or ram their enemies to get the most out of short-range weapons, and they will not

run to great distances to capitalize on LRMs. They tend to circle opponents at fairly close range, but not so close that they can hit them with machine guns.

Other tips to help you with your starmates include:

- Starmates don't use machine guns and autocannons very well. Big autocannons have limited ammo, which will quickly be depleted by your gun-happy starmates. Machine guns' limited range restricts their use.
- Streak SRMs are great for starmates because you can really load up on the ammunition and they always find their mark. Your starmates tend to be fairly poor shots, and Streak SRMs are a legitimate way to increase the accuracy of their hits.
- Medium lasers may well be the best all-around weapon for starmates: They inflict a good deal of damage, the speed of their beams increases their accuracy, and their range is consistent with the range at which your starmates prefer to fight.
- PPCs deliver a good punch but often miss a fast target. In missions where you'll face lively opposition, medium lasers are a much better choice.
- Give your pals Jump Jets. Sometimes the jets come in handy when your starmates try to deal with an obstacle, because they can jump right over instead of trying to navigate their way around. In combat as well, starmates tend to fare much better when they've got Jump Jets in their arsenal.
- Speed is crucial for your teammates, so those slow but powerful designs you love so much won't do the job where they're concerned. Your allies use their speed quite well, circling their opponents in battle the same way your enemies do. But when they're given 'Mechs with weak engines, they're reduced to plodding along and absorbing damage—and they're likely to make a quick exit.
- If you don't want to bother designing a 'Mech for your starmate, give him a Jenner II-C or a Summoner. Both 'Mechs have the speed, firepower, and Jump Jets your starmates appreciate. Jenner II-Cs should be modified a little; see Figure 6-6 for a good weapons configuration.

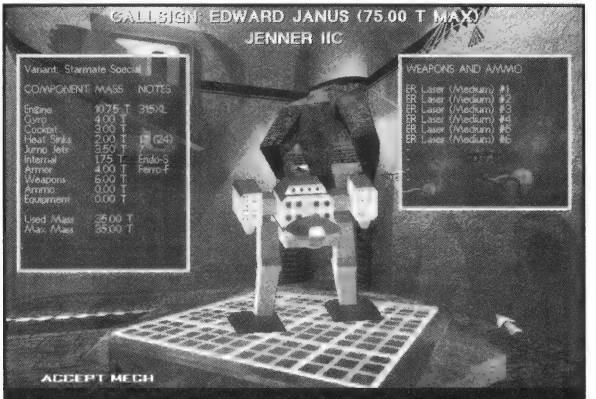


Figure 6-6 This Jenner II-C's weapons are optimized for starmate use.

Some Final Thoughts on Starmates

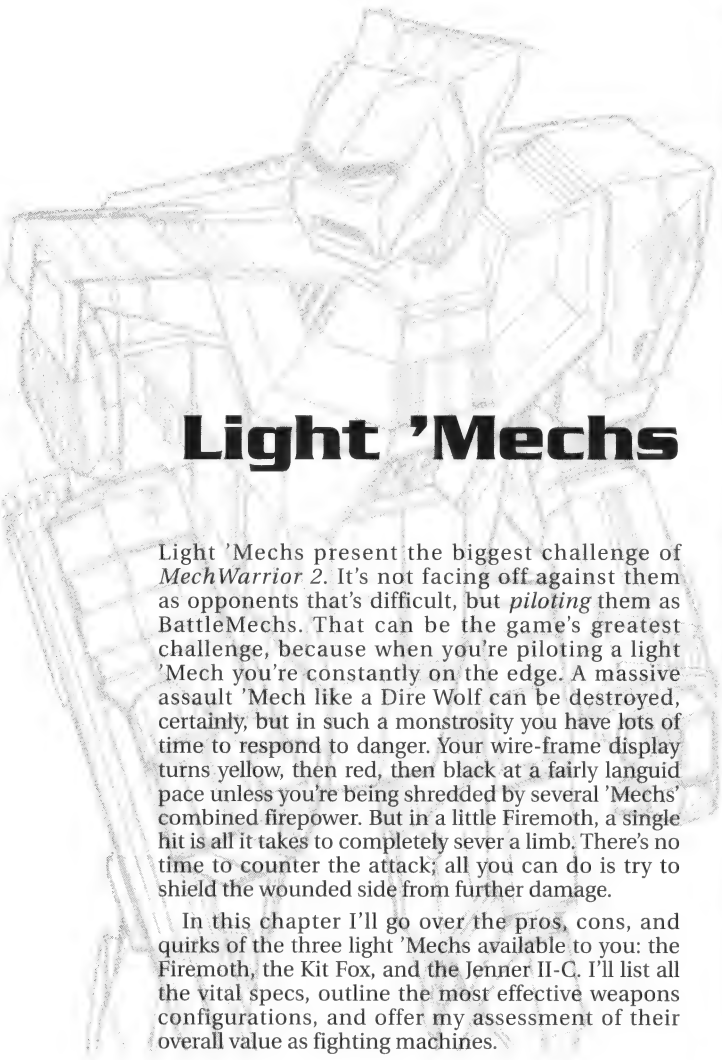
Starmates will not usually be a deciding factor in your missions. At most they'll give you some extra firepower, some extra weight, and an increased feeling of confidence when you step into battle. Instead of depending on them for assistance, you must actively guide them, choosing appropriate 'Mechs and giving them tasks they are capable of completing. If you're not careful when selecting their 'Mechs and their duties, you'll just find yourself in the role of BattleMech baby-sitter.

Now let's take a look at the 'Mechs themselves—under the hood, so to speak. Because no matter how well you manage your Star, you'll find that a good 'Mech design is crucial to victory.

PART III

The Combatants: An Overview of Mech Types

CHAPTER 7



Light 'Mechs

Light 'Mechs present the biggest challenge of *MechWarrior 2*. It's not facing off against them as opponents that's difficult, but *piloting* them as BattleMechs. That can be the game's greatest challenge, because when you're piloting a light 'Mech you're constantly on the edge. A massive assault 'Mech like a Dire Wolf can be destroyed, certainly, but in such a monstrosity you have lots of time to respond to danger. Your wire-frame display turns yellow, then red, then black at a fairly languid pace unless you're being shredded by several 'Mechs' combined firepower. But in a little Firemoth, a single hit is all it takes to completely sever a limb. There's no time to counter the attack; all you can do is try to shield the wounded side from further damage.

In this chapter I'll go over the pros, cons, and quirks of the three light 'Mechs available to you: the Firemoth, the Kit Fox, and the Jenner II-C. I'll list all the vital specs, outline the most effective weapons configurations, and offer my assessment of their overall value as fighting machines.

The Lowdown on Light 'Mechs

All light 'Mechs have this in common: They live and die by speed. Yet a light 'Mech running at top speed can hardly turn at all, and turning is essential if you want to avoid shots. You can slow down to turn, but a light 'Mech at low speeds will be pulverized in moments. The skill comes in striking a fine balance, moving quickly but unpredictably, slowing only for a second to turn and then dashing away again. This is even harder than it sounds, and it takes a dedicated warrior to master the technique. As always, practice makes perfect.

Learning to handle speed is only part of the trick to piloting a light 'Mech. They also have difficulty landing knockout blows. Many 'Mech pilots, myself among them, deal with tough situations by eliminating enemies as quickly and efficiently as possible. An AC-20 shot here, five PPC blasts there . . . this kind of concentrated firepower can maim or destroy enemy units, simplifying your battles immensely. Unfortunately, a light 'Mech is hard pressed to handle a single PPC, much less five of them. Light 'Mech pilots must be content to poke and prod their way to victory, slowly chipping away at armor levels until they finally break through.

But although piloting a light 'Mech can be difficult and frustrating, it's also tremendously rewarding. If you complete a mission with an underweight 'Mech you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that your techniques were almost flawless—the mere fact that you survived is proof positive.

Don't worry if you can't finish a mission with only a light 'Mech. There are limits to everything, even pilot skill, and some missions simply cannot be completed without a little extra tonnage. After all, enemy 'Mechs sometimes carry Streak SRMs, and all the dodging in the world won't help you once those missiles have locked on.

The Firemoth

Firemoth	
Mass	20 tons
Chassis	Endo steel
Power plant	200 XL
Cruising speed	108 kph
Maximum speed	162 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

Figure 7-1 The Firemoth

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	5
Center torso	6	5
Center torso (rear)	-	2
R/L torso	5	4
R/L torso (rear)	-	2
R/L arm	3	3
R/L leg	4	4

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
SRM-6	RA	1	1.5
Ammo (SRM) 15	RA	1	1
CASE	RT	0	0
SRM-4	RT	1	1
Ammo (SRM) 25	RT	1	1
CASE	RT	0	0

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	Ferro-fibrous	0
Center torso	MASC	–
	Endo steel	0
Right torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	–
	Endo steel	–
	Double heat sink	5
Left torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	–
	Endo steel	–
	Double heat sink	5
Right arm	Ferro-fibrous	–
	Endo steel	7
Left arm	Ferro-fibrous	–
	Endo steel	7
Right leg	Endo steel	1
Left leg	Endo Steel	1

The Firemoth is an extremely fast 'Mech. It's not necessarily the most agile 'Mech around, though, mainly because the primary configuration of the Firemoth doesn't include Jump Jets—if it did, the little 'Mech wouldn't have room for much in the way of weaponry.

Tip: You shouldn't automatically pick the Firemoth when you're looking for a pure speedster or the most nimble 'Mech in the game. The Jenner II-C wins most agility contests.

The Firemoth's basic configuration includes MASC, a speed-augmentation system that is sort of a poor man's Jump Jet. Unfortunately, MASC boosts your speed much less than jets do, and it doesn't allow the fast pivots and lateral jumps that make jets so useful in combat. The only reason to use MASC, then, is that it can boost ground speed for a cheap tonnage cost. MASC can be added to any 'Mech design quite easily to provide a quick surge of leg power.

The primary weapons configuration of the Firemoth is quite good. Two ER medium lasers provide respectable punch, and the standard SRMs augment its short-range firepower. These aren't Streak SRMs,

though, so you'll have to shoot quite accurately as you navigate if you hope to succeed with the Firemoth. You might be better off removing that SRM launcher and adding a small laser or two instead.

Some might question the location of the Firemoth's weapons, but in a 'Mech of this size it doesn't much matter where the primary weapons are placed. Enemy pilots will know where your weapons are and they'll shoot for that area, so in larger 'Mechs you often want your weapons placed in your well-armored torso. But a Firemoth is so fragile that it's best to spread the weapons around through the arms. Otherwise your enemies will go straight for the torso and you'll be dead after a shot or two instead of losing an arm and getting a chance to fight on a while longer.

The Firemoth is the ultimate test of a pilot's abilities because it allows no room for error. Most missions are well nigh impossible when you're piloting a Firemoth, though surprisingly enough, your starmates will sometimes flourish in them due to the extra speed. Try giving your starmates Firemoths when you're fighting on a low-gravity moon, and you'll be surprised at how effectively they deal with larger foes.

M.D.05.05.3055

Six Stars of Wolf Elites charged onto the icy battlefield, meeting their Jade Falcon counterparts with a thunder of grinding engines and hissing gunfire. Gregor sprinted into the foray in his tiny Firemoth, dodging the huge, lumbering bodies and peppering the closest with a spattering of laser beams. The titans of the battlefield lumbered past him, oblivious, intent on reducing to ashes their equally weighty adversaries.

Gregor relished his tiny 'Mech. Here he was, darting through the crowded battlefield like an avenging angel, branding the evil giants with his deadly blade.

Gregor dashed behind a Falcon Warhawk and, grinning madly, set about melting the armor plates on the back of its metal knees. His laser fire drew no notice, so preoccupied was the Falcon with a Wolf Marauder IIC planted dead ahead.

Suddenly the Wolf Marauder IIC leveled a mighty arm and fired at the Warhawk. Its PPC and laser suite passed wide to the right of its target, barely missing the Warhawk's awkwardly hunched shins. The shots crashed into Gregor's Firemoth and tore its leg off at the knee, and Gregor was left standing motionless as the battle raged around him.

There was only one thing for him to do now: Pray that nobody would knock him over.

Kit Fox

Kit Fox	
Mass	30 tons
Chassis	Endo steel
Power plant	180 XL
Cruising speed	64.8 kph
Maximum speed	97.2 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	10	9
Center torso (rear)	-	5
R/L torso	7	8
R/L torso (rear)	-	4
R/L arm	5	7
R/L leg	7	8

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Large ER laser	LA	1	4
Small pulse laser	LA	1	1
Streak SRM-4	RA	1	2
Ammo (Streak) 25	RA	1	1
CASE	RA	0	0
LB 5-X	RA	4	7
Ammo (AC)	RA	1	1

Figure 7-2 Kit Fox

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	Ferro-fibrous	0
Center torso	Double heat sink	0
Right torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	–
	3 Endo steel	5
Left torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	–
	2 Endo steel	6
Right arm	Ferro-fibrous	–
	Endo steel	7
Left arm	Ferro-fibrous	–
	Endo steel	7
Right leg	Double heat sink	0
Left leg	Double heat sink	0

The Kit Fox is a problematic 'Mech in its primary configuration. It's not as fast as the Firemoth so it's less suited to missions requiring pure speed, but it's still more than fast enough for combat. It does not have Jump Jets, however, so its overall agility is no better than the Firemoth's.

A Kit Fox weighs in at 10 more tons than a Firemoth, and those extra tons are typically used for enhanced weapons systems. This is the case in the Kit Fox's primary configuration, but the selection and placement of weapons in this configuration is quite poor. The ER large laser should be replaced with medium lasers if at all possible, while the small pulse laser should be replaced with a more damaging small ER laser: After all, if you're close enough to be within a small laser's effective range, you won't need the pulse laser's rapid fire to help you hit your foe.

The Streak SRM-4 isn't a bad choice at all, though you might want to remove the LB 5-X and its ammo to make room for a Streak SRM-6 instead, and use the excess tonnage for armor. Armor is hard to come by in these small 'Mech designs, so you're well advised to use as much as you possibly can.

All the Kit Fox's weapons are located in its arms, which is not good. Although it's true that a small 'Mech is vulnerable in all locations, the arms are definitely the weakest spot, especially if there are very few torso weapons to distract enemy pilots' shots. Try to reconfigure the Kit Fox and spread its weapons around, putting one or two medium lasers in the torso as well as the arms.

Caution: If left unmodified, the Kit Fox is a relatively difficult 'Mech to pilot. It sports more guns than the Firemoth and therefore it's tempting to slug it out with bigger 'Mechs. But there just isn't enough armor on the Fox to sustain such a direct approach. You'll have to remember that, despite your decent complement of weapons systems, you're still very easily destroyed.

The Jenner II-C

Jenner II-C	
Mass	35 tons
Chassis	Endo steel
Power plant	315 XL
Cruising speed	97.2 kph
Maximum speed	151.2 kph
Jump Jets	7
Jump capacity	210 meters
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

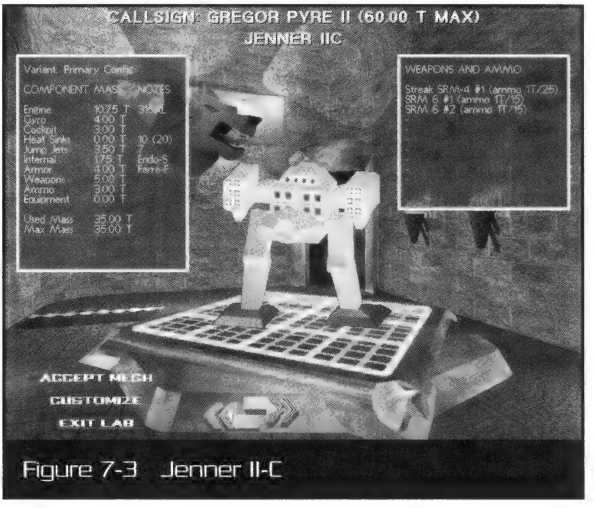


Figure 7-3 Jenner II-C

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	7
Center torso	11	13
Center torso (rear)	-	7
R/L torso	8	8
R/L torso (rear)	-	4
R/L arm	6	4
R/L leg	8	9

The Jenner II-C is a solid 'Mech design boasting exceptional speed and good firepower. The Jenner II-C is almost as fast as the Firemoth when on the ground, and it will achieve vastly greater speeds when using its powerful Jump Jets. This makes the Jenner II-C an excellent choice for hit-and-run missions. The Jenner II-C is best in missions where you can either avoid excessive combat or instruct your starmates to do your fighting for you. If a fight is unavoidable, however, the Jenner II-C can usually hold its own.

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Streak SRM 4	CT	1	2
Ammo (Streak SRM) 25	RT	1	1
SRM-6	RA	1	1.5
Ammo (SRM) 15	RT	1	1
SRM-6	LA	1	1.5
Ammo (SRM) 15	RT	0	0
Jump Jets	LL	3	1.5
Jump Jets	RL	3	1.5
Jump Jets	RL	1	0.5
CASE	LT	0	0

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	–	1
Center torso	Jump Jets	1
Right torso	2 Engine 2 Double heat sink	– 6
Left torso	2 Engine 2 Double heat sink	– 6
Right arm	–	8
Left arm	–	8
Right leg	2 Jump Jets	0
Left leg	2 Jump Jets	0

If there's any problem with the Jenner II-C, it's the extremely ammo-dependent primary configuration. SRMs are strong at close range, but the Jenner II-C's dearth of beam weapons can cripple it. You might put up a brilliant fight, only to realize that even though you've beaten your foe and escaped unscathed, you've still lost the mission because you lack the ammunition to finish it. Also, the ammunition necessary to power those SRMs leaves the Jenner II-C extremely vulnerable to ammo explosions.

Finally, the Jenner II-C features a typical small 'Mech configuration, with the primary weapons located in the arms. This is hard to avoid in the Jenner II-C, however, because Jump Jets take up all the leg space, and the SRM ammunition has to go somewhere as well.

You can reconfigure the Jenner II-C with medium lasers if you wish to combat these problems, but doing this will introduce a new set of heat-related difficulties. Regardless of what you do to the weapons systems, however, I'd recommend that you leave the Jenner II-C's speed and jump capacity intact. That maneuverability is this 'Mech's strongest point, and by slowing it down to add more weapons you essentially make it an imitation heavy 'Mech, well-armed but lacking the armor to stand up to its deadlier opponents.

When assigning 'Mechs to your Star, you should consider giving your starmates a slightly modified version of the Jenner II-C. When refitted with beam weapons, the Jenner II-C is one of the best 'Mechs to hand out to your subordinates. It's also great for you, if you don't mind its limited firepower and relatively light armor.

On to the Medium 'Mechs

Now its time to look at the medium 'Mechs. You'll have a much better chance of actually completing your missions when you're piloting these units.

CHAPTER 8

Medium 'Mechs

So light 'Mechs are good scouts, and heavy 'Mechs, as we'll see in Chapter 9, are great fighters; but what's the advantage of medium 'Mechs?

In a word, versatility. Many of your missions will involve both combat and scouting, so knowing your way around a medium 'Mech is invaluable. In the following pages I'll review the Nova, the Storm Crow, and the Mad Dog, the three medium 'Mechs in the *MechWarrior 2* lineup.

Medium 'Mechs: Chameleons on the Battlefield

Medium 'Mechs are exciting machines in many respects. They're light enough to move quickly (sometimes as quickly as a light 'Mech) but heavy enough to engage even the brawniest opponents and have at least a fighting chance of winning. Medium 'Mechs allow you a lot of scope for customization: They're big enough to support the heaviest weapons systems, although not without squeezing a bit.

In addition to their versatility, medium 'Mechs are very efficient. With heavy 'Mechs you must devote a lot of space to engines if you want to achieve decent speeds. Light 'Mechs have a different problem—they only require small engines but don't have the tonnage to mount much weaponry or equipment. Medium 'Mechs strike a fine balance between these extremes, and as a result there is very little waste.

A skilled pilot can often use a medium 'Mech to finish a mission where a heavy 'Mech is recommended. Very seldom can you finish a heavy 'Mech mission in a light 'Mech, but accomplishing a 70-tonner's mission in a 50-ton 'Mech is entirely possible. Experiment with different designs and see what you can achieve.

The Nova

Nova	
Mass	50 tons
Chassis	Standard
Power plant	250 XL
Cruising speed	54 kph
Maximum speed	86.4 kph
Jump Jets	5
Jump capacity	150 meters
Armor	Standard

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	16	23
Center torso (rear)	–	8
R/L torso	12	17
R/L torso (rear)	–	7
R/L arm	8	16
R/L leg	12	20

Figure 8-1 Nova

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
Double heat sink (1)	LA	2	1
Double heat sink (1)	LT	2	1
Medium ER laser	RA	1	1
Medium ER laser	RA	1	1
Medium ER laser	RA	1	1
Medium ER laser	RA	1	1
Medium ER laser	RA	1	1
Medium ER laser	RA	1	1
Double heat sink (1)	RA	2	1
Double heat sink (1)	RT	2	1

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	–	1
Center torso	Jump Jets	1
Right torso	2 Engine 2 Double heat sink	– 6
Left torso	2 Engine 2 Double heat sink	– 6
Right arm	–	8
Left arm	–	8
Right leg	2 Jump Jets	0
Left leg	2 Jump Jets	0

The Nova is a most unusual 'Mech. It may appear squat and ungainly, but it's a terrifically maneuverable and agile machine. To a large extent this is due to its powerful Jump Jets, which allow the Nova pilot to perform both high-speed travel and extreme combat maneuvers with great ease. The only real drawback to this 'Mech is its inability to torso twist, a great liability for some pilots but a minimal nuisance for others.

The primary weapons configuration for the Nova is nearly flawless; its official specs are not. They indicate that it carries 12 medium lasers, but that's impossible because in *MechWarrior 2* a 'Mech can carry only 10 weapons maximum. Still, the principle remains the same: medium lasers and more medium lasers! In a Nova you can alpha strike with all your lasers once or twice without overheating, and this inflicts some tremendous damage. I cannot say enough about the efficiency and power of a medium laser arsenal such as this, especially in a medium 'Mech where the supposed heavy hitters like Gauss rifles and AC-20s are not feasible due to weight and space restrictions.

Laser placement is the one aspect of the Nova that could stand some improvement. They're lumped into the arms, as is so often the case with prefabricated 'Mechs, so you'll probably want to spread them around before setting off on a mission. Many pilots like to scatter the lasers throughout the arms and torso, and perhaps even remove a laser or two to make room for some extra armor.

Tip: The Nova is one of the very few 'Mechs you'll be tempted to use more or less as is. Its great weapons configuration only needs a little work, and if you don't miss the torso-twisting capability, this medium 'Mech might prove to be one of your favorites.

M.D.05.08.3055

After a heated argument with Edward Janus, a fellow MechWarrior and notorious hothead, Gregor agreed to a Trial of Grievance. It was to take place in a shielded dome filled with sand and giant boulders, and neither man would pilot a 'Mech of more than 50 tons. After preparing a custom design and submitting his request to the techs, Gregor scouted the arena. When he left the dome hours later, he was confident he'd pulverize the upstart Janus.

On the morning of the trial Gregor proceeded to the dome and asked about his 'Mech. To his horror, his request had been lost somehow and his carefully worked custom design was never created. Gregor's only choices were a standard-issue Nova and a dilapidated Jenner II-C that was missing an arm. Uneasy but unwilling to sacrifice honor by turning down the challenge, Gregor climbed into the Nova with a heavy heart. He would be facing Edward Janus's completely retooled Nova, a slow but bruising design sporting a heavy autocannon and an array of machine guns.

When the green light flashed, Gregor sprinted out into the arena and discovered that the sand slowed his 'Mech immensely, shifting and sliding underfoot and grabbing at the Nova's actuators. He fired the Jump Jets and flew aloft, peering down at the rocky expanse of the arena. There was Janus, plodding along below; apparently his design had no jets.

Gregor fired a blistering alpha strike as he plummeted earthward, smashing the enemy Nova's arm with full force and wrenching off the autocannon mounted there. Hitting the sand with a jarring thud, Gregor engaged full throttle and ran past Janus's 'Mech, ignoring the plink of machine gun bullets as they rattled his torso armor.

Rounding his adversary's 'Mech and executing a fast pivot with his Jump Jets, Gregor fired two powerful strikes into the back left torso of Janus's prized custom design. His lasers burned a ragged hole through the weak back armor and triggered a deafening ammo explosion that sent the 'Mech reeling, defeated, to the floor of the arena.

Gregor congratulated himself on a stupendous victory and went on to pilot standard Novas very frequently in his later missions.

The Storm Crow

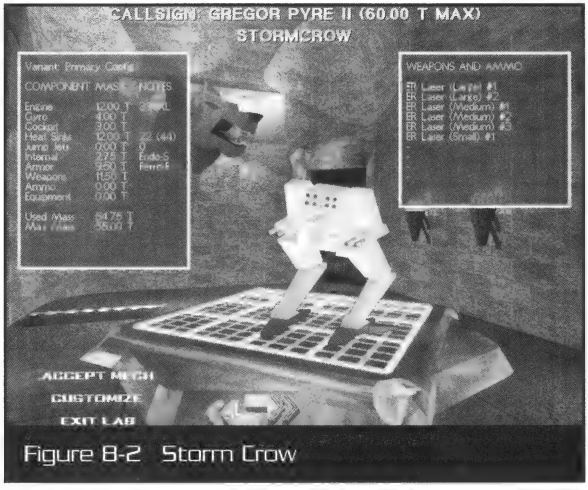


Figure 8-2 Storm Crow

Storm Crow	
Mass	55 tons
Chassis	Endo steel
Power plant	330 XL
Cruising speed	64.8 kph
Maximum speed	97.2 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	18	25
Center torso (rear)	–	11
R/L torso	13	17
R/L torso (rear)	–	9
R/L arm	9	18
R/L leg	13	26

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
Medium ER laser	CT	1	1
Large ER laser	LA	1	4
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
Double heat sink (3)	LT	6	3
Large ER laser	RA	1	4
Medium ER laser	RA	1	1
Double heat sink (3)	RA	6	3
Double heat sink (3)	RT	6	3

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	Ferro-fibrous	0
Center torso	Endo steel	1
Right torso	2 Engine	–
	3 Ferro-fibrous	–
	Endo steel	6
Left torso	2 Engine	–
	3 Ferro-fibrous	–
	Endo steel	6
Right arm	–	9
Left arm	–	9
Right leg	2 Endo steel	0
Left leg	2 Endo steel	0

The Storm Crow is a clumsy looking beast, a hunched-over 'Mech with no apparent head. It's a speed demon on the ground but does not sport Jump Jets or MASC. Still, the Storm Crow's energy will satisfy all but the most velocity-crazed pilots.

The techs who designed the Storm Crow blew it badly on the weapons configuration. Aside from the fact that the arms host the primary weapons systems (as always), there are two large lasers in the primary configuration, and that's two more large lasers than a pilot ever needs. It doesn't really matter what you replace them with, but leaving those large lasers in place will overburden the Storm Crow's heat sinks, numerous as they are.

A good alternative configuration scraps the large lasers and adds a PPC or medium lasers instead. The PPC generates considerable heat but is much more effective than the large laser. An AC-10 is another solid replacement for the large lasers. Some pilots like to outfit the Storm Crow with more unusual weapons configurations, like a huge battery of machine guns or a preponderance of SRMs.

In spite of its impressive speed, the Storm Crow personifies the mediocrity that many pilots associate with medium 'Mechs. In its standard configuration it is neither remarkably agile nor powerful, and it definitely tends to overheat. But if you tear it apart and think of it as a 55-ton chassis to rebuild, your experience with this 'Mech can be quite gratifying.

Tip: If you need a 'Mech similar in tonnage to the Nova but you can't do without torso twisting, consider refitting the Storm Crow as if it were a Nova. The extra five tons can be an asset, allowing room for a little more weaponry or armor. In fact, a Storm Crow is probably at its best when it's reconfigured to look like a 55-ton Nova.

The Mad Dog

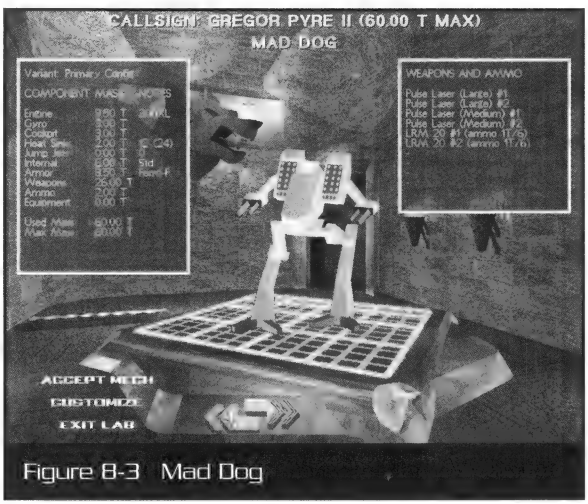


Figure 8-3 Mad Dog

Mad Dog

Mass	60 tons
Chassis	Standard
Power plant	300 XL
Cruising speed	54 kph
Maximum speed	86.4 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	20	23
Center torso (rear)	-	7
R/L torso	14	16
R/L torso (rear)	-	7
R/L arm	10	16
R/L leg	14	23

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
Large pulse laser	LA	2	6
Medium pulse laser	LA	1	2
LRM-20	LT	4	5
Ammo (LRM) 6	LT	1	1
CASE	LT	0	0
Large pulse laser	RA	2	6
Medium pulse laser	RA	1	2
LRM-20	RT	4	5
Ammo (LRM) 6	RT	1	1
CASE	RT	0	0

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	Ferro-fibrous	0
Center torso	–	2
Right torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	8
Left torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	8
Right arm	Ferro-fibrous	8
Left arm	Ferro-fibrous	8
Right leg	–	2
Left leg	–	2

The Mad Dog is a 'Mech you'll probably see a lot of; its 60 tons fall squarely into the range you'll be assigned for many of your missions. Because of this, you will probably design more variants of the Mad Dog than any other type of 'Mech. In its base configuration the Mad Dog offers respectable speed and an extraordinary long-range punch, ill-suited for close combat. The Mad Dog can be made more versatile with the addition of Jump Jets, or it can be made to emulate a large, slow weapons platform capable of destroying immense, bruiser 'Mechs—but not without sustaining considerable damage in return.

The fact is, the Mad Dog's primary configuration is inappropriate for most missions. The biggest drawbacks are its twin LRM-20s. They do provide exhilarating power at long range, allowing you to annihilate small 'Mechs before they get close. But there are only six shots' worth of ammunition in this configuration, and you'll need to fire the LRMs more than that to win most missions.

Tip: As a rule, if you can't get at least 20 shots out of a weapon you're better off replacing it with a beam weapon you can use unreservedly.

What's more, LRMs aren't versatile. On missions with dense, vertical terrain you may never get a single clean shot with your LRMs, much less six good shots. You're better off scrubbing the LRMs and the large lasers and reconfiguring the Mad Dog's weapons systems from the ground up.

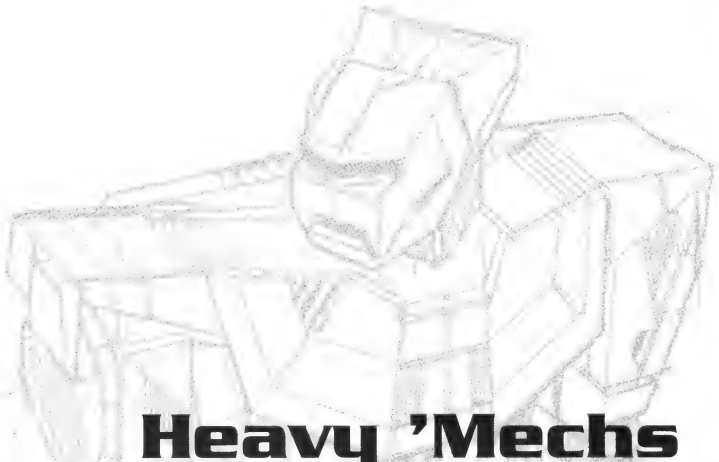
However, customizing a Mad Dog requires a good deal of thought. Sixty tons is a truly intermediate weight for a 'Mech, which means you'll probably be unable to make it either go as fast as you want or carry as many weapons as you need. The best idea is to pick a direction and run with it: Jump Jets for a faster and harder-to-hit 'Mech, or a load of weapons (and possibly a smaller engine) for firepower that can level the big guys.

The adjective most often used to describe the Mad Dog is *solid.* It will never be the fastest 'Mech, nor the strongest, but if you customize it wisely it will serve you well in many different situations. Play with this 'Mech design and save a variety of configurations. There's no telling how often you'll use them.

On to the Heavy 'Mechs

Now let's take a look at the heavy 'Mechs. While medium 'Mech's are indeed versatile and efficient, their heavier counterparts are a lot of fun. You'll spend a lot of time in them, because most of your missions will demand no less.

CHAPTER 9



Heavy 'Mechs

Despite the many virtues of light and medium 'Mechs, most pilots prefer the sheer size and firepower of a heavy 'Mech. Indeed, since enemy pilots like to attack the Star leader first, you often won't have the luxury of using a small or medium 'Mech. Instead you'll need a 'Mech with enough armor to survive a long and grueling mission, and enough firepower to deliver a fast knockout blow to smaller 'Mechs that get in your way. That means you'll be manning a Hellbringer, Rifleman II-C, Summoner, or Timber Wolf, each of which I'll discuss in this chapter.

Combat Heavyweights

As a rule, heavy 'Mechs are not terribly agile. However, they can be fast and passably nimble, so if you customize them for speed you won't be wasting your time. The Summoner is a good case in point: In addition to its respectable speed and powerful Jump Jets, it is an intimidating and quite deadly foe.

Heavy 'Mechs are tall and wide, which makes them easy targets for enemy fire. Pilots engaging smaller 'Mechs at close range often have difficulty angling down to blast away at their little opponents. Neither of these drawbacks severely limits the effectiveness of heavy 'Mechs, but it's important to understand that there are a few minor trade-offs to reckon with when you pilot one of these bruisers.

Your middle to later missions will be spent primarily in heavy 'Mechs, so you will doubtless develop several custom designs.

The Hellbringer

Figure 9-1 Hellbringer

Hellbringer	
Mass	65 tons
Chassis	Standard
Power plant	325 XL
Cruising speed	54 kph
Maximum speed	86.4 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Standard

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	21	17
Center torso (rear)	8	–
R/L torso	15	14
R/L torso (rear)	7	–
R/L arm	10	11
R/L leg	15	15

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
CASE	CT	0	0
ER PPC	LA	2	6
ER medium laser	LT	1	1
ER medium laser	LT	1	1
ER medium laser	LT	1	1
ER PPC	RA	2	6
Streak SRM-6	RT	2	3
Ammo (Streak) 15	RT	1	1
Machine gun	RT	1	0.25
Ammo (MG) 200	RT	1	1
CASE	RT	0	0

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	–	1
Center torso	–	2
Right torso	2 Engine	10
Left torso	2 Engine	10
Right arm	–	9
Left arm	–	9
Right leg	–	2
Left leg	–	2

The Hellbringer is a solid 65-ton 'Mech with decent speed and solid weapons systems. Nothing about this 'Mech's primary configuration will excite most pilots, but the Hellbringer offers a reliable combination of speed and power that allows its pilot to maim smaller 'Mechs easily and to avoid the most damaging blows of heavier opponents.

The primary weapons configuration is not bad at all, though it is somewhat prone to overheating in the midst of battle. The twin PPCs provide good, concentrated damage, albeit at a large heat cost. A trio of medium lasers, mounted (wisely) in the Hellbringer's torso, provides good, efficient damage at mid- to close range. And the Streak SRM-6, also torso mounted, is a fine supplementary system and an excellent way to dispatch small, highly mobile targets with little effort. The torso-mounted machine gun isn't a bad supplement to the Hellbringer's close-range firepower, although when it comes time to customize the Hellbringer this is often the first weapon to go.

Some pilots like to remove a PPC from the Hellbringer and replace it with a small autocannon or medium lasers, thereby negating some of the inevitable heat problems in battle. Pilots who have difficulty monitoring heat levels should by all means remove at least one of the standard PPCs. Also consider removing the machine gun to make room for SRM ammo. The SRM-6 is a fine system, but it will often see heavy use and could benefit from a few more missiles. Losing the machine gun leaves room for a little extra armor as well.

The Hellbringer is an adequate choice for starmates as well as Star leaders, though you might want to add Jump Jets to the configuration when assigning starmates to this 'Mech.

The Rifleman II-C

Rifleman II-C	
Mass	65 tons
Chassis	Endo steel
Power plant	195 standard
Cruising speed	32.4 kph
Maximum speed	54.0 kph
Jump Jets	3
Jump capacity	90 meters
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

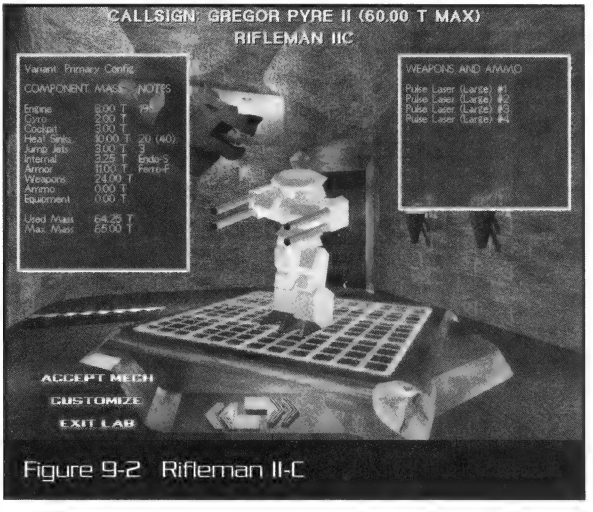


Figure 9-2 Rifleman II-C

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	21	30
Center torso (rear)	12	–
R/L torso	15	20
R/L torso (rear)	10	–
R/L arm	10	20
R/L leg	15	30

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Large pulse laser	LA	2	6
Large pulse laser	LA	2	6
Large pulse laser	RA	2	6
Large pulse laser	RA	2	6
Jump Jets	LT	1	1
Jump Jets	CT	1	1
Jump Jets	RT	1	1

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	–	1
Center torso	–	2
Right torso	2 Engine	10
Left torso	2 Engine	10
Right arm	–	9
Left arm	–	9
Right leg	–	2
Left leg	–	2

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Gregor blasted away at the enemy Rifleman, a regulation design featuring large lasers and Jump Jets. Gregor's own Rifleman was a standard-issue plodder as well—a laser platform but little else.

The two 'Mechs swapped shot after shot, and several times Gregor's HUD threatened to black out. A critical hit to the engine forced him to turn and start a retreat, but he knew he didn't have the speed. Still the laser bolts kept coming, a constant stream of sizzling destruction. How could the Falcon pilot keep this up in the middle of a desert? It was impossible.

After scraping his way around a mesa Gregor found himself in a dead-end gulch. Grimly, he spun the Rifleman and faced his foe, pounding a few last shots into the enemy torso before the eject mechanism fired him high into the blisteringly hot desert air.

Later, at Wolf headquarters, he explained a new theory to his Star colonel.

"Sir, they have a new cooling system. I'm *sure* of it."

As Colonel Kesh listened to Gregor's theories a half-smile crept across his badly scarred face. After reflecting for a moment or two, he acknowledged Gregor's comments with a curt nod and dismissed him from the room.

Gregor seethed with fury all that night. The Falcons had developed a new sort of heat sink. It was the only possible explanation.

The most distinctive features of the Rifleman II-C are its arm-mounted lasers, its slowness, and its incredible heat production. The Rifleman is a curious design. It is torpid on the ground, but its Jump

Jets provide an alternate mode of travel. Its weapon systems are composed exclusively of large lasers, the most inefficient heat-generators in all of *MechWarrior 2*, yet the Rifleman can still be extremely potent.

The Rifleman's sluggishness is the price you pay for its vast firepower, but using that firepower is a tricky business because of this 'Mech's near-legendary tendency to overheat. Unfortunately, if you wish to make the Rifleman more efficient, you have to completely overhaul it. You'll need to increase the speed, add different weapons, and move those new weapons out of the vulnerable arm position, thereby cutting the odds that you'll be reduced to an armless spectator as the battle rages around you.

After you pilot a Rifleman II-C and experience its waste and excess firsthand, you'll be amazed at the wonders enemy pilots can work with it. They pepper you with endless laser fire, seeming to defy the laws of heat transfer with their repeated shots. There are several theories about this phenomenon, but none adequately explains the incredible power of the computer-controlled Rifleman.

Summoner

Figure 9-3 Summoner

Summoner

Mass	70 tons
Chassis	Standard
Power plant	350 XL
Cruising speed	54 kph
Maximum speed	86.4 kph
Jump Jets	5
Jump capacity	150 meters
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	8
Center torso	22	27
Center torso (rear)	8	–
R/L torso	15	22
R/L torso (rear)	7	–
R/L arm	11	17
R/L leg	15	23

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Large pulse laser	LA	2	6
LB 10-X	LA	5	10
Ammo (AC) 10	LA	1	1
CASE	LA	0	0
LRM-15	LT	2	3.5
Ammo (LRM) 16	LT	2	2
CASE	LT	0	0
ER PPC	RA	2	6

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	Ferro-fibrous	0
Center torso	Jump Jets	1
Right torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	8
Left torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	8
Right arm	Ferro-fibrous	8
Left arm	Ferro-fibrous	8
Right leg	2 Jump Jets	0
Left leg	2 Jump Jets	0

The Summoner is an impressive-looking 'Mech with equally impressive capabilities. The design is not overloaded with weapons, but the weapons it has are all extremely powerful. The Summoner is very fast despite its size, attaining ground speeds seldom seen in a 'Mech of its weight. It can perform evasive maneuvers that pilots typically expect only from a much smaller design. Jump Jets add a great deal of mobility to this model, allowing it to dart and leap about the battlefield as if by magic: The Summoner truly is worthy of its name.

A favorite with starmates and enemies alike, the Summoner is an excellent choice for almost any mission. Enemy pilots seem to relish the Summoner's mixture of speed and power—even a poor pilot becomes a threat when controlling this monstrous beast. Seldom, though, will you face a poor pilot in a Summoner. The very best Falcon and Wolf MechWarriors gravitate toward this menacing design.

The only thing you might want to change about the Summoner is its weapons configuration. The PPC, LRMs, and LB 10-X in its standard configuration are geared toward long-range combat, and you may feel ill at ease with this. If so, trim the LRMs or a PPC and add some Streak SRMs or other weapons more suited to close-range infighting. These modifications are not crucial, though. If you use your Jump Jets to keep battles at a reasonably long range, you'll encounter few 'Mechs able to match your power.

When assigning Summoners to starmates, consider removing the LRMs, adding some more ammunition to the autocannon, and tacking on a few lasers for more mid-range power.

The Timber Wolf

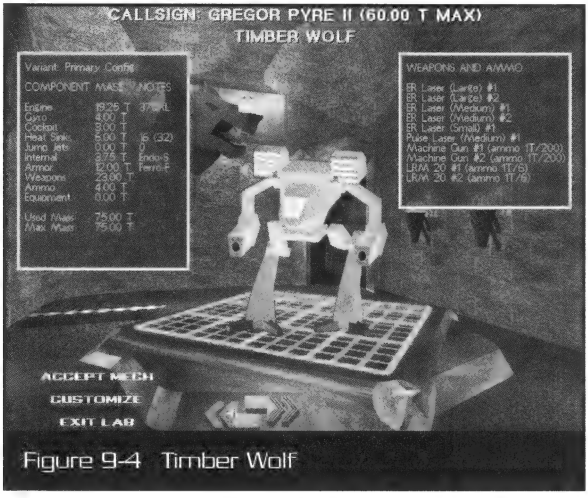

Figure 9-4 Timber Wolf

Timber Wolf

Mass	75 tons
Chassis	Endo steel
Power plant	375 XL
Cruising speed	54 kph
Maximum speed	86.4 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	23	36
Center torso (rear)	9	–
R/L torso	16	24
R/L torso (rear)	8	–
R/L arm	12	24
R/L leg	16	32

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Machine gun	CT	1	0.25
Large ER laser	LA	1	4
Medium ER laser	LA	1	1
Double heat sink (1)	LA	2	1
Medium pulse laser	LT	1	2
LRM-20	LT	4	5
Ammo (LRM) 6	LT	1	1
CASE	LT	0	0
Small ER laser	LT	1	0.5
Large ER laser	RA	1	4
Medium ER laser	RA	1	1
Double heat sink (1)	RA	2	1
Machine gun	RT	1	0.25
Ammo (MG) 200	RT	1	1
Ammo (MG) 200	RA	1	1
CASE	RA	0	0
LRM-20	RT	4	5
Ammo (LRM) 6	RT	1	1
CASE	RT	0	0

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	Ferro-fibrous	0
Center torso	Endo steel	1
Right torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	–
	Endo steel	7
Left torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	–
	Endo steel	7
Right arm	Ferro-fibrous	8
Left arm	Ferro-fibrous	8
Right leg	2 Endo steel	0
Left leg	2 Endo steel	0

With twin LRM-20s that generate massive firepower but carry very little ammo, the Timber Wolf is one of those designs you'll want to modify before piloting. If you're facing off with an enemy Timber Wolf, beware: It usually has a few missile salvos left to shoot at you, and that's all it needs to destroy you. On the other hand, if *you* are the pilot of the Timber Wolf, you'll be battling so many enemies that six shots is nowhere near enough.

The Timber Wolf has good speed but no Jump Jets; no matter, you probably don't need them. The LRM-20s, with their measly six shots, definitely need modification. Remove one of them and use the space to add ammunition for the other LRM and to tack on some extra armor or medium lasers. As always, I highly recommend replacing the large lasers.

Otherwise the Timber Wolf's weapons configuration is quite solid. The machine guns and small lasers can be grouped for a strong short-range punch; the medium and large lasers can be grouped into another slot for mid- to long-range targets; and the LRMs should get their own special group, to be used only when dealing with foes at extended range.

The Timber Wolf is a strong 'Mech with good power at any range. It is fairly fast and it will seldom overheat if you learn to stay away from those large lasers. If you're handed a Timber Wolf in a Trial of Position (where you have no control over weapons configuration), make sure your LRMs count! Fire them when you're positive they will hit, and don't wait until your enemies are too close for their tracking mechanism to engage.

Starmates often seem a little befuddled when you place them in a Timber Wolf. Perhaps the sheer variety of weapons baffles them, or maybe the lack of Jump Jets depresses them. Whatever the reasons for your starmates' confusion, it's a good idea not to assign them Timber Wolves.

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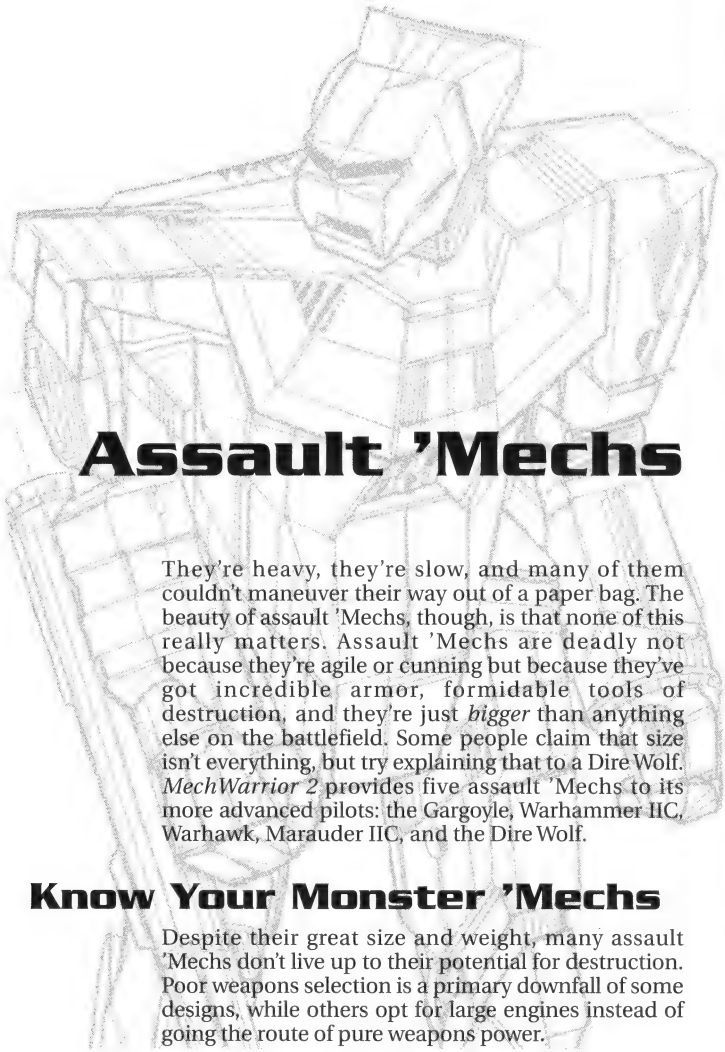
Alone in the computerized simulation room, Gregor played and replayed a hypothetical Trial of Position. He was given a Timber Wolf every time and expected to face overwhelming opposition. How could he win against such unfair odds? He leaned back in his battle simulator and scratched his chin thoughtfully.

Finally he came up with a strategy that worked. He fired both LRM batteries simultaneously at the first Jenner II-C, then another double volley at the second. Aiming the volleys properly and firing them as fast as possible, he destroyed each Jenner II-C with an LRM blast. When the next phase of the trial started, he moved to a position where most of the arena was visible and blasted the smaller of the two final 'Mechs with another LRM-20 salvo. Finally he turned his attention to the Rifleman II-C that lumbered forward slowly, emptying his last LRM shots before closing with his relatively weak lasers to finish the job.

The strategy didn't work every time, but when he fired his missiles properly Gregor found the battle much easier to win.

CHAPTER 10



Assault 'Mechs

They're heavy, they're slow, and many of them couldn't maneuver their way out of a paper bag. The beauty of assault 'Mechs, though, is that none of this really matters. Assault 'Mechs are deadly not because they're agile or cunning but because they've got incredible armor, formidable tools of destruction, and they're just *bigger* than anything else on the battlefield. Some people claim that size isn't everything, but try explaining that to a Dire Wolf. *MechWarrior 2* provides five assault 'Mechs to its more advanced pilots: the Gargoyle, Warhammer IIC, Warhawk, Marauder IIC, and the Dire Wolf.

Know Your Monster 'Mechs

Despite their great size and weight, many assault 'Mechs don't live up to their potential for destruction. Poor weapons selection is a primary downfall of some designs, while others opt for large engines instead of going the route of pure weapons power.

An assault 'Mech can indeed be maneuverable, but at what cost? If you want a fast and maneuverable 'Mech, look elsewhere. Don't try to make these lumbering giants into speed demons—heavy 'Mechs are better suited for that sort of customizing. But if it doesn't bother you that it takes a little longer to complete your mission, then assault 'Mechs are a perfect choice. Getting to and from each NAV point will be painfully slow, it's true, but on the bright side you get to flat-out obliterate anything that tries to slow you down any further.

Tip: Assault 'Mechs accommodate weapons systems that just won't work in a smaller design. The Gauss rifle and the dreaded AC-20 can be yours when you opt to pilot one of these massive 'Mechs. That doesn't mean your choices are unlimited, though. You'll have to deal with critical spaces as well as tonnage, and those huge implements of destruction take up a lot of room.

There are many benefits to rising in rank. You can command starmates, take on more important missions, or simply relish the knowledge that you've attained a title few others possess. But the biggest asset of all is your increased tonnage, because only when you're piloting the heaviest of 'Mechs will you know what it's like to be the undisputed king of the battlefield.

The Gargoyle

Figure 10-1 Gargoyle

Gargoyle

Mass	80 tons
Chassis	Standard
Power plant	400 XL
Cruising speed	54 kph
Maximum speed	86.4 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	25	30
Center torso (rear)	-	10
R/L torso	17	24
R/L torso (rear)	-	10
R/L arm	13	23
R/L leg	17	24

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Small ER laser	CT	1	0.5
LB 5-X	LA	4	7
SRM-6	LA	1	1.5
Ammo (AC) 10	LT	1	1
CASE	LT	0	0
Ammo (SRM) 15	LT	1	1
LB 5-X	RA	4	7
SRM-6	RA	1	1.5
Ammo (AC) 10	RT	1	1
CASE	RT	0	0
Ammo (SRM) 15	RT	1	1

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	Ferro-fibrous	0
Center torso	–	2
Right torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	8
Left torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	8
Right arm	Ferro-fibrous	8
Left arm	Ferro-fibrous	8
Right leg	–	2
Left leg	–	2

Depending on your point of view, the visage of the Gargoyle can be formidable or downright silly. The Gargoyle is certainly one of the most distinctive and easily recognizable 'Mechs on the battlefield. Its thick, stubby limbs and leering face make it look like a strange toy robot grown large. You would expect the Gargoyle's capabilities to belie this toylike appearance, but in essence they do not. The Gargoyle is one of the most underpowered 'Mech designs you'll ever have the displeasure of piloting.

The problems begin with the Gargoyle's large engine. With a running speed of around 86 kph it's undeniably fast, but at 80 tons this monster wasn't meant to be fast. When you first confront a Gargoyle on the battlefield its remarkable agility might give you pause, but soon you'll realize that agility amounts to naught without sufficient firepower to eliminate one's foes.

Each arm of the Gargoyle holds an SRM-6 and an LB 5-X, decent weapons to be sure, but not nearly enough for a 'Mech of this size. And their location makes the Gargoyle one of the most vulnerable 'Mechs around. Arms are perhaps the easiest part of a 'Mech to blast away, so to destroy a standard-configuration Gargoyle, simply shear off its arms and then deal with other 'Mechs as you need to. Later you can come back and finish off the armless Gargoyle, which now amounts to a large, armored target.

If you want to pilot a Gargoyle, your best bet is to immediately trim down the engine size, rip out all the existing weapons, and stock up on some serious firepower. Otherwise you'll be piloting the biggest joke on the battlefield.

Caution: The standard-configuration Gargoyle is a terrible 'Mech for you to pilot, but it's even worse for your starmates: It is slow, has weak weapons, and is prone to running out of ammunition.

The Warhammer IIC

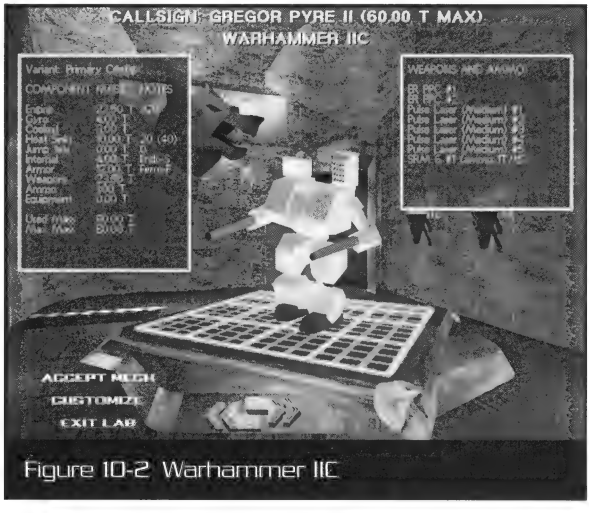


Figure 10-2 Warhammer IIC

Warhammer IIC	
Mass	80 tons
Chassis	Endo steel
Power plant	320 standard
Cruising speed	43.2 kph
Maximum speed	64.8 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	25	30
Center torso (rear)	–	15
R/L torso	17	24
R/L torso (rear)	–	10
R/L arm	13	24
R/L leg	17	30

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
ER PPC	LA	2	6
ER PPC	RA	2	6
Medium pulse laser	H	1	2
Medium pulse laser	LT	1	2
Medium pulse laser	LT	1	2
SRM-6	RT	1	1.5
Ammo (SRM) 15	RT	1	1
CASE	RT	0	0
Medium pulse laser	RT	1	2
Medium pulse laser	RT	1	2

A favorite of every MechWarrior, the Warhammer IIC is a big, aggressive-looking 80 tonner with decent speed and devastating weapons in its primary configuration. It is somewhat prone to heat problems, but the vast firepower more than outweighs any downside to this design. Based almost entirely upon beam-weapon technology, the Warhammer IIC will never suffer from a lack of ammunition. The beam-weapons configuration also makes the Warhammer IIC a very versatile design that will thrive in any terrain or environment.

The Warhammer IIC even gets high marks for weapons placement. The PPCs are slung in either arm, which isn't necessarily ideal, but the medium lasers and SRMs stowed in the torso compensate somewhat.

Modifying the Warhammer IIC is entirely optional. The 'Mech has no glaring faults and is extremely well balanced: It provides optimal power and at the same time manages heat buildup rather nicely. Some pilots prefer to scrap the weapons system entirely and replace the beam weapons with heavy autocannons or Gauss rifles. This is a

legitimate approach, and if done properly it gives the Warhammer IIC an even deadlier knockout punch. However, Gauss rifles and autocannons need ammunition, and one of the best things about the standard configuration of the Warhammer IIC is that it frees you from ammo worries.

Enemy pilots and starmates do tolerably well with the Warhammer IIC. The lack of speed and Jump Jets is a problem, but its limitless firepower makes this 'Mech ideal for starmates who aim poorly but shoot a lot.

The Warhawk

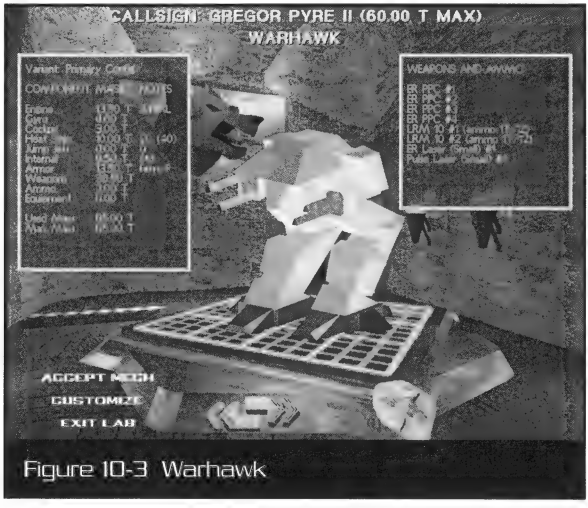


Figure 10-3 Warhawk

Warhawk	
Mass	85 tons
Chassis	Standard
Power plant	340 XL
Cruising speed	43.2 kph
Maximum speed	64.8 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	27	42
Center torso (rear)	–	10
R/L torso	18	26
R/L torso (rear)	–	10
R/L arm	14	28
R/L leg	18	35

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
ER PPC	LA	2	6
ER PPC	LA	2	6
LRM-10	LA	1	2.5
Ammo (LRM) 12	LA	1	1
CASE	LA	0	0
ER PPC	RA	2	6
ER PPC	RA	2	6

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	Ferro-fibrous	0
Center torso	–	2
Right torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	–
	Double heat sink	6
Left torso	2 Engine	–
	2 Ferro-fibrous	–
	4 Double heat sinks	0
Right arm	Ferro-fibrous	8
Left arm	Ferro-fibrous	8
Right leg	Double heat sink	0
Left leg	Double heat sink	0

Though the Warhawk weighs just as much as the Marauder IIC (discussed next, it is one of the thickest 'Mechs, featuring a heavy build that's easy for enemies to target. In spite of this, the Warhawk is hardly an easy mark). It embodies the assault 'Mech's maxim of sheer firepower: Its multiple PPC design allows it to rain devastation upon foes at any range, and an LRM-10 launcher augments its awe-inspiring long-distance prowess.

The Warhawk has room for improvement, however. When an assault 'Mech's main guns are all PPCs, heat levels tend to reduce the actual efficiency of its weapons. What's more, its entire arsenal is located in its arms, so while the Warhawk is nowhere near as underpowered as the pathetic Gargoyle, it faces the same fate if its arms get shot off.

Many pilots like to remove a couple of the PPCs and replace them with Streak SRM launchers. The Streak missile array is a quality weapons system that takes up relatively little space and, more important for this design, produces much less heat than a PPC. Four PPCs are powerful indeed, but they cannot be fired too quickly: Cockpit heat levels rise too far, too fast.

The Warhawk is formidable in the hands of skilled warriors but weak when piloted by incompetents. The PPCs' relatively slow projectiles miss frequently if they aren't aimed with a careful and steady hand, and too often a poor pilot falls into a routine of firing and missing, waiting for heat to subside, then taking another poorly aimed shot. When assigning 'Mechs for inept starmates, the Warhawk is clearly a bad choice.

The Marauder IIC

Marauder IIC	
Mass	85 tons
Chassis	Endo steel
Power plant	340 standard
Cruising speed	43.2 kph
Maximum speed	64.8 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Ferro-fibrous

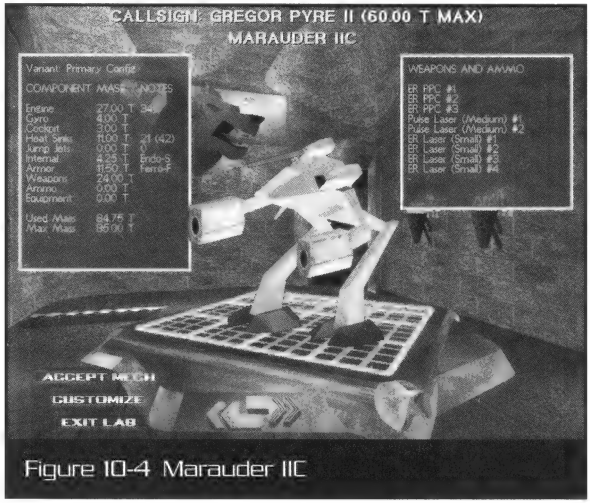


Figure 10-4 Marauder IIC

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	27	30
Center torso (rear)	–	12
R/L torso	18	26
R/L torso (rear)	–	8
R/L arm	14	24
R/L leg	18	27

Another perennial favorite among MechWarriors, the Marauder IIC is an undeniably powerful fighting machine. Instead of the excessive four-PPC design of the Warhawk, the Marauder IIC cuts back slightly on the PPCs and augments its firepower with more efficient pulse lasers. This mix of beam weapons results in an extremely strong 'Mech with no ammo limitations whatsoever. It has tremendous firepower but is less likely than the Warhawk to overheat in a direct confrontation. Add to this the fact that the Marauder IIC has a very lean, angular profile that's difficult to hit, and you've got an excellent 'Mech for any mission.

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
ER PPC	LA	2	6
ER PPC	RA	2	6
ER PPC	LT	2	6
Medium pulse laser	LA	1	2
Medium pulse laser	RA	1	2
Small ER laser	LT	1	0.5
Small ER laser	CT	1	0.5
Small ER laser	CT	1	0.5
Small ER laser	RT	1	0.5

The placement of the Marauder IIC's weapons systems makes the 'Mech look scary, but it isn't the most efficient configuration. Both low-slung arms are thick with weapons, while the torso (as always) receives fewer weapons systems. Though it defies the overall look of the 'Marauder IIC, which has large and accentuated arms, it might be best to sink another PPC into the torso for better protection.

The Marauder IIC's 65 kph running speed might seem slow when compared with most other 'Mechs, but it's reasonable considering the powerful weapons systems the Marauder IIC can carry. Alternate configurations with Jump Jets punch up the Marauder IIC's speed and versatility, making it an extremely mobile assault 'Mech and a surprising opponent.

Competent pilots flourish in the Marauder IIC, though as we mentioned with the Warhawk, a PPC is generally harder to aim than a laser. Starmates with borderline gunnery skills should not be given a Marauder IIC unless it is extensively refitted, preferably with Jump Jets and autocannons or lasers.

Note: Although it has nothing to do with the mechanics of battle, the silhouette of the Marauder IIC is one of the most formidable inside or outside of the Inner Sphere. The appearance of a Marauder IIC instantly commands respect, making them especially valuable in multiplayer games.

The Dire Wolf

Figure 10-5 Dire Wolf

Dire Wolf	
Mass	100 tons
Chassis	Standard
Power plant	300 XL
Cruising speed	32.4 kph
Maximum speed	54 kph
Jump Jets	None
Jump capacity	None
Armor	Standard

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center torso	31	47
Center torso (rear)	–	14
R/L torso	21	32
R/L torso (rear)	–	10
R/L arm	17	34
R/L leg	21	41

Primary Weapons Configuration

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Ton
Double heat sink (1)	CT	2	1
Large ER laser	LA	1	4
Large ER laser	LA	1	4
Medium pulse laser	LA	1	2
Medium pulse laser	LA	1	2
Medium pulse laser	LA	1	2
CASE	LA	0	0
LRM-10	LT	1	2.5
Ammo (LRM) 12	LT	1	1
Double heat sink (3)	LT	6	3
CASE	LT	0	0
Large ER laser	RA	1	4
Large ER laser	RA	1	4
Medium pulse laser	RA	1	2
Ultra AC-5	RA	3	7
Ammo (AC) 20	RA	1	1
CASE	RA	0	0
Double heat sink (3)	RT	6	3

Weight and Space Allocation

Location	Fixed	Space Remaining
Head	–	1
Center torso	–	2
Right torso	2 Engine Double heat sink	– 8
Left torso	2 Engine Double heat sink	– 8
Right arm	–	9
Left arm	–	9
Right leg	–	2
Left leg	Double heat sink	0

The sheer size of the Dire earns it the title, "King of the Battlefield." There are no other standard hundred-ton designs in *MechWarrior 2*, so the crown is handed to the Dire Wolf by default. The Dire Wolf is a rather slovenly and inefficient king, however, with sprawling, wasteful weapons systems and a remarkably slow top speed.

This isn't to say that you should never use a Dire Wolf; you must experience this mammoth 'Mech at least once. It will be an inefficient experience, to be sure, but what the heck? It's a lot of fun.

Even more fun is modifying the 'Mech so that it's actually a powerful design. The default quad of large lasers and the assorted other weapons do generate power, but if any 'Mech begs for an Ultra AC-20, this is the one. The AC-20 has very limited ammunition and takes up vast quantities of space and weight, to the point where it excludes the use of other systems. But the beauty of the Dire Wolf is that you *can* use the AC-20, or two of them as I like to do, and throw in a few medium lasers as well for alternative mid-range power and to destroy defenseless targets without wasting precious ammunition. The Ultra AC-20 is inefficient indeed, but the rush of joy you'll feel as you chew through any 'Mech in a matter of seconds makes it worthwhile.

In fact, the Dire Wolf itself is much like an Ultra AC-20. It's huge, inefficient, and there are a million reasons why you shouldn't use it. But all those reasons get swept aside when you realize that you're holding the biggest gun of all or piloting the proverbial *üeber-Mech*. Whenever there's an opportunity to pilot a Dire Wolf (and it happens very rarely in Clan missions) you should take it. Not necessarily because you need all that power, but because you *like* it.

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Gregor felt as if he were perched on a builders' crane high above the rolling hills, so tall and slow was his hulking Dire Wolf. He had buried the throttle but he was still quite distant from the battle: Straining up a difficult hill, he checked his speed gauge and groaned when he saw that the glowing red indicator read 45 kph.

"Gregor, where are you? We're getting slaughtered down here!" It was Droggo, Gregor's witless protégé. As usual, Droggo was probably running back and forth across the battlefield without really engaging anyone, too excited at the prospect of battle to do any real good. Fortunately his Jenner II-C was fast enough to keep him from harm.

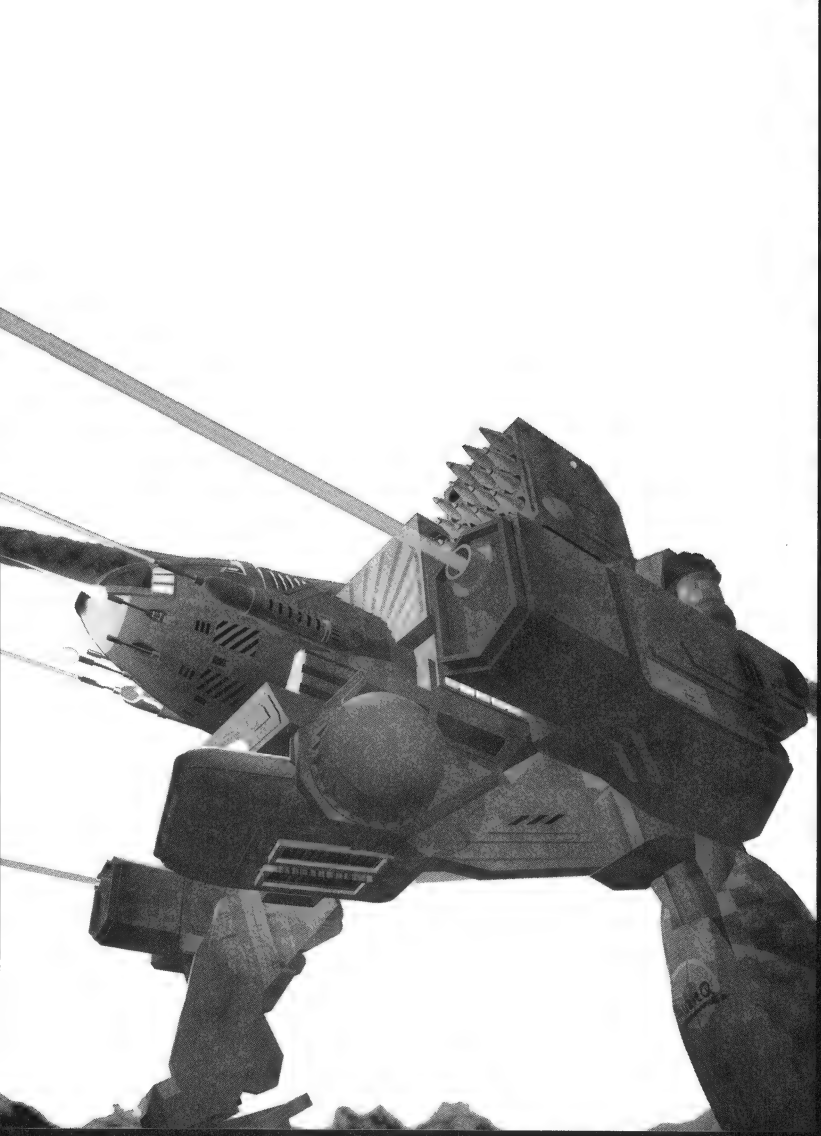
"I'm almost there," replied Gregor. "If I can just clear this damned hill!"

At last the battlefield spread before him, a shining verdant plain now scarred by the heavy feet of 'Mechs. Droggo's Jenner II-C sprinted this way and that, firing lasers at no one in particular and occasionally hitting the mark; Cyril, Gregor's other starmate, was chasing a Firemoth instead of engaging the larger Novas.

Gregor leveled his fire-linked AC-20s on the squat head of a Nova and pulled the trigger once: The AC-20s double-fired and shredded the Nova beyond recognition, eliciting a delayed fireball of massive proportions. The other Falcon 'Mechs wheeled to face the new threat, but they were already too late. Again and again Gregor squeezed the trigger; again and again the smaller 'Mechs burst into flames or crumpled like rag dolls. Within a minute the plain was littered with smoldering 'Mech corpses, as if a gigantic meteor had struck the area and torn all its occupants asunder.

Cyril cleared his throat, a hiss of static on the radio. "Umm, good work, captain."

"Yes," replied Gregor, surveying the wreckage. "I rather enjoyed it."



PART IV

We need . . . Bigger Guns!
(Designing Your Own Mechs)

CHAPTER 11

'Mech Design

The 'Mech Lab of *MechWarrior 2* allows you to customize a BattleMech in a variety of ways. In fact, you can rebuild a 'Mech entirely, going well beyond mere customization. The only constraints on your design are tonnage, 'Mech name, and appearance.

You can't start a 'Mech from scratch; you must choose an existing 'Mech design and modify it. This means you simply cannot make a 95-ton 'Mech. Why? Because there aren't any 95-ton 'Mechs in *MechWarrior 2* for you to start out with. So occasionally you'll find yourself in a situation where you'd like an extra five tons but must take an extra 10 instead.

'Mech names cannot be changed. You can give your variant a name, like the Weed Eater, but your Weed Eater will still be listed as a Firemoth or Jenner II-C or whatever it started out as—except that now it's the Weed Eater variant of the Firemoth class.

Finally, you can't change the way your 'Mech looks. If you take a Rifleman II-C and strip all the weapons out of its arms, it will still look like it's got weapons in its arms. This is not a big deal because in combat you generally can't see yourself anyway.

Aside from these restrictions, you can do anything you want. You can put Jump Jets in a Dire Wolf or try to stick an AC-20 in a Firemoth.

> **Tip:** It won't work, but you can try.

Your only limits are what will fit on your 'Mech chassis and how patient you are with your handiwork once you're done.

In this chapter I'll explore the basics of 'Mech creation and look at some of the options available to you. It's impossible to list every permutation you might come up with, but by touching on the fundamentals of 'Mech design you'll get a better sense of what you want to create and how to accomplish it.

The Basic Steps of 'Mech Design

When you set out to modify a 'Mech it's easy to lose sight of your goals unless you work step by step, in a sensible order. It's tempting to play with the weapons configuration first, and that's perfectly fine if you're only looking to change the weapons. But if you want to make extensive revisions to several aspects of the 'Mech you should definitely consider customizing it in the following order. Of course, if you find that a different order suits you better, then feel free to use that method instead.

Select the Base Chassis

To begin modifying your 'Mech, enter the 'Mech Lab, shown in Figure 11-1. On the bottom center of the screen you'll see two large arrows and two smaller arrows contained within the big ones. The large arrows are the Prev/Next Chassis buttons, and they let you scroll through the various types of chassis available to you. The smaller arrows show you different configurations of your currently selected chassis, including the standard configuration, a couple of alternate configurations, and any customized models you've designed previously. Once you've settled on a weight, you can click on the Customize button and begin your work in earnest.

Select Your Engine

At the top of the Configuration Summary (the top left window) you'll see that the first option available is Engine. Click on it, then scroll through the various engine options by clicking on Faster and Slower. Pay attention to how the maximum speed changes as you select

Figure 11-1 The 'Mech Lab allows you to get under the hood, so to speak.

different levels of engine, and also note how much weight is taken up by each engine type.

If you know how fast you want your 'Mech to go, this will be an important part of the customization process. If you don't care much about the 'Mech's speed, you can just leave the engine size at default and come back to this screen later.

The other option the menu will offer is Standard or XL Engine. The XL engine weighs half as much as the standard engine but takes up more critical slots in your 'Mech's torso. As a rule of thumb, you will want an XL engine in small 'Mechs because weight is precious. In the bigger 'Mechs you'll usually opt for a normal engine. As with engine size, this option can be changed later if you find you need more free weight or critical slots.

Add Jump Jets or MASC

This decision is sort of a subset of your engine decision. If speed and maneuverability are important to you, you'd better add Jump Jets or MASC right after you've chosen an engine. Otherwise you'll come back later and find that you don't have room for them, and you'll have to spend extra time freeing up weight and critical slots for your jets.

Select an Internal Structure

The only thing you can determine about your 'Mech's internal structure is whether you'll use standard or endo steel structures. Endo steel frees up tonnage but occupies critical spaces, so you'll have to make this decision much as you make the standard versus XL engine decision: Smaller 'Mechs usually use endo steel, while larger 'Mechs need those extra free slots and can often handle a normal internal structure's greater weight.

Remember, you can come back and change this later if you need more tonnage or critical slots.

Modify Your Weapons and Ammunition

At this point your should play with your weapons configuration, as pictured in Figure 11-2. If you use beam weapons you'll probably need to leave a few tons free for extra heat sinks. Also, you might want to peek at the "Assign the Dreaded Critical Slots" section very briefly before selecting your weapons, just to avoid hassles and excessive shuffling of components.

Your weapons are extremely important, because in many ways they define the role of your 'Mech and determine how it will stand up to enemy units. Select them carefully. Don't just pick weapons that seem to fit easily into the remaining space. If you feel that a certain weapons system is critical to your design, you might now have to go back and change engine size or type, internal structure type, or jump capability to make room for those key weapons.

Don't forget that projectile weapons need ammo. Look at the ammunition levels of each weapon and ask yourself whether it's enough for you to complete a typical mission.

Caution: Try not to rely entirely on projectile weapons—there's nothing more frustrating than destroying all enemy 'Mechs but not having enough bullets left to blow up your primary objective.

Weapon Range

When selecting your arsenal, think long and hard about weapon range. Bear in mind that battles in *MechWarrior 2* tend to be circling battles that usually take place at short range, sometimes spiraling out to medium range before closing again.

Figure 11-2 A long list of weapons and ammunition is at your disposal.

This is how it's going to be unless you actively try to control the distance between you and your enemies, and if you don't have an exceptionally fast 'Mech you'll seldom be able to dictate the range of a battle. Therefore you will only be fighting at long range for a little while unless you have remarkable speed. Even speed won't help you much, because you cannot torso twist 360 degrees and fire at opponents behind you—you must turn around to shoot at them, and that means you'll have to pause and let your enemies catch up.

Because of this you should think twice about using long-range weapons in any 'Mech design. LRMs are usually good for one or two shots before you close with your foes, and long-range weapons like Gauss rifles and PPCs typically only get a few shots off before the range has closed to nothing. Think about whether you'd be better off with more efficient weapons like medium lasers or Streak SRMs, which can only be used at medium to short range but are much lighter and easier to carry.

Weapon Power

Regardless of how elegant your 'Mech design is, it needs sufficient firepower to destroy enemies quickly. Add up the damage totals of your weapons and determine what would happen if you hit an opponent with everything at once. A good damage range will be between 30 and 60.

For example, if you have two chain-linked LB 20-X autocannons and you shoot your opponent's arm, you're doing 40 points of damage to that arm. The effect of those 40 points will vary based on the difficulty setting you've chosen, but 40 points is a good amount of concentrated damage. In another scenario you may have a medium 'Mech sporting six medium lasers. If you hit with all of them you'll do 30 points of damage—5 points per laser. This is a good amount of damage, too. Conversely, shooting opponents with individual medium lasers or SRM batteries inflicts minimal damage and will not speed along the demise of your foes. Consider all of these issues when choosing 'Mech weaponry.

Modify Heat Sinks

Once you know the sort of weapons you'll be using you can gauge how many heat sinks you'll need. Click on Heat Sinks and take a look. High-heat designs need a lot of sinks; it's often better to have one too many heat sinks than one too many lasers. The heat sinks make your 'Mech more lethal by keeping you cool enough to fire all your weapons more often.

Note: Your engine has some heat sinks built into it, so when you click on Heat Sinks don't be surprised if you can't reduce the number of sinks beyond a certain point.

If your 'Mech design features projectile weapons exclusively, you needn't worry about heat sinks. Once lasers and other beam weapons are introduced, however, extra heat sinks become quite crucial. Test your designs by configuring the weapons just as you would in battle, then firing off a sequence of group shots. If your heat levels become critical after only two group shots or salvos you probably need more heat sinks.

Keep in mind that heat levels can be deceptive. A cool-running design sporting projectile weapons but only featuring 10 heat sinks will take a long time to heat up, but when it finally does it will take a while to cool down. Alternately, a design with lots of lasers but plenty of heat sinks will heat up in record time but cool off quickly as well, allowing you to take another shot in mere moments.

Modify Armor

A 'Mech needs to be able to survive the slings and arrows of the battlefield. Protection can take several forms, but the two basic ways to cover yourself are to endow your 'Mech with enough speed to dodge some enemy shots and enough armor to withstand the ones you can't avoid.

Select the type of armor you'll wear by clicking on Armor, then selecting Std (standard) or Ferro-F (Ferro-fibrous). Ferro-fibrous armor protects you more but occupies critical slots. It is highly recommended, because you'll need all the protection you can get.

You can add or delete armor with the Add and Delete buttons, which manipulate armor levels in half-ton increments. Most 'Mechs have a decent amount of armor to begin with, but I strongly advise adding at least some extra protection.

Once you have added extra armor you must decide where it goes. The 'Mech diagram in the center of your screen lets you select where to put the armor: Click on an arm, leg, torso piece, or the head to add or delete armor from that section. There are two sets of arrows used to allocate armor. The first set allots armor to a leg, arm, head, or to the front of a torso piece. The second set is only used with torso pieces, and it determines how much armor goes on the back of the torso plate.

Tip: In general it's better to have about one-third as much armor on your back as on your front torso.

As a rule you should never remove armor from a basic 'Mech design, as we've done in Figure 11-3. Rather, you should add armor. If you find yourself removing armor to make way for extra weapons, ask yourself whether you'll even get a chance to use those weapons after sustaining a few enemy blows.

Assign the Dreaded Critical Slots

Few things are more irritating than designing a 'Mech that comes in at the proper weight but can't fit all its gear into its critical slots. However, this will happen to you a lot, especially when you first begin building 'Mechs. There are lots of ways to save on weight or expand your armor value, but they all come at the expense of critical slots, and when you finally click on Critical Slots you'll most likely find that you don't have room for everything, as Figure 11-4 shows.

Click on the 'Mech diagram to assign items to a given location, then click on your list of unassigned items to place them in that spot. Don't be afraid to remove items that were preplaced, though obviously some things (like Ferro-fibrous armor slots) can't be moved around.

At this point you will know whether your design is feasible or not. If you are short on critical slots you'll have to go back and play a delicate game of balancing weight and space, changing the engine and internal structure, or perhaps removing a nonessential weapon or heat sink.

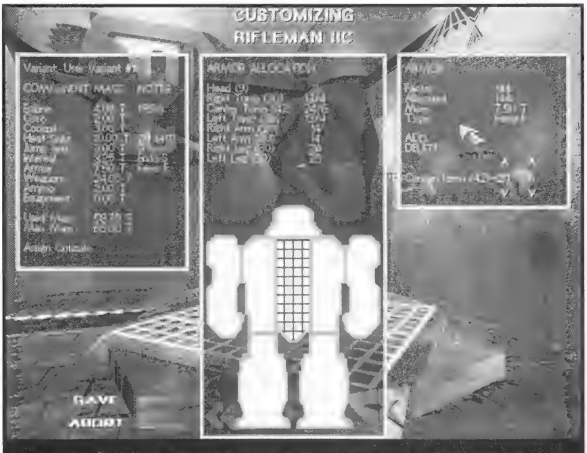


Figure 11-3 Removing armor can be a critical mistake.

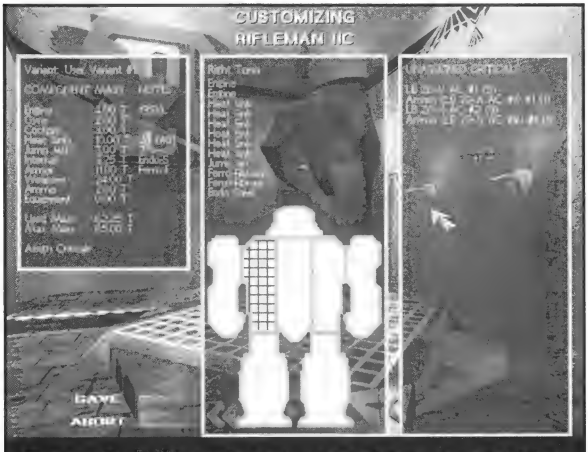


Figure 11-4 There's not enough space on this 'Mech for all the equipment.

'Mech Roles and Design

'Mech modification is a much easier process when you know at the outset the type of 'Mech you want. Devise a concept for your new 'Mech. What will it be good at? Many 'Mechs are designed with all-purpose use in mind. Others are highly specialized theme 'Mechs. Some theme 'Mechs are designed as a response to a particularly challenging scenario, while others are simply an attempt to see how far you can push a specific idea or concept. Regardless of what 'Mech type you're striving for, you should think it through ahead of time to spare yourself indecision and extra work.

All-Purpose 'Mechs

An all-purpose 'Mech, such as the Marauder IIC featured in Figure 11-5, can be used successfully in just about any mission. These 'Mechs are appealing because they eliminate the need for overspecialized, custom-built 'Mechs for every mission. Some pilots view this as important, while others enjoy tinkering with 'Mech designs before each outing. It's up to you.

Most general-purpose 'Mechs:

- Either use lots of beam weapons or they have projectile weapons with lots of ammo. Weapons with low ammunition levels cut down on versatility.
- Have weapons that are useful at short and long ranges, but tend to focus on mid-range weapons like medium lasers or AC-10s because that's where battles are most often fought.
- Have a top speed appropriate to the terrain and gravity conditions under which they operate.

Theme 'Mechs

Theme 'Mechs are a diverse lot. Some are actually quite versatile: A Streak SRM-theme 'Mech, for example, would feature loads of Streak SRMs. Since Streak SRMs are good weapons with decent range, this 'Mech would be useful in a variety of situations. However, a large laser-theme 'Mech would be an exercise in futility unless your goal is to see how quickly you can make a 'Mech overheat.

It's a good idea to customize a theme 'Mech for your current mission if you're having lots of difficulty. Speed 'Mechs work well on planets with poor terrain, while sluggish but powerful 'Mechs are best when the battles get rough. Chapter 12 will look at specific sample designs and explore more theme 'Mech possibilities.

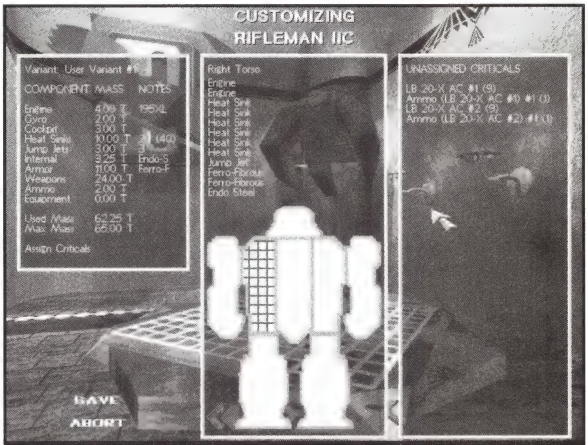


Figure 11-5 This Marauder IIC is good on any terrain.

Designs that Just Don't Work

There are some BattleMech designs that will never be effective because they're based on faulty appraisals of the *MechWarrior 2* environment.

Among the more common mistakes:

- 'Mechs without at least one beam weapon, like the one in Figure 11-6. They, tend to fail missions because they run out of ammo and can't kill targets such as cannons or the static targets that are their primary objectives.
- A 'Mech with nothing but LRMs won't work. Eventually you'll find an enemy who can get close to you, and you'll be utterly helpless. Small 'Mechs can run back to long range again, but they cannot carry enough LRMs to complete a whole mission.
- 'Mechs with very little armor will not win the toughest missions. There's always at least one enemy pilot who can shoot straight, or one enemy 'Mech with Streak SRMs. These will hit you no matter how quick you are.

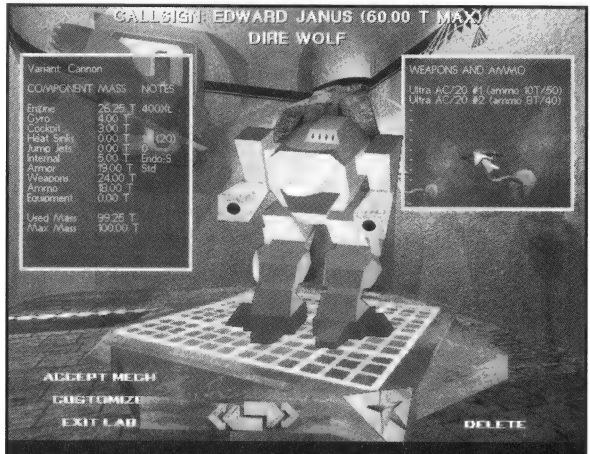


Figure 11-6 This is an extremely ammo-dependent 'Mech.

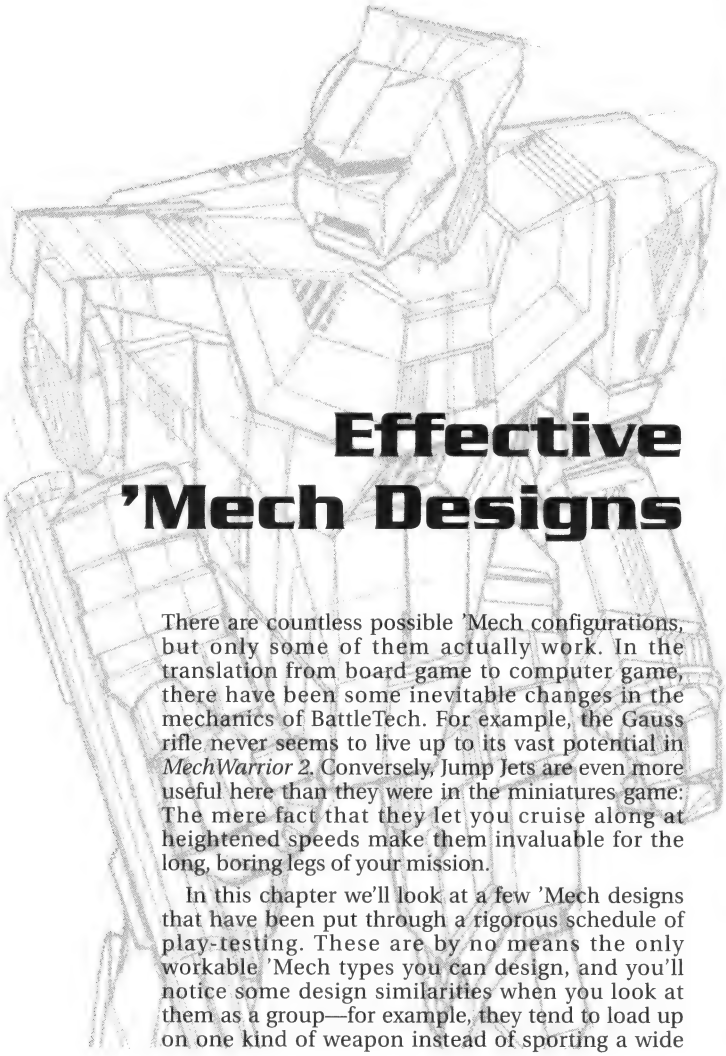
Go ahead and build these 'Mechs and use them in network play if you want, but if you try to use them during missions you're just asking for grief.

More Possibilities

The next two chapters will discuss 'Mech design in greater detail. Chapter 12 reveals a host of sample 'Mech designs, and summarizes design concepts that work well within the game environment. Chapter 13 explores the lighter side of 'Mech design and offers some advice on silly and unusual 'Mechs that you can use in modem play or design just for the fun of it.

The 'Mech Lab is a vital part of *MechWarrior 2* and you should make the most of it—long after you've beaten the game you'll have fun designing unusual 'Mechs and testing them in combat.

CHAPTER 12



Effective 'Mech Designs

There are countless possible 'Mech configurations, but only some of them actually work. In the translation from board game to computer game, there have been some inevitable changes in the mechanics of BattleTech. For example, the Gauss rifle never seems to live up to its vast potential in *MechWarrior 2*. Conversely, Jump Jets are even more useful here than they were in the miniatures game: The mere fact that they let you cruise along at heightened speeds make them invaluable for the long, boring legs of your mission.

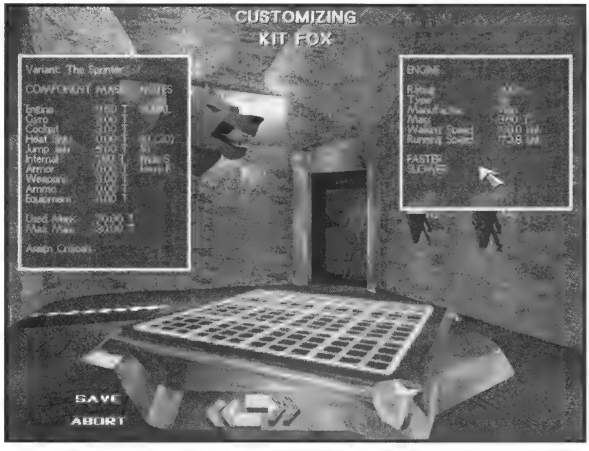
In this chapter we'll look at a few 'Mech designs that have been put through a rigorous schedule of play-testing. These are by no means the only workable 'Mech types you can design, and you'll notice some design similarities when you look at them as a group—for example, they tend to load up on one kind of weapon instead of sporting a wide

variety of guns. This is primarily because certain weapons are intrinsically more effective than others. It's also easier to aim a group shot when all your weapons are the same type.

I won't bore you with charts and lists of 'Mech numbers, or with long-winded theories on chassis modification. Everyone has his or her own ideas about what constitutes the perfect 'Mech, and you'll probably want to make a few modifications to these designs if you do choose to use them. It's my hope that they'll serve you well or inspire you to create even more lethal 'Mechs.

Note: As you move up in 'Mech size you'll discover that critical slots are finally becoming an important issue, so you can't automatically click XL engine, endo steel internal structure, and Ferro-fibrous armor, and then expect everything to fit.

The Sprinter



The intent of this design is pretty obvious: pure speed. It came about as a response to the Wolf Clan's third mission, where you're forced to take a small 'Mech into an enemy city swarming with unfriendlies, find a power converter, and destroy it. Nuking the other 'Mechs is impossible, so it's not even a secondary goal.

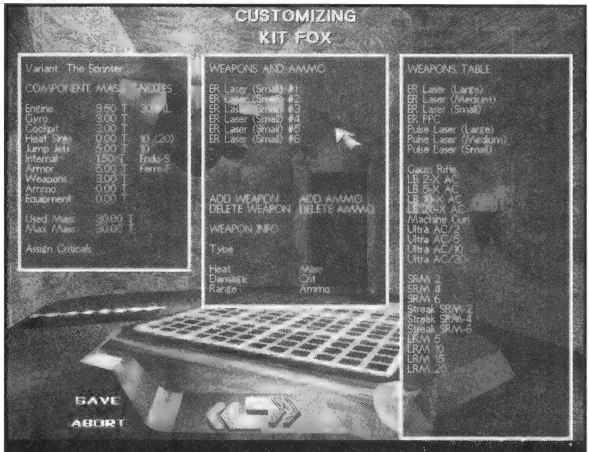


Figure 12-1 The Sprinter's lasers come in handy for close combat.

The Sprinter features a big engine for lots of speed, powerful Jump Jets for more of the same, and a battery of six small lasers so that when you finally reach your target you can quickly blow it up from close range. Fewer lasers than this would cause problems—you'd be standing all day attacking your target while enemy 'Mechs swarmed you and picked through your minimal armor.

Endo steel internal structure and Ferro-fibrous armor are easy choices for this 'Mech, but neither weight nor space are a problem. The weapons are compact, so the majority of space in the 'Mech can be devoted to pure speed. The 300 XL engine provides a respectable 172-kph top speed, and Jump Jets boost that speed immeasurably.

Heat sinks have not been added, because firing the laser battery repeatedly will not raise heat levels drastically. Even if it did there would be little reason for more heat sinks—you won't be doing much fighting in the Sprinter.

Despite the Endo steel structure, Ferro-fibrous armor, and XL engine, there are critical slots to spare on this 'Mech. Therefore the weapons and critical elements all have been bunched into the torso, while the arms are left vacant except for Endo steel, as you can see in Figure 12-2.

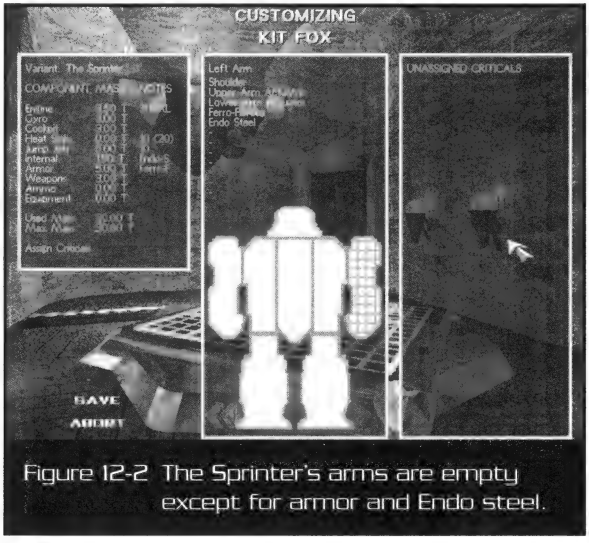
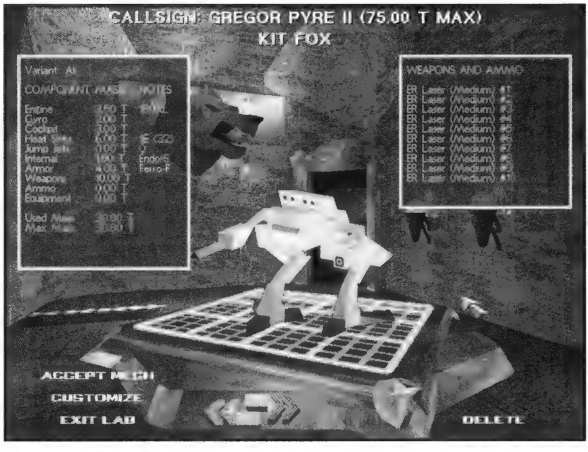


Figure 12-2 The Sprinter's arms are empty except for armor and Endo steel.

The Ali



The Ali design demonstrates just how much firepower you can pack into a 30-ton 'Mech. Ten, count them, 10 medium lasers make this tiny 'Mech a formidable opponent capable of totally disabling a large 'Mech before it has a chance to respond. Certain sacrifices must be made if you want 10 medium lasers on such a small 'Mech, but they aren't too severe: The Ali has no Jump Jets and its engine isn't great, but it is by no means sluggish.

All the standard weight-reducers (endo steel, XL engine) are in place, and there is still no lack of critical slots. Sixteen heat sinks won't keep the Ali particularly cool, but it will keep heat from becoming a problem for all but the most trigger-happy MechWarriors.

The Grendel

You don't always have to make sweeping changes to make a more effective 'Mech. Witness the Grendel, shown in Figure 12-3. The two LRM launchers remain, and unfortunately the ammo levels have not been increased (an oversight, I admit) but eight medium ER lasers have replaced the Mad Dog's remaining weaponry. The result is a 'Mech with great long-range punch plus devastating mid- and short-range clout. The standard Mad Dog was quite weak in close combat, making it hard to win a fight unless you connected with LRMs first.

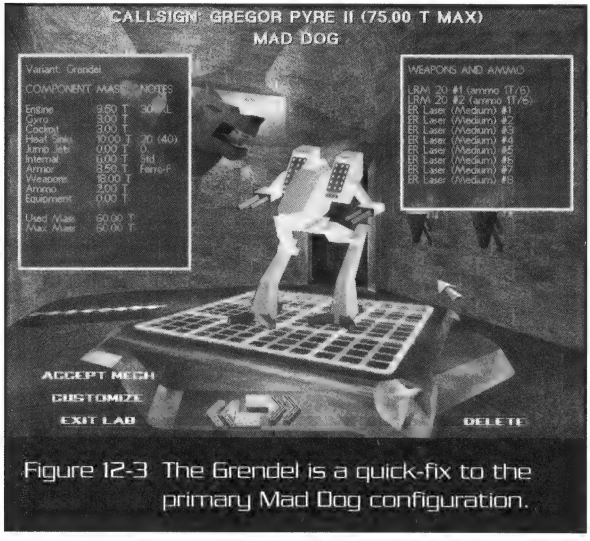


Figure 12-3 The Grendel is a quick-fix to the primary Mad Dog configuration.

The 20 heat sinks in this design are more than enough to keep the Grendel reasonably cool, even when using frequent group strikes with all eight medium lasers.

Note that internal structure remains standard here, though all the other weight-reducers are in effect.

The Gunner

One glance at the Gunner (Figure 12-4) tells you it's a high-concept design. You know exactly why it was built: "Hmmm, what if we just put 10 machine guns in this thing and set it loose?" The funny thing is, it actually works rather well.

Figure 12-4 The Gunner is a high-concept 'Mech that's surprisingly effective in close-range combat.

Machine guns suffer when paired with other weapons systems because they have to be fired rapidly to do their job, and other systems don't. So you end up adding a single machine-gun burst to your other weapons fire, which gives you only a tiny addition of damage. When your arsenal is stocked entirely with machine guns, you know exactly what you have to do: Get close, aim, and hose your enemies down with a constant stream of hot lead.

Two of the Gunner's guns have 800 ammunition, while the rest carry 400. The extra ammo is for blowing up static targets, a simple precaution against losing missions just because you can't destroy a chemical plant or firebase.

A 300 XL engine powers the Gunner along quite nicely, and although it doesn't have Jump Jets, your enemies will usually play right into your hands, making high-speed pursuit unnecessary.

One design flaw in this version of the Gunner is its 12 heat sinks. There's no need for more than the standard 10, because machine guns produce no heat to speak of. Those extra tons should be used instead for more armor or perhaps a Jump Jet or two.

Particle Man

Particle Man, illustrated in Figure 12-5, is neither swift nor subtle. Its primary virtue lies in its four PPCs mounted on a 60-ton Mad Dog chassis, which combine to provide a punch unavailable on standard designs until you reach the 90- to 100-ton range. Particle Man's 19 double heat sinks help keep things cool during battle, but group-firing all those PPCs makes some heat inevitable. This is not a design for irresponsible pilots; going overboard with the PPCs can cause shutdown or explosions.

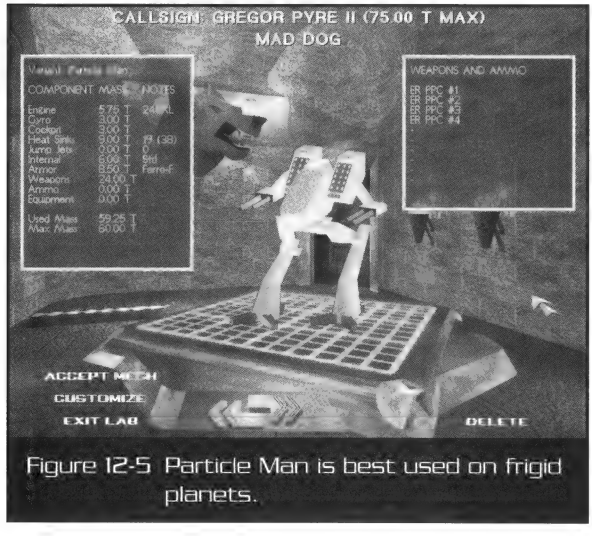


Figure 12-5 Particle Man is best used on frigid planets.

This 'Mech was originally designed to be used on a frigid world, where its vast heat generation would be less problematic than usual. If you like the basic Particle Man premise you'll find that larger 'Mechs can tuck in a few extra heat sinks and fire more rapidly. The effect of four PPC hits compares favorably to that of two AC-20 blasts, and four PPCs are a lot easier to carry than two AC-20s. However, the AC-20 allows a devastating rapid-fire assault that the PPC, with its longer recharge rate, can't match.

The value of Particle Man, then, is directly proportional to your ability as a MechWarrior to watch your heat level and make sure that it never gets too critical.

The Rocketeer

The Rocketeer, seen in Figure 12-6, was designed to overcome aiming problems. It can help pilots who aren't terribly good shots or MechWarriors on difficult missions where uneven terrain and fast opponents make shooting tough for everyone. The Rocketeer features four Streak SRM systems, which can be fired as a group to generate quick damage without any worries.

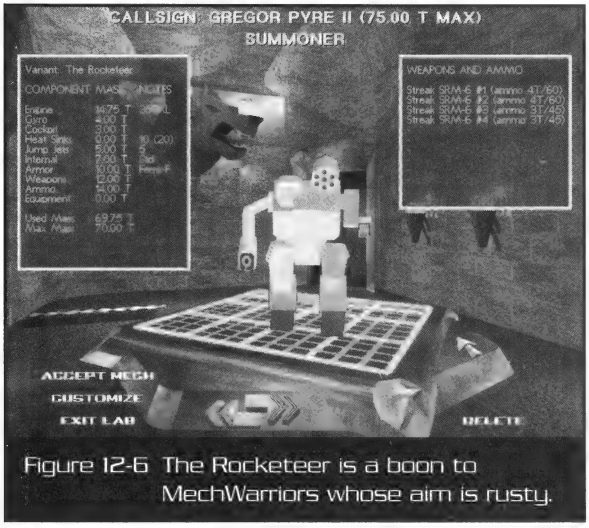


Figure 12-6 The Rocketeer is a boon to MechWarriors whose aim is rusty.

Since the Streak SRM is virtually guaranteed to hit if it's fired while you have missile lock, you're assured of making every rocket's damage count. And since the Rocketeer carries quite a lot of ammunition, you're unlikely to run out. Your shots will hit the first time, so you won't have to waste ammo on missed shots.

The Rocketeer is a great asset when your mission sends you up against small, difficult foes like Elementals or the bothersome cannons that guard most enemy installations. You can quickly cycle through your targets, firing one or two of the SRMs at each and then moving on to the next without worrying that your shots will miss. Within moments you'll have cleared the battlefield.

The Rocketeer is one of the few projectile-based designs you can safely hand to your starmates. Since they'll hit most of the time with their missiles, they won't run out of ammunition too soon. And because the speed and agility of the basic Summoner design has not been changed, your starmates will have no difficulties maneuvering in combat or on the open field.

The Stomper

The Stomper is one of three special 'Mechs that rely on AC-20s to flatten the enemy (the Grinder and the Whipping Boy are discussed next). The Stomper design is a prime example of power over speed. This 'Mech is intended to destroy a limited number of enemies as quickly as possible, using the deadly Ultra AC-20 weapons system to achieve its goals. Figure 12-7 shows you how speed has suffered, limiting the Timber Wolf-based 'Mech to a top speed of 55 kph.

This 'Mech carries no weapon systems other than the AC-20s, shown in Figure 12-8. Because of this limitation it is unsuitable for missions that require you to destroy fixed targets and installations. It's only good for those times when you must destroy several tough enemies in a rapid sequence, such as when you're defending a vital target. In these missions, and with a pilot who aims carefully in the cockpit, the Stomper is difficult to beat.

It can be very frustrating to dispatch all your foes only to find that you have one last task you cannot complete because your ammunition is spent. Therefore the Stomper should only be used when you know what sort of scenarios you'll be facing and you've previously failed because you were outgunned. This way you'll know what you have to accomplish and whether the Stomper will have enough ammunition to carry you through.

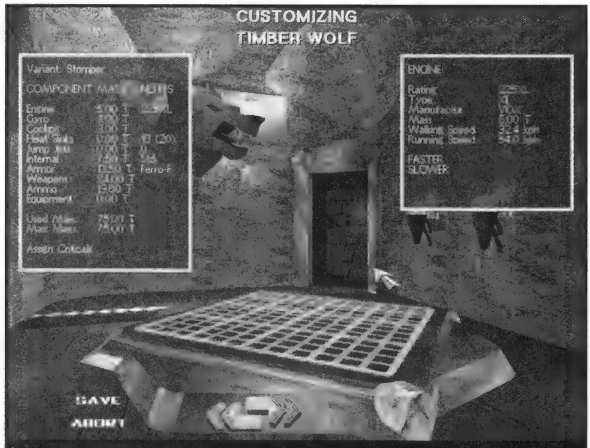


Figure 12-7 The Stomper won't win any races but packs a powerful punch.

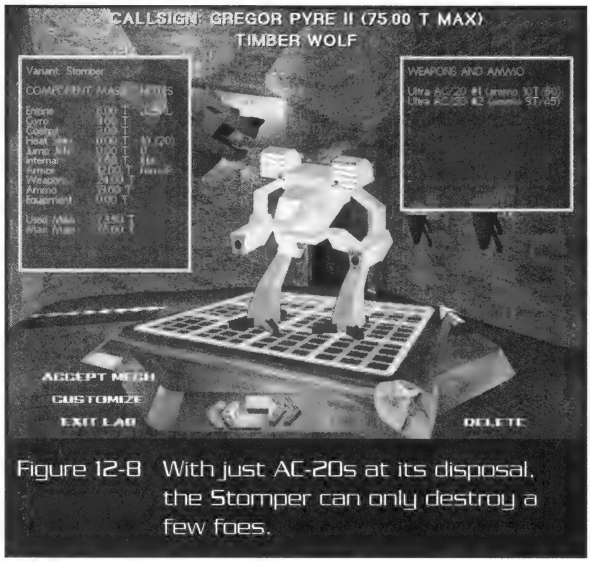


Figure 12-8 With just AC-20s at its disposal, the Stomper can only destroy a few foes.

The Grinder

The Grinder is somewhat more versatile than the Stomper. As you can see in Figure 12-9, the Grinder also has a fully loaded AC-20. However, instead of a second AC-20 it sports a complement of five medium ER lasers. Furthermore, this design features Jump Jets for emergency bursts of speed.

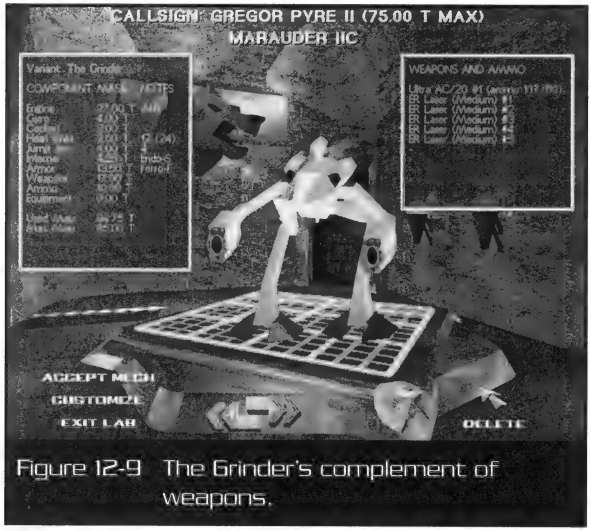


Figure 12-9 The Grinder's complement of weapons.

The end result is a tough 'Mech that can take out stationary targets and small foes with its lasers, saving the AC-20 for the largest and most threatening foes. With a decent top speed and Jump Jets at its disposal, the Grinder is good for missions that demand both power and speed.

The medium lasers can cause heat problems when they're all fired simultaneously, because this 'Mech has only 12 double heat sinks. Still, the idea here is to use your AC-20 only in the very worst situations, thereby eliminating the need to alpha strike again and again with the lasers.

All in all, this is one of the toughest 'Mechs you can build. The only limitation is that of the AC-20's ammunition. The key is to choose your targets wisely and aim well. Wasting precious AC-20 shots on Jenner II-Cs and Firemoths is a surefire way to pilot yourself into disaster.

The Whipping Boy

The Whipping Boy's name suggests a small 'Mech that is the target of much abuse on the battlefield. In truth, it is the Whipping Boy that does all the whipping. Its double AC-20 design is ideal for missions featuring huge, heavily armored foes. By carefully striking a balance between devastation and conservation, you can make your ammo go a long way and still kill enemies in mere seconds. As Figure 12-10 illustrates, this design also features three medium ER lasers to finish off static targets and help destroy bigger foes.

Figure 12-10 Three medium lasers complement two massive AC-20s.

Make no mistake about it, this is a slow and none-too-maneuverable beast. However, it comes in handy for those missions where the Grinder's agility isn't needed but a little extra firepower would certainly help.

'Mechs like the Whipping Boy are sometimes useful for your last few Clan missions. They don't help speed things up much, but combat becomes a little more manageable when you can blow up a Dire Wolf in less than five seconds.

CHAPTER 13

Fun 'Mech Designs

When you're trying to become Khan it's only natural to strive for efficiency in your 'Mech designs. You want an exemplary 'Mech, one that helps you out in the toughest situations. But what happens when you've won the game, or when you're playing against a friend with the Network Demo or in the full-blown network version of *MechWarrior 2*? Then it can be tiresome to always strive for solid 'Mech designs. Efficiency is *limiting*. If you only develop 'Mechs that are efficient and strong, you'll end up with a fairly homogeneous group.

Sometimes it's fun when you and your friends agree to be *in*efficient. By building 'Mechs that are unusual, pointless, or just grossly incompetent you'll get to explore the 'Mech design process more thoroughly. And who knows, in trying to create a strange 'Mech you just might hit upon a winner. Even if you don't, you'll surely enjoy yourself.

Compete to see who can produce the worst possible 'Mech, and the results will be thoroughly entertaining.

Here are a few sample designs to get you started. As you look at these archetypes of pointlessness, ponder how you could make the designs even worse.

Firemoth: Alternate Configuration

We'll start with a silly design that I didn't come up with; it appears right in the game. It's the first alternate configuration of the Firemoth, shown in Figure 13-1. This design is ridiculous because *MechWarrior 2* is a game of combat, not scouting. There isn't a single pure scouting mission from start to finish. And yet this miserable excuse for a 'Mech features a pathetic SRM-4 and two small lasers—pulse lasers at that!

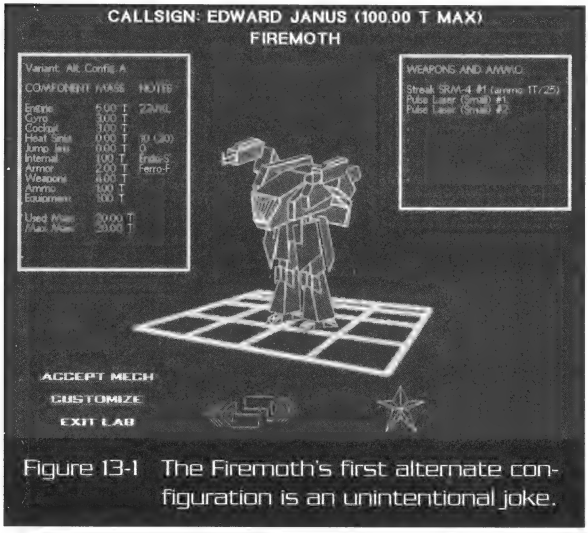


Figure 13-1 The Firemoth's first alternate configuration is an unintentional joke.

This 'Mech is good for multiplayer games, though, because if you manage to actually kill someone while piloting it you'll prove beyond all doubt that you have extraordinary aim. This no-weapons approach will be seen later in the Demon Scout, a 'Mech that carries it to even greater extremes.

Kit Fox: Alternate Configuration

Here's another 'Mech that's pretty unusual in its first alternate configuration. This Kit Fox, despite its tiny 30-ton limit, sports a Gauss rifle—look at Figure 13-2 if you don't believe me! The Gauss rifle is a huge monster that taxes even the biggest 'Mech designs, but here it is. Obviously, many sacrifices were made to free up weight for the rifle.

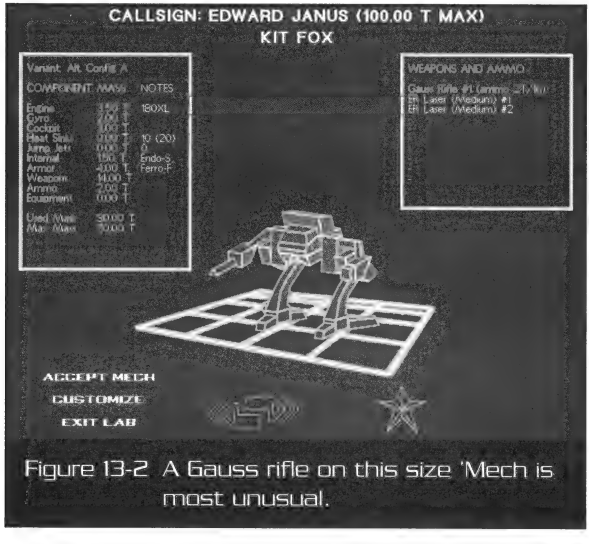


Figure 13-2 A Gauss rifle on this size 'Mech is most unusual.

This design would never hold up in a mission because its only real punch comes from the Gauss rifle, and once the ammunition is gone its pilot becomes a mere spectator. But it's fun to use in multiplayer games because the huge gun results in fast and bloody duels where a single shot decides the fortune of each MechWarrior.

Demon Scout

As long as we're looking at Kit Foxes, why not cast a fond glance toward the Demon Scout, shown in Figure 13-3? This remarkable design has been configured to achieve almost unheard-of ground speeds. How about 130 kph . . . as a *walking* speed? When you run

you'll get up around 205 kph. The standard designs that come with *MechWarrior 2* rarely exceed 170 kph for top running speed. What good is all this extra ground speed? None, of course! But you'll undoubtedly be amused by the jolting ride you get when you're bouncing along at over 200 kph. You'll discover that your turning radius is next to nothing; it will seem like you need a good 10 kilometers just to perform a U-turn.

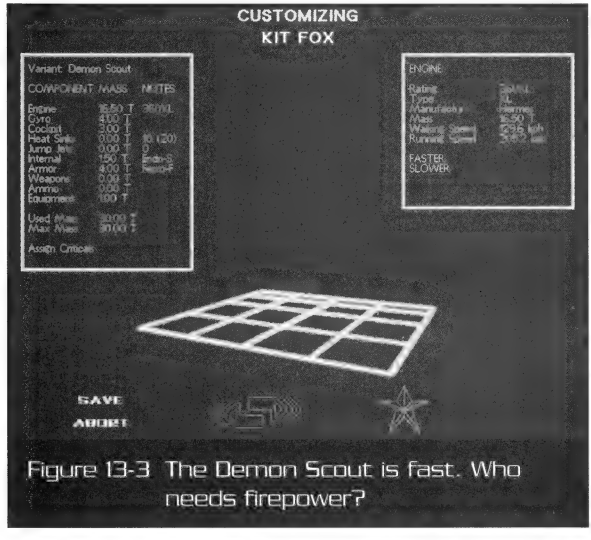


Figure 13-3 The Demon Scout is fast. Who needs firepower?

This 'Mech design leads to one of the most enjoyable sorts of multiplayer battle: bumper 'Mechs. Select an arena-style battlefield and make everyone pilot a Demon Scout. There are no weapons whatsoever on this 'Mech, so the only way to kill your opponents will be collision damage. The only way to damage others is to take a risk yourself, because collisions hurt everyone involved. This leads to humorous and spectacular battles where 'Mechs often as not blow up when they collide with walls or other inanimate objects after trying to ram their opponents.

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Gregor agreed to a trial of bumper 'Mechs with his old adversary Edward Janus. Janus had proposed the trial with a sneering grin in the Wolf Star lounge three evenings ago, as if in jest. But his tone held a serious challenge that was apparent to everyone in the room, and Gregor could not turn him down.

Now, staring at his pathetic 'Mech, Gregor was not so sure. What sort of tactics could save him when there were no weapons systems to employ? And how could he know when to eject if the computer did not detect enemy weapons fire? It would be a game of chicken, that was all there was to it. He squeezed reluctantly into the 'Mech's tiny cockpit, thinking how foolish it would be if he were actually killed this way.

Gregor strode forward and waited for the signal light to turn green. When it finally did he dashed his Scout out onto the battlefield, thundering forward at speeds he had never before experienced during overland travel. There was Janus, dead ahead. Instinctively he pulled the stick and attempted a turn, but the Demon Scout only turned the barest fraction of a degree, so fast was he traveling. The 'Mechs met with a shattering crash and rebounded a hundred meters, armor falling in chunks. The combatants circled and prepared for another run.

On the second pass Gregor saw Janus approaching at the exact same angle as last time; their 'Mechs would collide at the same spot, where their armor had been weakened. Gregor panicked and threw the throttle into reverse, grinding his 'Mech into single-digit speeds as he threw the stick to the right and prepared to dash away.

Too late. Janus's 'Mech struck his side with full force, and a deafening explosion rocked the arena. When the smoke finally cleared Janus's 'Mech lay in tattered ruins, while Gregor's lay on its side but was apparently undamaged.

Later that evening Gregor tried to remember what had happened, but the trial was nothing more than a blur in his memory. He could only guess that by turning his 'Mech and presenting his undamaged side, he had saved himself.

The IceBox

The IceBox design seen in Figure 13-4 is actually feasible on the battlefield. Of course, most pilots wouldn't want the slow, unmaneuverable 'Mech on their missions, but technically speaking it can be made to work.

The idea is to take the usually hot-running Rifleman II-C and turn it into a powerful, cool-running design that can fire repeatedly without

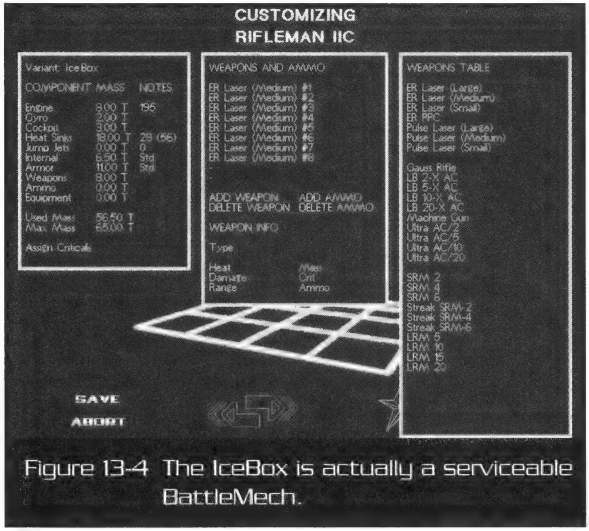


Figure 13-4 The IceBox is actually a serviceable BattleMech.

overheating. Therefore the large lasers have been replaced with more energy-efficient medium lasers, and heat sinks have been added—there are 28 double heat sinks on this 'Mech, equivalent to 56 regular heat sinks. This means that the IceBox can squeeze off shot after shot with little worry about heat. And the quick recharge time of medium lasers allows the pilot to capitalize on this design, firing nonstop while opponents are forced to wait and cool off.

If you use this 'Mech in a situation where only silly or poorly designed 'Mechs are allowed, you'll probably be tossed out of the game. Despite its unusual nature, this is one of the better theme 'Mechs you'll come across.

The Leviathan

How slow can a 'Mech be? The answer is *very slow*, as the Leviathan in Figure 13-5 demonstrates. Never mind what else you load onto this monster, the Leviathan uses the largest possible chassis (Dire Wolf) and adds the smallest possible engine (a pathetic 100 XL). The result is a 'Mech with a 10 kph cruising speed and a laughable 21 kph top speed. It's as close as you'll ever get to transforming a mobile 'Mech into a stationary piece of artillery.

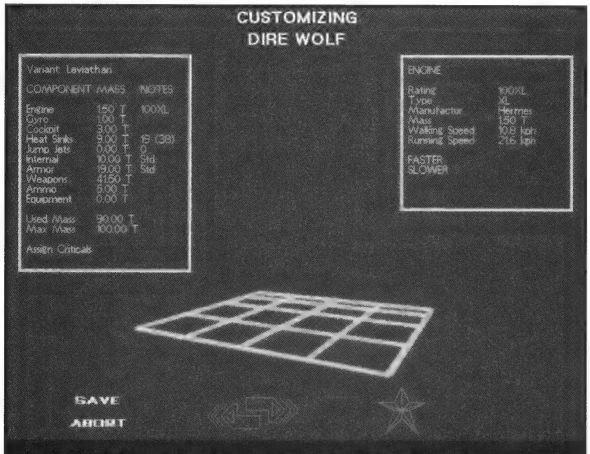


Figure 13-5 The Leviathan is a lot like a cannon: deadly but virtually immobile.

When properly equipped, this brute can take on legions of attackers; heck, it has room for three AC-20s. The only problem is movement: It's far too slow for even the least demanding of missions, and if you tried to use it you'd most likely exceed your time limit and fail. Even missions where you must defend a static target require you to move around a little so you can intercept attackers from several sides. This 'Mech would only do well if it was perched on a hill with a commanding view of every possible angle. And once the enemy units disappear behind a hill they're gone for good—there's not even a chance of pursuit in this 'Mech, unless your prey has actually lost a leg.

The Marksman

Figure 13-6 shows a Marksman in production. The Marksman is a truly perverse design, especially suited for MechWarriors who like their battles to go very slowly. The Marksman can be reconfigured in any number of ways, but the two constants are that it must have maximum armor values in all locations, and it must have only a single small laser as a weapon.

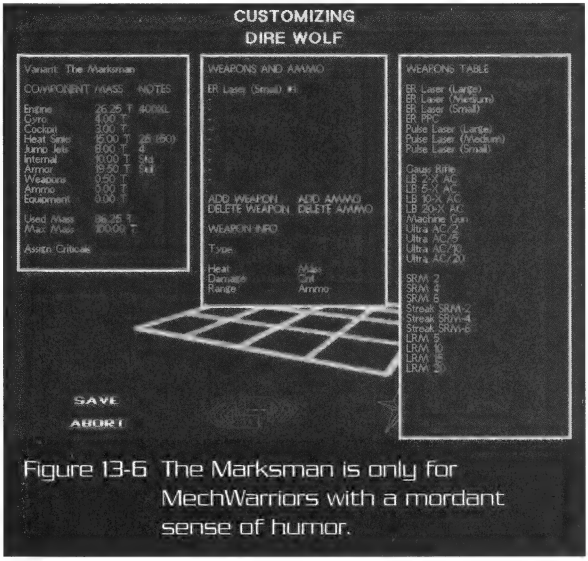


Figure 13-6 The Marksman is only for MechWarriors with a mordant sense of humor.

Imagine a battle between two Marksman designs: a slow ballet of laser fire. Each 'Mech would be armored to the extreme, yet only carry the smallest of weapons. The winner would be the pilot who is best at picking his shots, working away at a single spot on the enemy 'Mech until it was destroyed.

Tip: Leg shots would undoubtedly rule the day in a battle between Marksmen.

The Wastrel

Finally, Figure 13-7 shows one of my all-time favorite designs, the Wastrel. The Wastrel features a stunning array of 10 large ER lasers, a host of weapons to fell any target, big or small. The problem is that the Wastrel only has 10 standard heat sinks. If you're feeling particularly twisted, you can make those into single heat sinks, so that they're even less capable of dissipating heat.

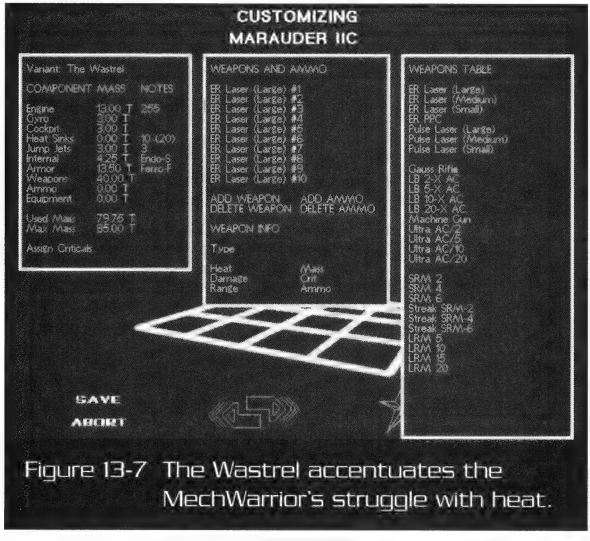


Figure 13-7 The Wastrel accentuates the MechWarrior's struggle with heat.

Battles between Wastrels really emphasize the old MechWarrior dilemma of heat versus weapons power. If you don't shoot enough your enemy will destroy you, but if you shoot too much you will destroy yourself. This turns a duel into a battle of nerve and patience, each pilot trying to walk the fine line between inactivity and excess.

If you have difficulty monitoring heat levels in your regular missions, you can easily break yourself of your inattentive habit by playing several Trials of Grievance in a Wastrel. After blowing yourself up repeatedly due to excessive internal heat, you'll finally become aware of the need to hold back when your temperature gauge is well into the red.

Don't Stop Now

It's both fun and instructive to design unusual, high-concept 'Mechs. Play them against your friends, and when you can't do that, play them in Trials of Grievance. You can assign enemy MechWarriors to pilot your weird and underpowered creations, so the match will be equal despite the fact that you have no weapons or can hardy move. Trials of Grievance are a good way to reap additional play value from *MechWarrior 2*; more on them to come in Chapter 16.

PART V

Mission Goals and Winning the Game

CHAPTER 14

Clan Jade Falcon Missions

As a Jade Falcon pilot, you have no control over which missions you are assigned. Your performance does not affect the sequence: You always get these missions in the order that is presented here. Honor will not affect your advancement, nor will rank. When you succeed at a mission you will get to advance to the next one in line.

The briefings for each mission have been reproduced here for your convenience. Use them to prepare in advance, building 'Mechs most suited to the demands of each world and the tasks you'll be performing.

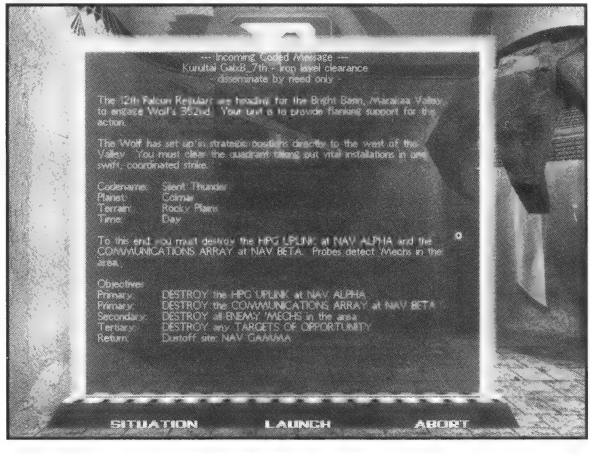
Most Jade Falcon missions are not difficult to figure out because in each one your goal is clear and the battlefield is fairly simple—it's just a question of defeating your foes. However, the combat itself can be rigorous. Suggested 'Mech types will be listed for each mission; effective 'Mech designs and combat

tactics were explained earlier in this book. If all else fails and you simply cannot beat a particular mission, read Chapter 17 for details on *MechWarrior 2*'s various difficulty levels and cheat codes. These should help you get past the mission that's giving you the most problems.

Instead of referring to objects and terrain features in terms of map position or degree headings, this chapter will steer you in the right direction by noting important NAV points and by referring to cardinal directions. For example, you might be instructed to go to NAV Epsilon and then walk east to find a particular object. In that case you must enter the mission, turn on the Autopilot, and press [N] until NAV Epsilon is highlighted. When you reach that spot, turn off Autopilot and walk east. If you're unsure of your directions, you can always turn on the Satellite Uplink view and navigate that way.

Targets of Opportunity are not extensively covered in these chapters because they are thoroughly nonessential and yield few benefits even if you do blow them up. Besides, you wouldn't want every single mystery revealed, would you? The best policy is to finish your missions quickly and then scour the area for targets you may have missed if you're still in the mood for combat.

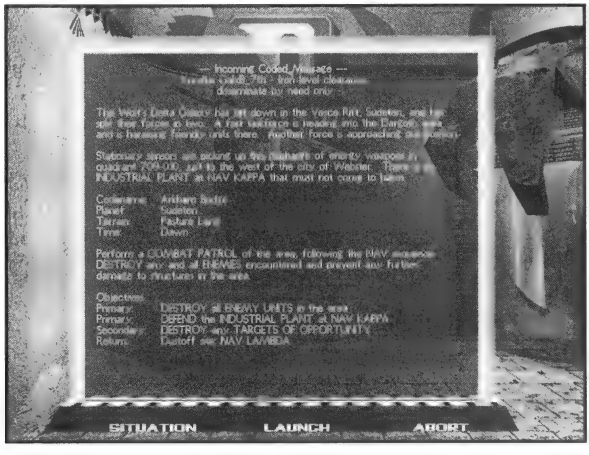
Silent Thunder



This is a very basic mission, the main challenge being to follow your NAV sequence and blow up any opposition you come across. Several different 'Mech types will work well on this mission, just so long as they have decent firepower and reasonable speed.

The most difficult part of Silent Thunder might be picking your way through the rocky terrain. Take your time and work your way around the biggest rocks; use a fast 'Mech if you don't have the patience for slow navigation.

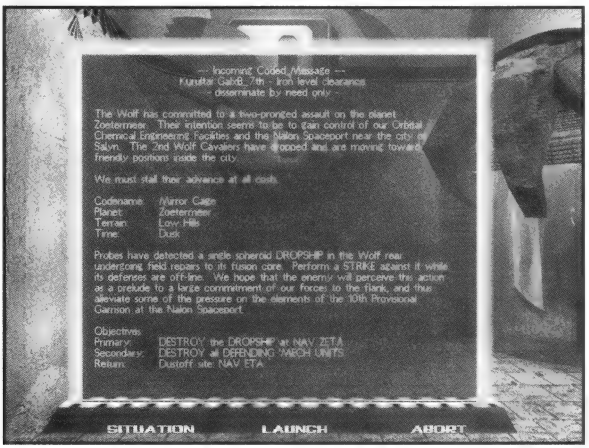
Arkham Bridge



This is another simple mission that requires you to follow your NAV sequence and blow up numerous small enemies. You will have to fight several bad guys as you run through the first few NAV points, then eventually you'll reach the Industrial Base. Wolf 'Mechs will be standing around taking pot shots at it and you'll get a very easy first shot at each 'Mech before it turns its attention toward you—so make that first shot count.

Beyond this, just fight well and you'll certainly succeed. If you discover that the base is destroyed before you get there, you need to either dispatch your first few enemies faster or pilot a speedier 'Mech design.

Mirror Cage

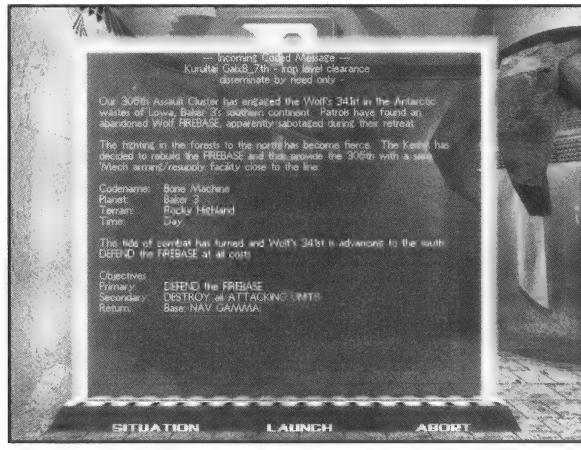


This mission sounds extremely tough. After all, destroying a dropship is no easy task! Actually, in this case it is easy, even though the 'Mechs you encounter beforehand will be a little tougher to handle than those on previous missions.

Choose a 'Mech with good power and at least a few beam weapons. Speed is not at all essential, because you start the mission quite close to the dropship and it is simply a matter of walking toward it and finishing off all the Wolf 'Mechs when they get into range.

Once you've cleared out all enemy 'Mechs, you should approach the dropship and shoot it repeatedly from a distance of two or three hundred meters. Ignore the trucks and support vehicles clustered around it; they aren't worth any honor points. The dropship takes a lot of punishment but its weapons systems are shut down and it cannot shoot back. The key is to pilot a 'Mech with lasers or to pack a whole lot of ammo if you're carrying projectile weapons.

Bone Machine

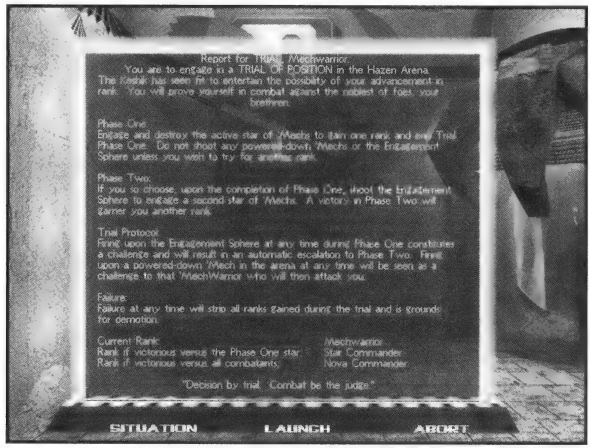


This mission can be very tough because of the sheer volume of enemy units. You can bring a single starmate along, and if you do, consider giving him a Streak SRM design. That way he won't accidentally shoot the Firebase.

Stay close to the Firebase at all times, using the E key repeatedly to find your nearest enemy. It's critical that you have a powerful 'Mech because you must knock out each Wolf 'Mech quickly and then engage the remaining attackers—otherwise you won't be able to save the Firebase from destruction.

Keep in mind that your enemies are preoccupied with blowing up the Firebase. Use this to your advantage by carefully aiming your first attack and making it count; shooting off a leg is a preferred tactic. Don't be frustrated if you end up replaying this one a few times. The Firebase is rather fragile and there are numerous attackers. If you have trouble navigating through the base, try taking a 'Mech with Jump Jets.

First Falcon Trial

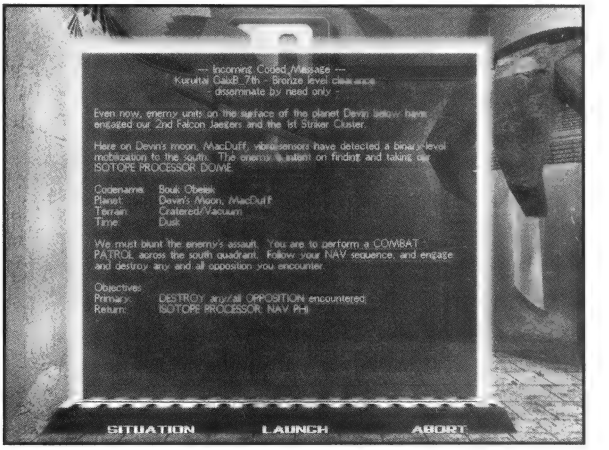


This is actually a rather simple trial. You get to pilot a modified Storm Crow, and its weapons configuration—a plethora of medium lasers—isn't half bad. The Jade Falcon arena is great, allowing you to hide quite easily and make your opponents come to you. And you only face one enemy 'Mech at a time: a Hellbringer in the first Star and a Timber Wolf in the second.

You start the trial right behind a large obstacle. Stay there! Line up your shot and disable the Hellbringer as it comes around the corner for you. Now destroy the Engagement Sphere and run back into hiding. Repeat the hide-and-ambush process with the Timber Wolf. Hey, you've just gained two ranks!

Bouk Obelisk

In this mission you're essentially on defense, but you don't have to follow the rule of staying close to your target. Instead, you should follow the NAV sequence until you encounter a veritable swarm of enemy 'Mechs. If you can smash through them all, you'll then need to return to the Isotope Processor where you started the mission and defend it from another (smaller) wave of bad guys.



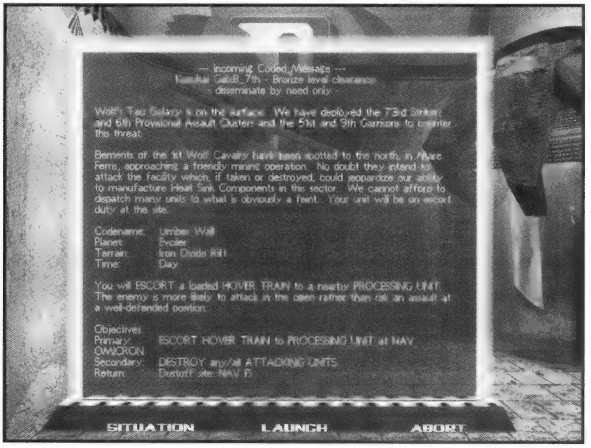
It's wise to bring along a starmate on Bouk Obelisk. Even if you don't, this mission includes an extra Falcon 'Mech whom you cannot control, and he'll help you somewhat on defense. If you do bring a starmate, you'll have a total of two other 'Mechs to distract the enemy and absorb damage for you, and that makes your life a lot easier.

Note: The only trick to this mission is destroying the first swarm fairly quickly and then getting back to the Isotope Processor in time to meet the second wave.

Umber Wall

The Umber Wall mission is most unusual, because a good portion of the early mission is spend attacking aircraft, not 'Mechs. You can make it much easier by taking a starmate and by arming his 'Mech with Streak SRMs. You'll also need a decent top speed: The Summoner that you're initially offered is a good choice for this mission.

Follow the Hover Train as it plods its way east. Several gunships (attack aircraft) will attack it as it slowly moves along, but by targeting these with Streak SRMs you won't have to keep craning your 'Mech's neck and staring at the sky—just fire and move on. Make your starmate attack them, too, and they'll disappear quite quickly.



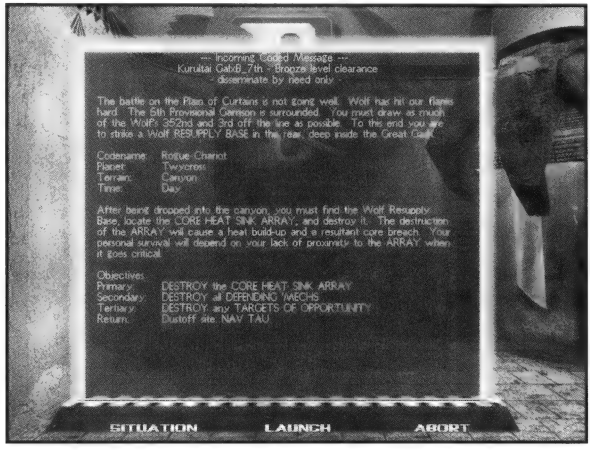
The Hover Train will eventually near a ridge and be ambushed by two or three enemy 'Mechs. If you can stay out in front of the train you won't have any problems dispatching them. Now comes the tricky part: Instead of going over the ridge, the train goes through it. You cannot enter the little tunnel that the train uses, so you should jet around that ridge as quickly as possible. On the other side, a Dire Wolf and other enemy nasties will be waiting for the train, so you really need to get there fast.

Tip: If you fail and the enemy 'Mechs destroy the train, next time try to get a little farther ahead. If you find this is impossible you might consider a faster 'Mech. And remember, Jump Jets are the best way to move quickly.

Rogue Chariot

Rogue Chariot is a fairly easy mission, and a very entertaining one as well.

Follow the NAV sequence and you'll soon come across some enemy tanks. Blow them up quickly with a few well-placed shots. Now turn your attention to that wonderful bridge! A group of enemy 'Mechs appear to be standing on the bridge, don't they? You know what to do. Blast those bridge supports—all of them. Watch the Wolf 'Mechs as



they plummet earthward and blow up. Such fun! The bridge counts as a Target of Opportunity, so it's definitely worth your while to blow it up completely.

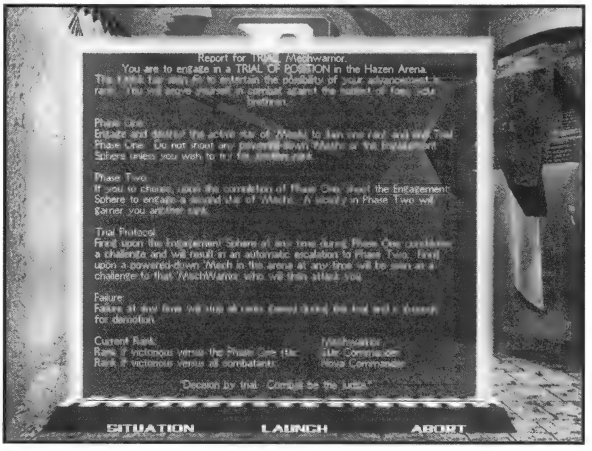
Now proceed down your NAV path and blow up any enemy 'Mechs you encounter. The Heat Sink Array that you're committed to destroying is sitting out in plain sight, so it's just a question of pumping it full of lead.

Caution: Be sure to race back at top speed after you've destroyed it, as your 'Mech will be incinerated if you're still within the blast radius when the core breach occurs.

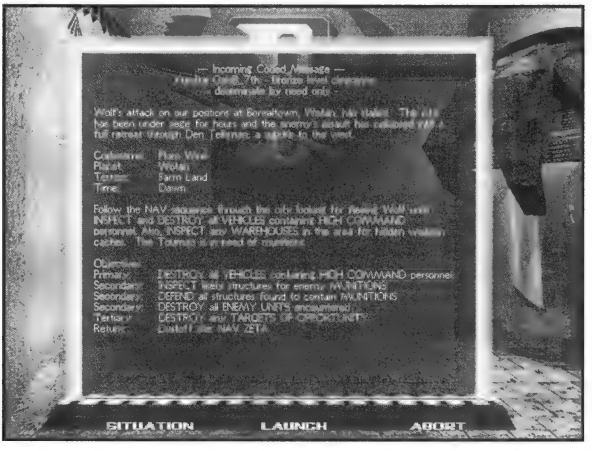
A couple of Wolf tanks will have found their way back to block your return path, but they should not present any difficulties.

Second Falcon Trial

This trial is somewhat tougher than the first, but still very manageable. You get a Nova, while your foes consist of a Warhammer IIC (Star 1) and a Gargoyle (Star 2). Just like the first trial, the old trick of hiding behind an obstacle until your foes get close will work admirably here. Your medium lasers work best in close-range sneak attacks, because your opponents are more geared toward long-range fighting.


Report for TRIAL MechWarrior.
You are to entaste in a TRIAL OF POSITION in the Hazen Arena.
Phase One
Phase Two
Trial Protocol
Failure
Current Rank:
Rank if victorious versus the Phase One (tie:
Rank if victorious versus all combatants:
"Decision by trial. Combat be the judge."
SITUATION
LAUNCH
ABORT

Plum Wine

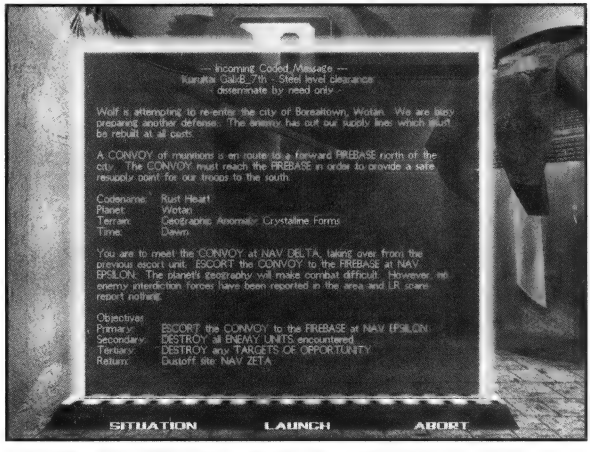

— Incoming Coded Message —
Wolf's attack on our positions at Borrastown, Wolfan, has failed. The city has been under seige for hours and the enemy's assault has reduced it to a full retreat through Den Tolimus, a suburb to the west.
Codename: Plum Wine
Planet: Wolfan
Terrain: Farm Land
Time: Dawn
Follow the NAV sequence through the city suburb for Nesmi Wolf unit INSPECT and DESTROY all VEHICLES containing HIGH COMMAND personnel. Also, INSPECT any WAREHOUSES in the area for hidden weapon caches. The Talimus is in need of munitions.
Objectives:
Primary: DESTROY all VEHICLES containing HIGH COMMAND personnel
Secondary: INSPECT every structures for enemy AMMUNITIONS
Secondary: DEFEND all structures found to contain MUNITIONS
Secondary: DESTROY all ENEMY UNITS encountered
Tertiary: DESTROY any TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY
Return: Debrief after NAV ZETA
SITUATION
LAUNCH
ABORT

Plum Wine is one of those annoying missions where you must intercept moving vehicles. Time is important and a slow 'Mech won't work, so take a fast 'Mech with beam weapons and perhaps some Streak SRMs for good measure. Proceed through your NAV sequence briskly, pausing only to destroy enemy 'Mechs and inspect warehouses. Don't bother inspecting other structures; warehouses have a very distinctive shape (large and low to the ground) and they are the only buildings that contain munitions.

Whenever you aren't fighting you should scan with the Satellite Uplink, looking for enemy units, warehouses, and above all, convoys. When you find a convoy it's often best just to destroy the whole thing instead of inspecting each one. This is particularly true if you have beam weapons, as you needn't worry about wasting ammo.

Enemy dropships are hovering around the area, but you should ignore them as best you can and just keep marching along the NAV sequence. There will be several Wolf 'Mechs to deal with, but if you are careful they won't be too much of a problem.

Rust Heart



Rust Heart is a slug-fest on a crystalline world. It is also another moving-vehicle mission, only this time you must defend the moving vehicles instead of destroy them. This is fairly easy if you take the right 'Mechs for the job; it's impossible if you do not. You and your starmates need big, fast 'Mechs with reasonable firepower and, more important, the speed to get out ahead of the convoy.

You start your mission next to the convoy, so it's just a matter of joining it and then walking out in front of it, scanning the murky horizon for bad guys. When the Wolf 'Mechs appear you should run out to meet them, destroy them, and quickly get back to the convoy to deal with the inevitable attack from the other direction.

Tip: This is not a difficult mission if you just obey that timeless edict: Stay close to the thing you're supposed to protect, and all will be well.

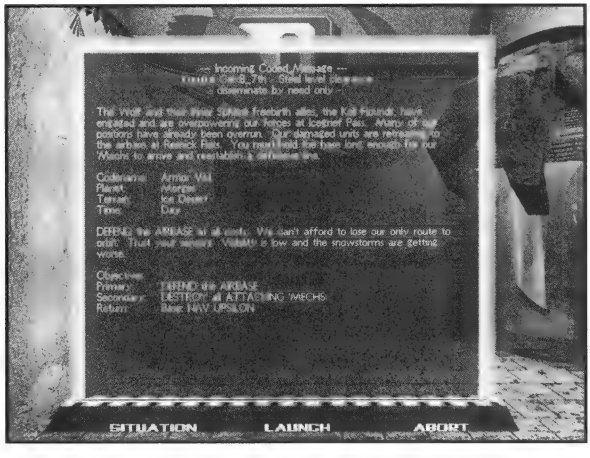
Third Falcon Trial

This is a nasty trial. You get a Kit Fox and your opponents are a Summoner (Star 1) and a Warhawk (Lance 2). Talk about being outgunned! Still, the Falcon arena provides good cover and the fact that you only have to fight one 'Mech at a time makes this trial a little

less unbalanced. Essentially you'll have to play hide-and-seek with your bigger opponents or they'll turn you into toast.

Maneuverability is nice, and you could approach these battles by scurrying around the arena, but when facing the Summoner you're better off attacking at short range where your weapons will do most good, then ducking for cover and repeating the surprise attack.

Armor Veil



This is perhaps the most frustrating mission you'll encounter. Take a 'Mech with excellent speed, sacrificing power if need be, because the Airbase you're supposed to defend is a sprawling expanse and you'll have to defend it from attacks on several sides. Furthermore, it's extremely fragile, and your mission will end quite abruptly if any of those buildings get fried.

Take starmates on this mission and set them to defend the Airbase. When an enemy wave appears, run out and destroy it before it reaches the flat plain where the Airbase is located. The Wolf 'Mechs attack the Airbase from great distances, so you really have to intercept them quickly. The first wave of two 'Mechs can be easily finished off, as can the second, but as the second attacks a third will appear from the opposite direction. Target these new 'Mechs as you're fighting the

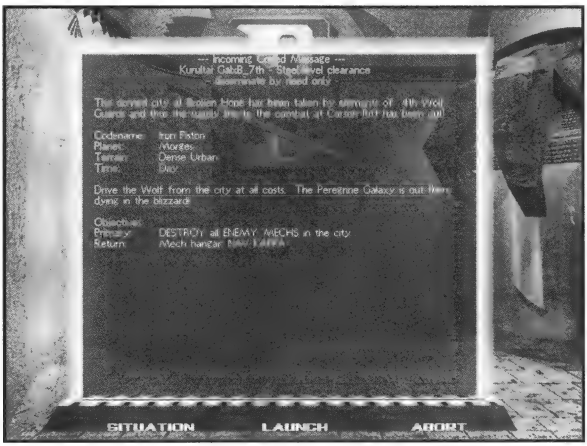
second wave, and have your starmates attack them. Better yet, finish off the second wave in record time and fly like the wind to deal with the third one yourself.

That's the truly critical part of the mission: getting to that third group of 'Mechs in time. It can be inexpressibly difficult to keep the Airbase defended, so don't doubt your own combat abilities if it keeps getting destroyed!

Tip: To cut down on response time you can shoot the members of that second 'Mech wave to distract them from the Airbase, then retreat toward the Airbase as you continue to fire at them. They will generally ignore the base once you've damaged them enough, so you can deal with them close to the base in relative safety.

When the second wave is finally destroyed, you'll be in a better position to intercept that third attack from the opposite direction.

Iron Piston

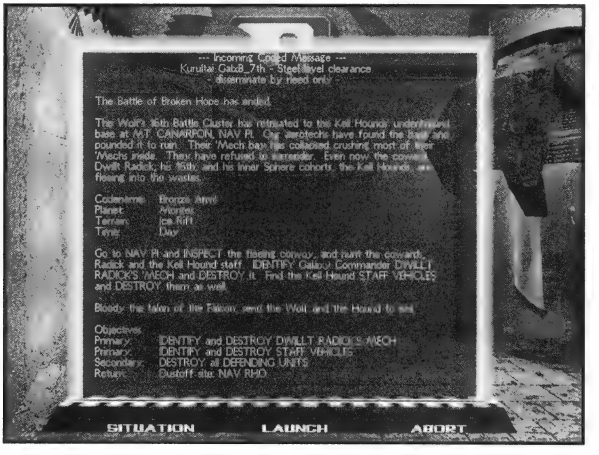


If there was ever a mission that called for a slice 'em, dice 'em, beat-'em-into-the-ground 'Mech, this is it. Forget about speed and all those other niceties—what you need here is a walking fortress. Lumber

through the city and hide behind buildings, checking the Satellite Uplink to make sure you're never exposing yourself to several enemies at once. Take out the Wolf 'Mechs individually and you'll find that your battle goes much more smoothly. Note the BattleMaster, by the way—a 'Mech design that you can pilot, but only with a cheat code.

This is a mission where your combat skills are tested to the limit. Pilot the 'Mech design and weapons systems you feel most comfortable with, but remember to load up on weapons and take lots of ammo if you've got projectile weapons. There are a whole lot of enemies to shoot.

Bronze Anvil



Bronze Anvil is an extremely tough mission. You should take two starmates along, and all three of you should have big but highly maneuverable 'Mechs.

When you first start the mission you'll be facing a long, narrow canyon. Wolf units will be fleeing down that canyon: They consist primarily of 'Mechs, convoy vehicles, tanks, and gunships (assault helicopters). You need to sprint after the convoy, ignoring the nearby gunships and tanks or killing them very quickly, or perhaps ordering your starmates to destroy them.

A nearby BattleMaster and Dire Wolf should be your first priority: By destroying them you knock out the enemy's best firepower. The Dire Wolf also happens to be Radick's 'Mech, so by destroying it you fulfill your first mission objective. Remember to identify these 'Mechs before you destroy them! You will fail the mission if you do not identify the Dire Wolf. Now you need to pick your way through the convoy vehicles and find the staff vehicles. You *must* identify them before you blow them up, as this is a condition of your mission.

Caution: Destroying convoy units or 'Mechs before you have identified them *may lead to failure.*

The convoy vehicles are hard to blow up anyway, so it does in fact pay to identify the ones you want beforehand and to destroy only those.

After you've dispatched the convoy vehicles, mop up any other units that appear, including several 'Mechs at the end of the canyon and the defenseless spherical dropship you'll also find there. These extra targets will net you some bonus honor points when the mission is done.

A primary reason many pilots lose this mission is that the convoy vehicles make it to the dropship before the pilot can catch them all. Sacrifice your 'Mech if you must, but at all costs stop those staff vehicles or your mission will end prematurely. The bottom line is that you definitely need speed for this mission.

Fourth Falcon Trial

This trial is a rather cruel joke, putting you in a Firemoth and making you face a Marauder IIC (Star 1) and a Dire Wolf (Star 2). That's right, a Firemoth against two of the biggest and baddest 'Mechs in existence. Your only consolation is that your Firemoth has a good weapons configuration with lots of medium lasers. However, considering the odds, this isn't much of a consolation.

The only way I've made this trial work is to play peek-a-boo, hiding behind objects and carefully lining up a shot with my torso twisted 90 degrees and my feet pointing in the direction I'll need to run. When a big opponent first appears around the corner I fire a group shot of laser weapons and run immediately, putting the obstacle between me and my adversary. I then line up another shot and repeat the process.

This method of fighting can be nerve-racking, but it's one of a very few ways that you can kill such big opponents with such a little 'Mech. Many pilots find that the difficulty rating must be set to Easy before they can finish this mission. There's no shame in that when you're outweighed by more than 150 tons.

CHAPTER 15

Clan Wolf Missions

Every Clan Wolf mission in *MechWarrior 2* is reviewed in this chapter, along with tips on how to complete your tasks. As with the Jade Falcon missions, these mission synopses offer advice on what sort of 'Mech to use on each mission as well as tactical considerations and notes on special features you may encounter.

If any particular mission proves to be too much for you to handle, even with the tips provided here, see Chapter 17 for a discussion of the game options and cheat codes that will render even the toughest missions manageable.

As I did in Chapter 14, instead of referring to objects and features in terms of degree headings, I will steer you in the right direction by noting important NAV points and by sending you in cardinal directions. For example, you might be instructed to go to NAV Epsilon and then go east to

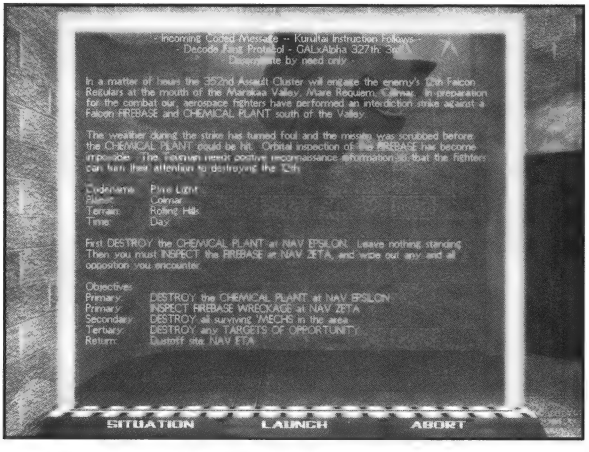
find a particular object. If you are unsure how to get there you can just start up the mission, turn on the Autopilot, and press [N] until NAV Epsilon is highlighted. When you reach that spot you should turn off Autopilot and walk east. If you're uncertain of direction, you can always turn on the Satellite Uplink view and navigate that way. If you want to translate your 'Mech's degree heading into a cardinal direction, you can do that quite easily by remembering that 0 degrees is north, 90 degrees is east, 180 degrees is south, and 270 degrees is west.

Wolf missions tend to have slightly more complicated terrain than Jade Falcon missions, so rough intelligence maps have been provided for those missions where your objectives aren't entirely clear or where they cannot be reached by using simple NAV-point navigation. These sketches aren't intended to be comprehensive, they are merely another tool in your arsenal.

Targets of Opportunity are not extensively covered in these chapters because they are thoroughly nonessential and yield few benefits even if you do destroy them.

Note: Wolf missions are a little harder than their Falcon counterparts, and your objectives tend to be a little less straightforward.

Pyre Light



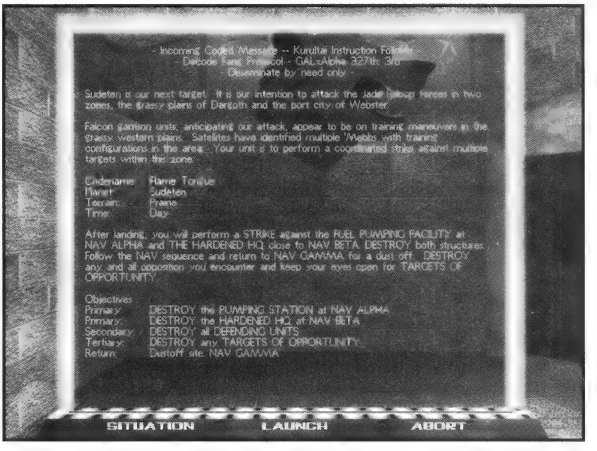
This is a very straightforward mission that can be completed with the standard Mad Dog you're provided with. When you hit planetside you should head toward NAV Epsilon and get a bead on the two 'Mechs who run out to greet you. If you give them each a good dose of LRMs they'll be crippled or destroyed before they can get too close. Finish them off and proceed to the chemical plant. Destroy it by shooting every single part of the building, and take your time. A verbal cue will tell you when it's fully destroyed.

Now head toward NAV Zeta. If you have LRMs left you can finish an enemy Firemoth with a shot or two, then deal with the Nova that's lurking in the flaming wreckage of the Firebase. Once that's done, line up the large, central piece of wreckage in your sights and press [Q]. That targets the wreckage.

Note: Merely hitting [T] repeatedly will *never* target buildings. You must line them up under your sights and press [Q] to actually lock them in.

Press [I] to inspect the wreckage, and your mission is complete. Head for the dustoff point and prepare for your next challenge.

Flame Tongue

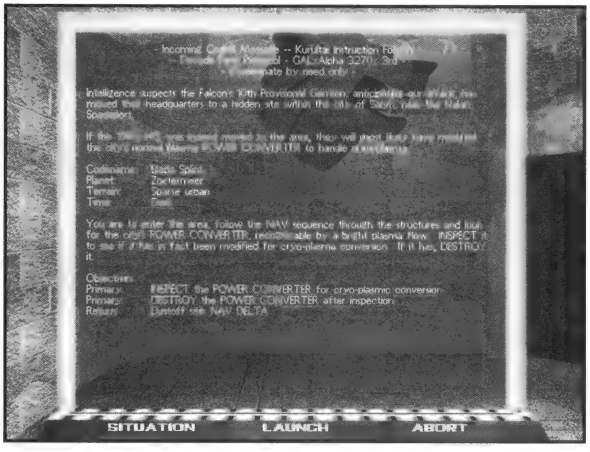


This is a very simple mission with little scope for strategy, mainly because the terrain is so wide open that cover is virtually nonexistent. Take a good, solid 'Mech, like a multiple-laser design, and disable the host of small enemies that appear near every NAV point. Better yet, stock up on Streak SRMs so you don't have to worry about aiming.

Follow the NAV sequence to destroy the pumping station and the hardened HQ. *Hardened* means fortified with walls and cannons, so you'll have lots of pesky little targets—easy to finish off with SRMs.

Targets of Opportunity are located very close to your two primary objectives, so it's just a matter of looking at what's right under your nose: Trucks, auxiliary buildings, and so forth are all there to destroy.

Blade Splint



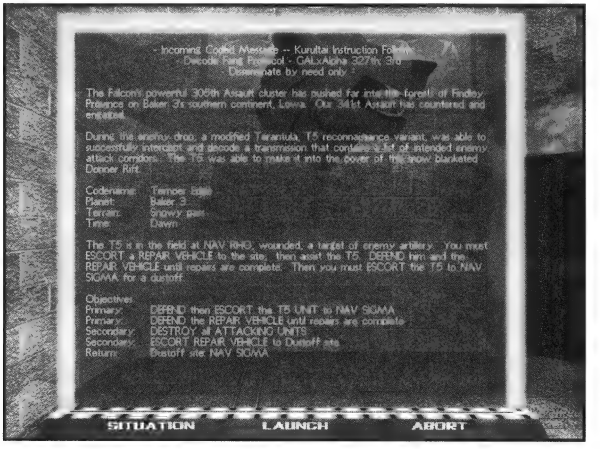
This mission will fail if you try to engage enemy units; besides, destroying enemies is not one of your mission goals. Take a design like the Sprinter, described in Chapter 12. The speed and Jump Jets will help you stay alive. Run through your NAV sequence. You'll find that you first must run north, then east. When you get to your second NAV point, do *not* turn north and head for the third NAV point. Turn southeast and scan the area by pressing Q repeatedly. The Power Converter is a small, thin building with an irregular shape. Run close, target it with Q, and hit I to inspect it. You'll find that it is indeed a

cryoplasma converter. Shoot it until it blows up and head north to finish your NAV sequence, ending up at NAV Delta.

The Blade Splint mission becomes much easier if you perform it with the Satellite Uplink view constantly enabled. This lets you view the action from an overhead perspective, which allows you to avoid enemy 'Mechs and obstacles that rush to block your path. It also lets you see the angle of incoming shots quite clearly, so you can adjust your path accordingly as you run away from enemy units. Finally, the Satellite Uplink lets you locate the distinctive, irregularly shaped Power Converter very easily.

If this mission is hard for you to complete, it's probably because you're trying to fight or because you're cracking under the pressure. In this case make yourself invulnerable in the Combat Variables screen and run through the mission with Satellite View engaged. Locate the Power Converter and see exactly where it is in relation to the second NAV point. Once you're comfortable with this you can try the mission for real.

Temper Edge



This mission sounds complicated but it's really quite simple. You can generally ignore those two vehicles that you're supposed to defend, at least after the very start of the mission. The mission objectives seem complicated because they are listed out of order on your briefing screen, but as you proceed it becomes clear what to do.

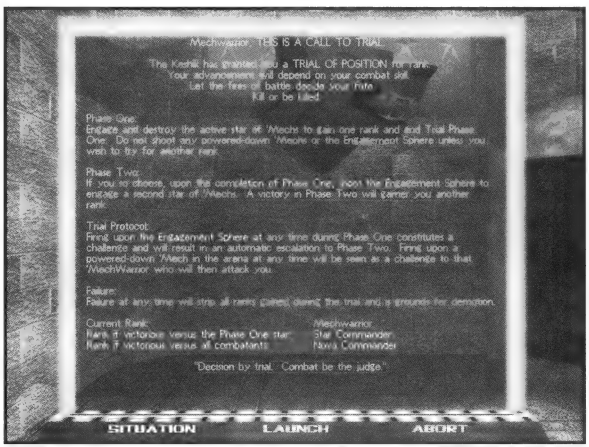
Target the repair vehicle unit and follow it until it stops near the T5 (the spidery thing). The T5 and repair vehicle will now rendezvous for a while, sitting in a little ring of debris as enemy Kit Foxes start to appear in waves. Your enemies are small, and if you take a strong 'Mech with multiple medium lasers or SRMs you should be able to knock them out with a few quick shots apiece.

As each wave appears you should target the closest enemy by pressing [E], then run out to meet that group. Destroy them all and then return to where the T5 and repair vehicle are sitting. Wait until the next wave comes and rush out to greet them.

Eventually, if you can disable the enemies before they get close to the T5 and repair vehicle, the repair will finally end (and you get a message to that effect). The repairs may seem like they're taking a long time, but that doesn't mean you've done something wrong. If you completely screw up and one of those vehicles gets blown up, you will know immediately, because the mission will end. As long as those vehicles are not destroyed you'll do just fine.

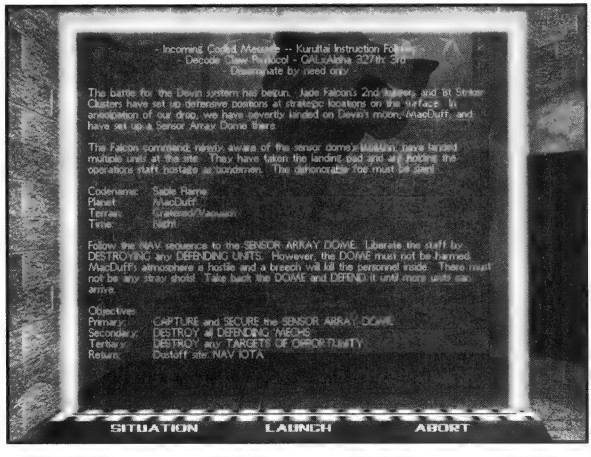
When the repair is finished you should follow the slow little repair vehicle to the dustoff site and your mission will be complete.

First Wolf Trial



This is a typically tough Wolf trial. You get a Storm Crow, not a great 'Mech, and Star 1 of your opponents consists of two Firemoths. They're easy to kill, but the Storm Crow and Gargoyle in Star 2 are relentless adversaries. Run into a corner and fight the Storm Crow for a while before the Gargoyle gets near enough to fire. With luck you'll destroy the Crow quickly; then you can try to shoot off one of the Gargoyle's already injured legs. If you manage to do that, you can just circle around to the back side of the Gargoyle and finish him off at your leisure.

Sable Flame



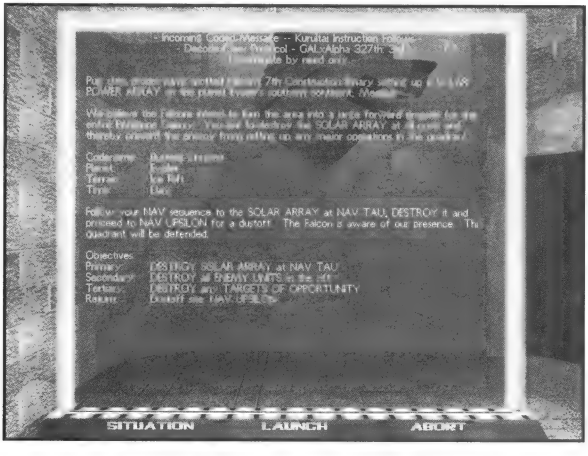
This arduous mission requires you to defend a transparent dome. A few simple precautions should make it easier.

Take a 'Mech with AC-20s or Streak SRMs. The idea is to disable the 'Mechs swarming the Sensor Array Dome (SAD) as quickly as possible, making sure that you don't damage the dome yourself. You are allowed a starmate on this mission. Take one, and give him Streak SRMs exclusively. Their accuracy will prevent him from missing your enemies and accidentally hitting the dome. Also, be extremely cautious about where you shoot. The enemy 'Mechs like to hug the walls of the SAD, so don't be tempted to take shots when they're right up against it. Get next to the dome yourself and shoot when your angle is clear, away from the dome walls.

There will be another wave of enemies after a brief pause in the action, and then a Jade Falcon dropship will appear a short distance from the SAD. Do not stray too far from the dome! Tell your starmate to defend the SAD while you go peek at the next wave of bad guys. Target the new 'Mechs to see what they're like and then head back to the dome. There are two sneaky 'Mech pilots who like to appear on the other side of the dome and blow it up when you're not paying attention. Use the Satellite Uplink to locate and destroy them, and then handle the more obvious enemies that come from the direction of the dropship.

The dropship itself can be ignored. Don't go near it! Stay fairly close to the dome throughout the mission and destroy Falcon 'Mechs as quickly and efficiently as you can. That's the easiest way to win.

Burning Chrome



Take a pal along for this mission—you'll need him because this one is very difficult. As for yourself, take a powerful 'Mech with at least one AC-20 and some beam weapons.

Tip: The AC-20 should be saved for a particularly nasty Summoner.

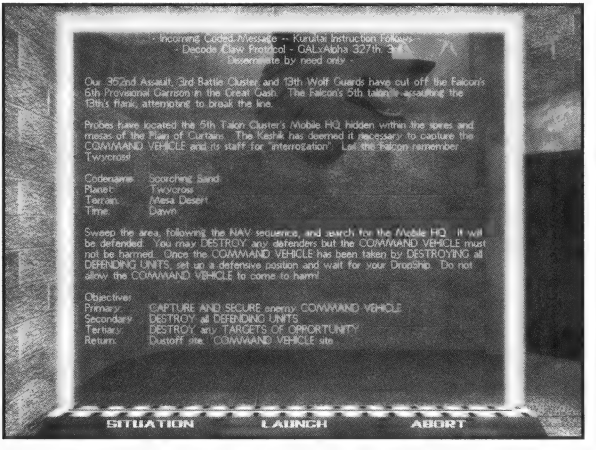
Proceed down your NAV path, eliminating a pair of little 'Mechs that appear almost instantly. As you walk along, repeatedly cycle through your targets with [T] and you'll find that a Falcon dropship is lurking behind a large, snow-covered mountain or mesa. Two enemy 'Mechs are also hiding back there, powered down. Walk around in front of that mountain to make the 'Mechs power up and chase you, but by no means should you go back there and let the dropship get a good shot at you. Also, don't go too close to the mesa with all those cannons on it. That should be handled after all enemy 'Mechs are dead.

Of the two hiding 'Mechs, the Mad Dog should be no problem, but the Summoner's pilot is very skilled. When the Summoner first appears, get right up next to the mountain and line up an AC-20 shot. Hose him down when he finally rounds the corner, and he won't get a chance to wreak his customary havoc.

Once both of the hiding 'Mechs have appeared from the vicinity of the dropship and have been eliminated, walk toward the mesa and destroy those pesky cannons with your beam weapons. Order your starmate to do it instead if you're severely hurt or lack weapons with adequate range (although medium ER lasers should do just fine). Pick off those cannons one by one before ascending the ramp to the mesa top.

Once on top you can blast all those solar collectors to achieve your primary objective. Go back down the ramp—don't drop off the mesa—and get to the dustoff point on NAV Epsilon.

Scorching Sand



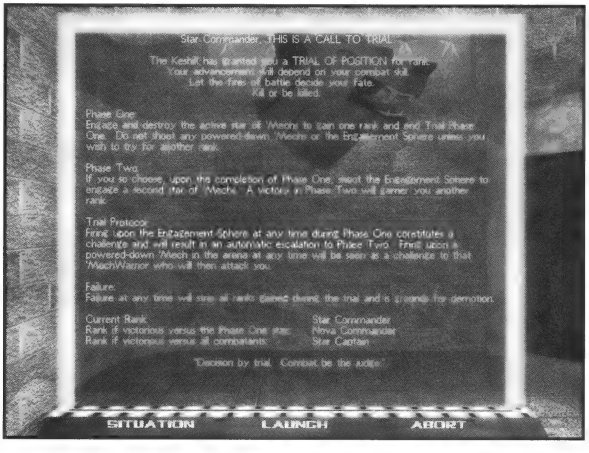
Take a 'Mech with Jump Jets or you'll suffer leg damage at the very start of this mission by falling off the mesa upon which you're perched. Also take some Streak SRMs to destroy the numerous small or fixed targets you'll encounter. Finally, take an AC-10 (for rapid-fire damage) or some other extreme firepower, as you'll face an extraordinarily tough Rifleman II-C at the end of your mission.

Destroy the two annoying Jenner II-Cs who appear right at the start, preferably by running behind the mesa where you begin the mission and ambushing them as they come around the corner. Now follow your NAV sequence and dispatch a lone Storm Crow who will appear from behind a mesa.

As you approach a narrow gulch flanked by twin mesas, you'll be attacked by two Elementals. Use Streak SRMs and they'll die immediately, with no fuss. After that you'll find an area filled with cannons and attack vehicles. SRMs are the single best way to destroy them all quickly and easily. You'll notice that the command vehicle is also there, sitting in a corner. Ignore it.

A Rifleman II-C now makes a dramatic entrance by dropping from a mesa top and firing at the command vehicle. He will ignore you until you pose a serious threat, so aim well with your first group shot and try to knock one of his arms off. From there you simply must slug it out and get to the nearby dustoff zone when you're done.

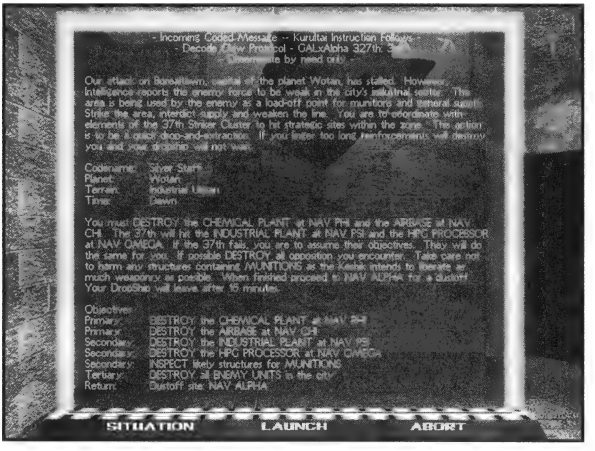
Second Wolf Trial



This nasty trial puts you in a Mad Dog. Your first set of enemies is a pair of Jenner II-Cs, and the second set is a Rifleman II-C and another Jenner II-C. The key is to sit in place and target the first two Jenner II-Cs with LRM-20 bursts before they get too close (a double LRM shot should kill a Jenner II-C flat-out). Then try to do the same to the third Jenner II-C, dump your remaining LRMs into the slower Rifleman II-C, and close in for the kill.

This is a very tough trial and you won't win unless you get mileage out of your LRM-20s. Ideally, you should kill all the Jenner II-Cs with LRMs before they get close enough to severely damage you. A final word of warning: You might want to ignore your large lasers and just rapid-fire the medium ones. You'll overheat less often.

Silver Staff



You presumably have help in this mission, in the form of the 37th Striker Cluster. Pretend they don't exist. This will make your mission much simpler and less stressful.

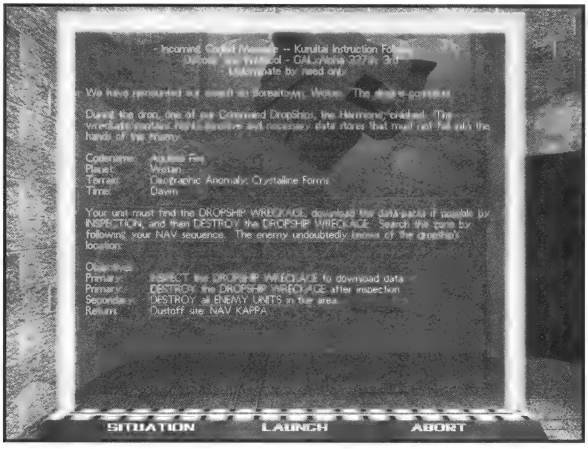
Follow your NAV points and destroy any enemy 'Mechs that attempt to get too close. This is one of those missions where you have lots of ground targets to destroy as well as several enemies, so don't use a 'Mech with limited projectile weapons. And don't worry too much about speed; it's not as critical as the mission briefing would have you believe. Power is more important.

Destroy the Chemical Plant at NAV Phi and continue to NAV Chi, where you must destroy the Airbase. There are many parts to this Airbase, so you'll have to blast away for a while.

Do the same with the Industrial Plant and HPG Processor, if necessary. Inspect all buildings you come across with [I] in order to achieve your secondary mission. Remember, you aren't supposed to destroy those nonessential buildings, just inspect them.

Keep looking at how much time you have left, and only destroy the 'Mechs that are engaging you directly. If you achieve all your primary and secondary objectives and you still have lots of time left, you can go clean up remaining enemy units.

Aquiline Fire

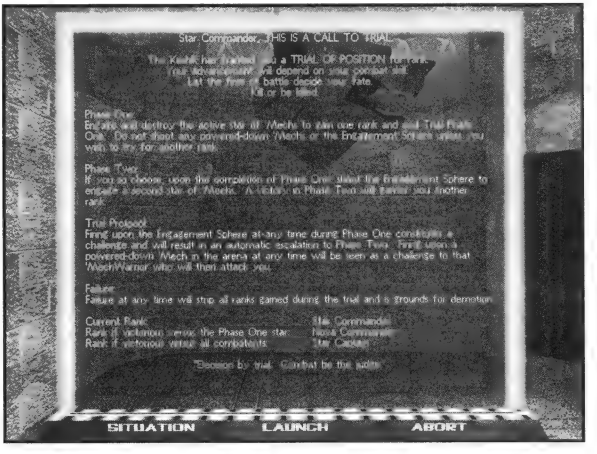


This is a mission where you need to do a little fighting and a little searching. It's not too hard if you have a 'Mech with a good punch and decent speed, like the Summoner that's recommended for the mission.

As you follow your NAV points you'll discover several groups of Falcon 'Mechs lumbering about, more intent on searching the area than on fighting you. If you can ambush them quickly and destroy them all, you'll eventually get the All Clear message indicating that you've destroyed all enemy units in the area. At this point you can relax and look for the dropship wreckage in peace.

Follow your NAV points and use the Satellite Uplink whenever there are no enemies in the vicinity. It gives you a nice perspective on an otherwise foggy world. You can follow the NAV sequence until you reach NAV Theta, at which point you'll turn directly southwest and run across the flaming wreck of the dropship. Perform your tasks there and head back toward the dustoff site.

Third Wolf Trial

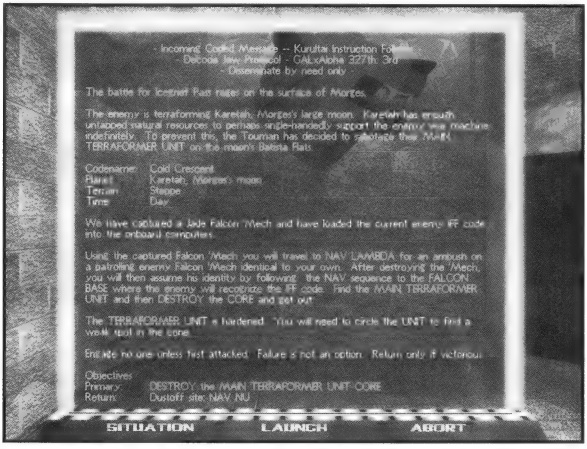


This is one of the easiest Wolf trials. You get to pilot a modified Summoner, while enemy Star 1 pilots a Mad Dog and Storm Crow. Star 2 consists of two pathetic Gargoyles.

Get in close to Star 1 and blast them to bits—not hard considering your size—and then approach the Gargoyles. Aim for the legs and disable one, then run away and shoot a leg off of the other. At this point it's just a matter of cleaning up.

Cold Crescent

This is one of the most interesting missions you'll perform. It features a lot of unusual terrain, including a fully functional monorail. It's also a tough mission, because your 'Mech needs both power and speed.



The mission briefing makes it seem as if you have no choice of 'Mechs. This is untrue: You can pick your 'Mech just as usual. A good choice would be a design with a big weapons punch and Jump Jets for speed. 'Mech designs with limited ammo are inadvisable, as you must fight several enemy 'Mechs and destroy a static target.

Start your mission and kill the lone 'Mech that appears almost immediately. Now follow the NAV path to the north. It takes you just to the south of a Falcon outpost, which is complete with 'Mechs and cannons. The Falcons will read your IFF code and think you're just another Falcon unit, so don't attack the base. Your computer will inform you when they're scanning your code, so there should be no confusion about whether or not you're being attacked. Once you've been told that you're clear, head due west. If you instead try to wander among the cannons and accidentally smash into or shoot something, you might just activate the defenses instead.

Eventually you'll come to a huge wall running north and south. You should see a gate in that wall; if you don't, follow the edge of the wall until it appears. It will be guarded by a lone 'Mech, which you should ambush immediately. Your IFF code will stop working as soon as you get to the gate, so line up your shot perfectly and destroy the 'Mech before it's alert.

Go through the gate and you'll find yourself inside a huge, square area. In the center of it is the Terraformer unit, an immense pyramidlike structure with arms branching out in the four cardinal directions. You

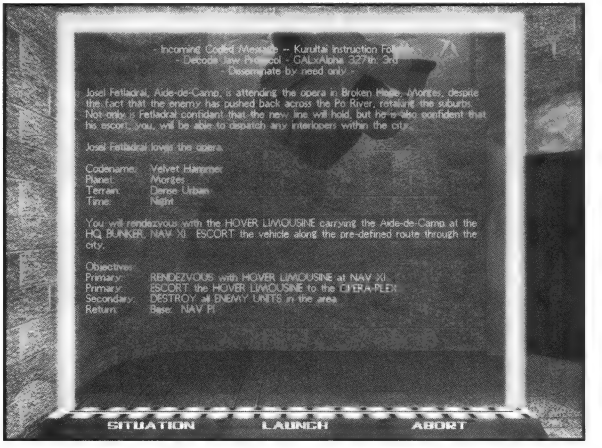
must destroy several 'Mechs that are running around inside this area or they'll distract you too much while you're trying to blow up the Terraformer. Then you need to walk around the Terraformer unit, preferably clockwise, until you reach the southwest corner.

Tip: Go up to the Terraformer and target it: You'll see a ventilation hatch on its side. Blow that up and destroy the core that's revealed in the opening.

Now you must run back to the gate and make your way to the dustoff site, NAV Nu. There will be a large explosion a few minutes after you destroy the Terraformer core, but if your 'Mech isn't severely crippled and you run straight for the gate, you should be fine. Your computer will inform you when you're safely outside the blast radius.

Remember that destroying enemy 'Mechs is not part of the mission objectives. Only destroy units that attack you and that you cannot outrun.

Velvet Hammer



The Grinder, a 'Mech design shown in Chapter 12, was made specifically for this mission and it worked admirably. You need a 'Mech with good shot power and reasonable speed to finish the Velvet Hammer.

Your primary objective is to follow a Hover Limousine and guard it. The trick is to destroy your opposition quickly and stay slightly ahead of the limousine—otherwise you'll crash into the limo and damage it. Follow the limousine at the very start of the mission and destroy the first enemy 'Mech you find, using your medium lasers. It will take a while without your AC-20, but you have some time to fight this 'Mech.

Now target the Hover Limousine and catch up with it. The limousine will deviate from its supposedly predetermined path and your computer will give you a warning message. Don't worry; this is supposed to happen.

Tip: Use the Satellite Uplink frequently to get a better idea of the terrain.

Once you've caught up with the limousine you should stay near it at all costs. Destroy two small 'Mechs that power up nearby, then jet ahead to catch up if you fall behind. If the small 'Mechs don't follow the limo, you can leave them more or less alone and come back to deal with them later.

A Marauder IIC will soon appear and get squarely in the path of the limo: This is a critical part of the mission. You must use your AC-20 to destroy the Marauder IIC as quickly as possible, then catch up with (and surpass) the limo as it drives down a long stretch of road. Four enemy tanks will appear on either side of the road; destroy them before the limo gets there.

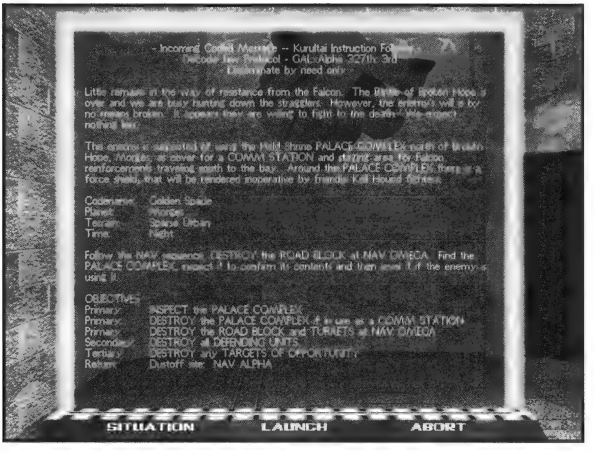
After that you're home free. Just follow the limo until it gets to the Opera-Plex. The mission will not end unless you reach the NAV point located next to the Opera-Plex, so make sure to tag that point before heading home.

Caution: This is a very difficult mission. Don't be surprised if you must play until you have perfectly memorized the limo's movements and the location of the enemy 'Mechs, and even then you may still have to try several times before you get it right.

Golden Spade

This is a blast-'em-and-blast-'em-some-more mission. Once again you're supposed to get assistance from an outside force (this time from a group of Kell Hounds), and once again you will fail to get it. Plan on going it more or less alone, though having starmates with

heavy 'Mechs will certainly help. A good policy is to give your starmates extremely heavy 'Mechs with tons of SRM-6 batteries, or else they might accidentally blast you. As for you, I'd recommend a very slow 'Mech loaded with AC-20s and an alternative weapon like a Streak SRM-6 or a couple of medium lasers. It's very dark throughout this mission, so use your Enhanced Imaging.



You'll have to fight two monstrous Warhawks at the very start of the mission. Kill them and move north. There's a roadblock and a couple of cannons that defend it: Destroy the individual roadblock pieces and cannons. Now a third Warhawk will come after you (yes, another!). I'd recommend using the many buildings around the palace for cover and then blasting him with AC-20s when he comes around a corner.

Now you need to inspect and destroy the Palace Complex, but you can't because a big force shield is guarding it. So walk west and slightly north of the complex. Eventually you'll run into a square depression in the ground that hides the shield generator. Blow it up.

The next thing you see will be some medium-sized 'Mechs swarming about inside and outside the Palace Complex. If you still have ammunition and aren't too badly hurt, they won't be a problem. Run up to the edge of the palace wall. You'll be able to target the complex with Q and inspect it with I without actually getting past the wall. You can blow it up from outside the wall too.

Now you're done. Congratulations! Don't feel bad if you had to knock the difficulty level down a notch before winning—this is definitely a tough one.

Fourth Wolf Trial

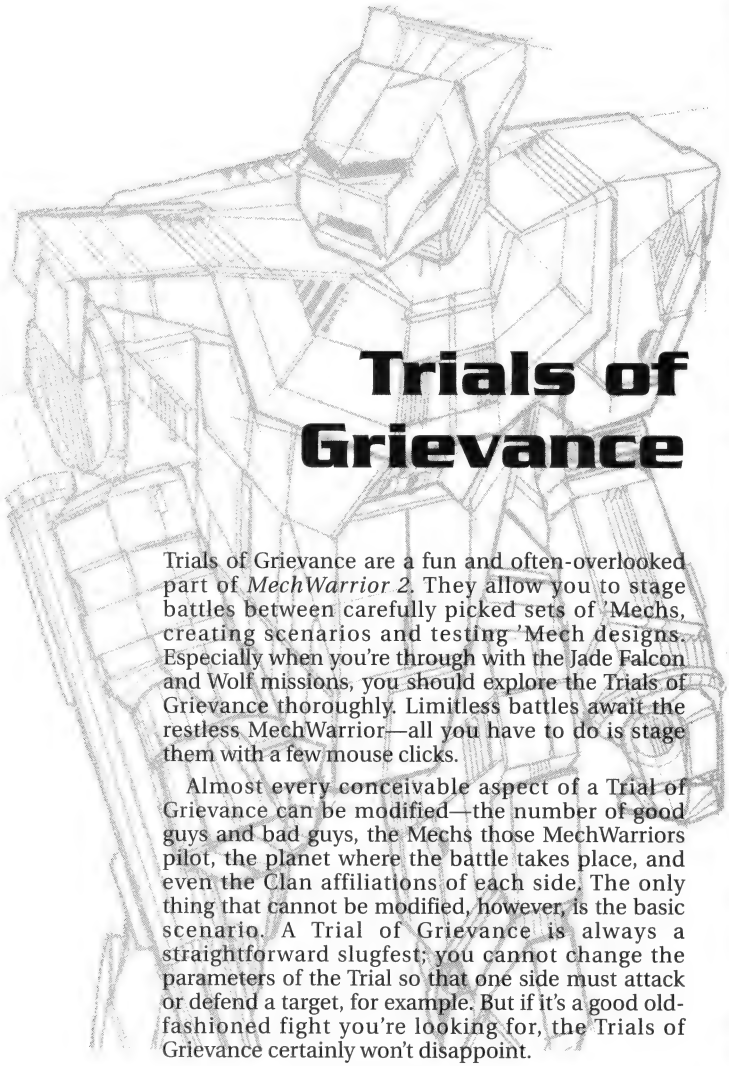
This trial is intensely challenging. You get a Timber Wolf with lots of weapons, LRMs being the most pivotal. Enemy Star 1 contains a Warhammer IIC and a Warhawk, while Star 2 consists of two Marauder IICs and a Warhammer IIC. Yikes! Your survival hinges upon using your LRMs to disable at least one of each Star's members before it gets close enough to hurt you, then picking off the rest with your lasers and other close-range tools. Backpedal a lot to keep your foes at long range.

Good luck on this mission—you'll definitely need it.

PART VI

Freestyle 'Mech Piloting

CHAPTER 16



Trials of Grievance

Trials of Grievance are a fun and often-overlooked part of *MechWarrior 2*. They allow you to stage battles between carefully picked sets of 'Mechs, creating scenarios and testing 'Mech designs. Especially when you're through with the Jade Falcon and Wolf missions, you should explore the Trials of Grievance thoroughly. Limitless battles await the restless MechWarrior—all you have to do is stage them with a few mouse clicks.

Almost every conceivable aspect of a Trial of Grievance can be modified—the number of good guys and bad guys, the Mechs those MechWarriors pilot, the planet where the battle takes place, and even the Clan affiliations of each side. The only thing that cannot be modified, however, is the basic scenario. A Trial of Grievance is always a straightforward slugfest; you cannot change the parameters of the Trial so that one side must attack or defend a target, for example. But if it's a good old-fashioned fight you're looking for, the Trials of Grievance certainly won't disappoint.

Trial Options

When you first start *MechWarrior 2* you'll see the screen depicted in Figure 16-1. Click on the central icon and you'll be transported to the Trial of Grievance area.

Now you'll see a screen very similar to that shown in Figure 16-2. From here you can click on the Launch button at any time to launch a Trial of Grievance with the selected parameters, or you can modify several aspects of the battle before pressing Launch and starting the fight.

Figure 16-1 Your subpeona to the Trail of Grievance looks like this.

'Mech Selection

By clicking on the small left and right arrows beside the Friendly Clan and Enemy Clan 'Mechs, you can change the 'Mech that each MechWarrior pilots, or eliminate starmates entirely and devise a one-on-one Trial. Any combination of 'Mechs is possible: If you want an incredible challenge you're perfectly free to take a single 'Mech and give your opponents three Dire Wolves; by contrast, if you're in a particularly vindictive mood you can team up with two starmates in Marauder IICs and hunt down a lowly Firemoth. It's all up to you.

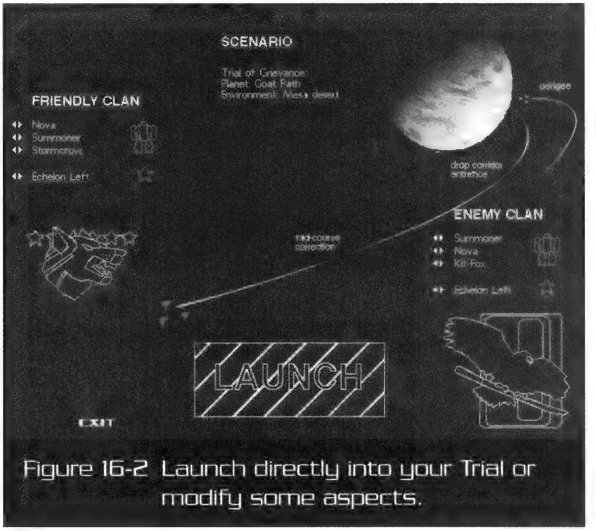


Figure 16-2 Launch directly into your Trial or modify some aspects.

Formation

If you really care about formation (and some MechWarriors do, while others tend to give formation-breaking orders at the start of every battle) you can change it from this main screen by clicking on the left and right arrows beneath the Friendly Clan and Enemy Clan options screens.

Note: This is a good way to test the effectiveness of different formations: Pit your Star against an equal Star with a different formation, then try the same battle again with yet a different formation.

The nice thing about a Trial of Grievance is that you actually know beforehand what formation the other side will be using, so the results of your battles might have some relevance.

Clan Affiliation

Some 'Mech pilots don't realize that they can change clan affiliation simply by clicking on the Wolf's head and Jade Falcon that appear by default on this screen. Figure 16-3 shows newly selected Clan affiliations, Steel Viper and Smoke Jaguar.

These new Clan affiliations do not affect combat per se, but they do add flavor to the game by suggesting conflicts that are beyond the scope of *MechWarrior 2's* mission structure. If you enjoy details, note that the Clan symbols will appear on each Star's 'Mechs during combat, and that the alternate Clan symbols (Smoke Jaguar, Ghost Bear etc.) have been faithfully reproduced in combat, as well.

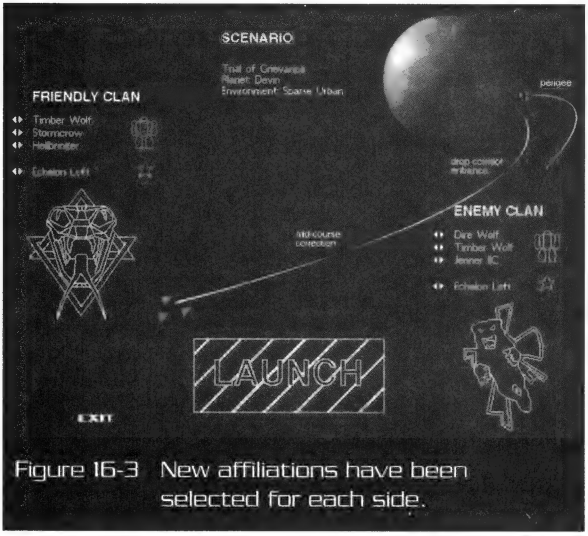


Figure 16-3 New affiliations have been selected for each side.

Scenario

You can change the Trial's battlefield by clicking on the Scenario area: *Scenario* implies that this somehow changes the situation surrounding the fight, but what you're really changing is the terrain.

Each battlefield has its own fixed gravity, terrain, and overall configuration. It also comes with a built-in light level, as well, so when you select a different battlefield you're selecting a whole package. Here's a quick look at every planet you may select.

Goat Path (Mesa Desert)

If you're having trouble with desert-based missions or simply wish to conduct a battle where heat will be a real factor, this is a good choice

of battlefields. It's quite hazy and visibility is limited, so rely on your radar and the Satellite Uplink.

Devin (Sparse Urban)

This small urban battlefield is a great place to practice your short-range gunnery and navigational skills. It's perpetually dark in Devin, though, so you should expect to use Light Amplification or Enhanced Imaging.

Mannedorf (Canyon)

This canyon mission features decent visibility and some very prominent landscape features to hide behind or sprint around. It's a good test when you're preparing for any terrain-intensive slug fest, where close-range firepower can be brought to bear from behind canyon walls or mountainsides.

Garstedt (Ice Plains)

This icy wasteland will test your ability to fight in cold conditions, where firepower is maximized and shutdowns are rare. If you're having difficulties with missions like Burning Chrome then you'd do well to practice here for a while.

Bone-Norman (Rolling Hills)

Lots of missions take place in rolling hills, and there's a subtle difficulty to navigating in this terrain effectively. The low ridges can be used to conceal yourself, but only up to a point. Also, long-range shots sometimes fail because your enemy is actually behind a hill and you hadn't realized it (you will get a targeting lock either way). Practice up on hillside combat here, and you'll fare better in many a mission.

Dawn (Ice Desert)

This ice desert is another area where you can practice up on your heat-intensive combat techniques. The generally flat terrain ensures quick and bloody battles that heat up the icy desert with the flames of burning 'Mechs - ideally not your own 'Mechs.

Kanowit (Cratered Vacuum)

This cratered expanse is similar to the vacuum areas found in several Clan missions. The colorless, high-speed environment takes a little getting used to, and pilots who practice here will be better prepared for the fast-paced encounters in those missions.

Graus (Rocky Highland)

Graus is an interesting battlefield with mid-level terrain features that really test your tactical abilities. It's also a nice change of pace from the all-or-nothing (flat or mountainous) terrain of many battlefields.

Bjarred (Enclosed Arena)

This arena will look extremely familiar to any MechWarrior who's faced a Falcon Trial of Position. The circular, domed expanse is filled with symmetrical obstacles that are perfect for ambushes and surprise tactics. Fast 'Mechs whose pilots are adept at navigation do very well in this sort of environment.

Port Arthur (Enclosed Trial Arena)

This a square arena, enclosed by walls like a castle and containing some very rough hills inside. It's more similar to the Wolf trial arena than the Falcon site, so MechWarriors facing an important trial would do well to stage preparatory battles in here.

'Mech Lab

By clicking on the small 'Mech icon under the Friendly or Enemy Clan areas, you can access the 'Mech Lab that is also found in each Clan headquarters. The only difference is a cosmetic one: As you can see from Figure 16-4, 'Mechs are depicted as a wire-frame instead of a texture-mapped entity.

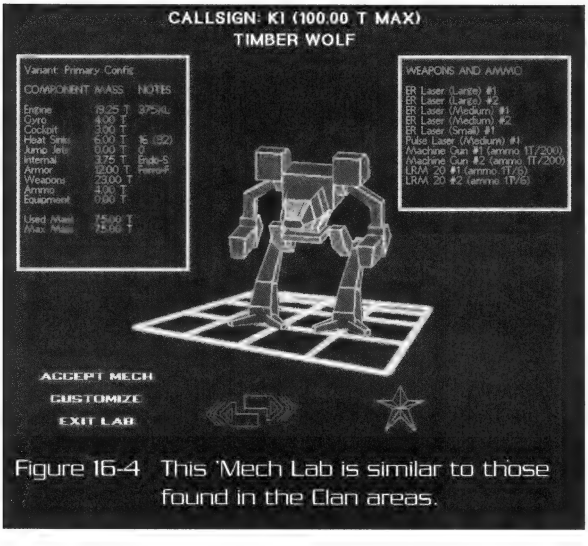


Figure 16-4 This 'Mech Lab is similar to those found in the Clan areas.

This 'Mech Lab is a fun place to build experimental 'Mechs for use in the Trials. Even the most ludicrous or unusual designs can be made to work in a Trial environment, because you have complete control over your opposition—you can give the bad guys unusual 'Mechs as well.

Star Configuration

Clicking on the small star under each Clan area leads to a Star Configuration screen, seen in Figure 16-5, where you can customize each 'Mech just like you would for a mission. The difference, of course, is that you can customize enemy 'Mechs as well. Star formation, starmate 'Mechs and starmate names can all be modified from here.

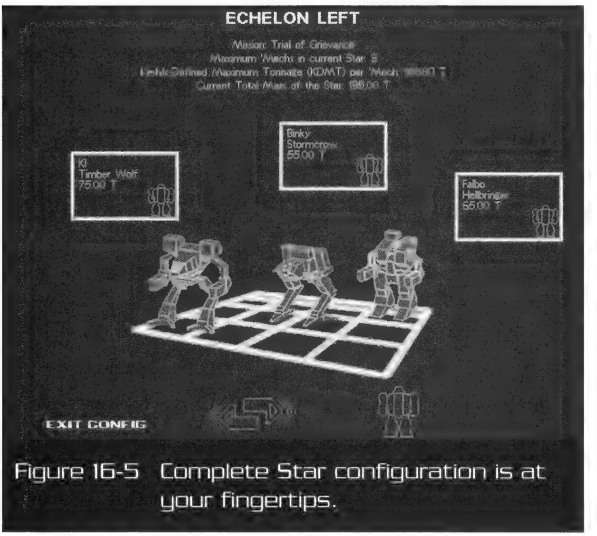


Figure 16-5 Complete Star configuration is at your fingertips.

If you want to use customized or non-standard 'Mech designs in your Trial of Grievance then you'll have to select them from the Star Configuration area; from the main Trial of Grievance area you can only assign standard 'Mech configurations.

Trial Potential and Possibilities

Trials of Grievance present an opportunity to stage battles you've always wanted to play, or the battles that you wish had occurred during your Clan missions. They're also a way to continue the *MechWarrior 2* experience long after your mission sequence has been played out: You can return again and again to the Trials, formulating new battles with new designs, and testing new possibilities in battle. Aside from being quite entertaining, the Trials will help to make you a much better MechWarrior. So keep on playing those Trials of Grievance to keep yourself sharp: You never know when a network game of *MechWarrior 2* will crop up, and you'd best be ready for it.

M.O.08.24.3055

Gregor understood the importance of Trials of Grievance, and he particularly enjoyed them as well. The thrill of combat, the triumph of defeat—and he didn't even have to bother with all that mission-objective garbage. There was nothing to defend or discover, no targets to identify or escort, just a good hard fight with one's honor at stake.

Unfortunately, however, Gregor had been banned from the Trials of Grievance. After having six perfectly good 'Mechs completely destroyed underneath him and devastating fourteen enemy 'Mechs beyond any hope of salvage, the Keshik decided it was time for Gregor to retire from Trials of Grievance. After all, there was a war to fight, and Clan Wolf could no longer support Gregor's frequent and destructive Trials.

CHAPTER 17

Last Resorts: Mission Difficulty, Altered Reality, and Cheat Codes

Once in a while you simply can't get past a particular mission, no matter how many times you play and replay it. Some missions seem especially designed to home in on your weak points, leaving you thrashing in your chair and pounding the screen at 2 a.m. When your nerves have reached the breaking point, there are still a few options left: You can change the Difficulty or Altered Reality settings in the Combat Variables screen, or you can type in cheat codes during the missions themselves. In this chapter we'll look at both methods.

Any changes you make in the Combat Variables screen will automatically affect the honor you receive from your missions, and it might even prevent you from advancing to the next mission. For that reason cheat codes are preferable if you wish to complete each mission and keep your honor untarnished. However, cheat codes don't exist for every obstacle, so knowing what's available through the Combat Variables screen can be a real lifesaver. We'll discuss that option first.

The Combat Variables Screen

The Combat Variables screen, accessed with a right click of the mouse button from any noncombat stage of the game, is a quick and easy way to change the difficulty level of your mission. As Figure 17-1 illustrates, two main areas of interest—Difficulty and Altered Reality—let you make each mission as hard or as easy as you like.

Figure 17-1 Here is the Combat Variables screen in all its blazing glory.

Adjusting the Mission's Difficulty

The Difficulty setting consists of two elements: an overall difficulty rating, which you can toggle between Easy, Medium, and Hard, and Heat Tracking, which you can turn on or off.

Difficulty Levels: Easy, Medium, and Hard

Playing a mission at Easy, Medium, or Hard will not affect your ability to progress from one mission to the next: If you complete a mission at Easy you will receive less honor than you would receive if you'd completed it at Normal or Hard, but you still get to move along to the next mission. The Hard setting gives you a substantial Honor bonus when you complete the mission.

Several aspects of the game are affected by the Difficulty setting. At higher difficulty levels your opponents' AI (Artificial Intelligence) is somewhat superior, meaning that their shots will miss you much less often. Their armor becomes unnaturally tough, so shots that should kill a 'Mech will now only wound it. Heat tracking also gets affected, so that you will be more likely to overheat when firing barrages of weapons systems. All these things combine to stack the proverbial deck against you at the Hard setting.

Many players avoid the Hard setting not just because it is hard but because it makes the simulation very inaccurate in terms of BattleTech miniatures rules. According to the miniatures rules, if you shoot a 'Mech in the head with an AC-20 it should die, regardless of what 'Mech it is. Playing *MechWarrior 2* on the Hard level invalidates this rule, so that you often need numerous shots to fell an enemy 'Mech. Purists might actually prefer the Easy level, as it most closely reflects the original BattleTech game.

Heat Tracking

Heat Tracking is an all-or-nothing proposal. When it's on (the default setting), the game keeps track of heat levels and you must be careful not to overheat your 'Mech. With Heat Tracking off, you can fire your weapons all day long and heat will never be a problem. However, missions completed with Heat Tracking disabled do not count toward career advancement.

Altered Reality

The Altered Reality section of the Combat Variables screen lets you make your 'Mech invulnerable, give it unlimited ammunition, or make it impervious to damage from collisions. Using these options (as shown in Figure 17-2) results in dishonorable combat, so you will not get credit for missions completed with any of these unrealistic options engaged.

The main reason to use these options is to scout out a mission that's giving you trouble. By making yourself invulnerable and giving yourself unlimited ammunition, you can ignore or destroy all enemy 'Mechs with ease and get to the root of your problem by discovering which way you need to go, where the item you're searching for is located, or what keeps blowing up the target that you're supposed to defend. After you figure everything out you can put the Altered Reality settings back to normal and play the mission for real.

Note: Enabling one of these settings disqualifies you from finishing the mission, so you might as well use all of them at once—and turn off Heat Tracking while you're at it. You won't get any credit anyway, so have a blast and turn your 'Mech into a veritable titan!

Figure 17-2 Altered Reality may be fun, but it won't help you finish the game.

Graphics Settings

Graphics Settings are also adjusted via the Combat Variables screen. While these settings aren't supposed to affect the game difficulty, they might in fact do so if you have a slow computer. If your machine is having difficulty with graphics in combat you probably have a low frame rate (the graphics will be choppy and there will be visible pauses at certain points). In this case you need to lower your screen resolution and turn off some of the detail settings, such as Object Density and Display Detail. The increased frame rate should help you aim a little better.

Cheat Codes

There are a variety of cheat codes in *MechWarrior 2*, many of which duplicate the functions of the Combat Variables screen. There's a big difference, though: When you use cheat codes you can complete the mission and advance as normal.

Below is a list of cheat codes in *MechWarrior 2*. Use them when you need a little extra help to finish a mission or when you're just fooling around and want to see some neat effects.

These cheats are performed within the combat missions themselves. If you want them to affect your entire mission you should type them in immediately after you are dropped onto the battlefield, before marching off to fight the good fight.

To activate these cheats you must hold down a combination of Shift, Alt, and Ctrl. While holding these three keys down, type in one of the following codes. A small message will usually appear in a gray bar at the top of your screen, confirming that the code has been entered properly and has taken effect.

CIA

Typing CIA gives you unlimited ammunition but doesn't interfere with your Honor rating or your ability to finish the mission. Just think, unlimited ammo without Altered Reality . . . time to build a four-AC-20 'Mech design with no extra ammunition! You could shred everything in sight.

COLDMISER

This turns off your heat tracking, just like the Combat Variables option, but doesn't keep you from completing the mission. This a great way to vent your frustration on extremely tough missions, loading up on large lasers and blasting almost continuously.

DORCS

This code removes you from the battlefield and takes you to the world of the Dorcs, the programmers who worked on *MechWarrior 2!* Here you can learn everything you ever wanted to know about Dorcs, and more. Seriously, though, it's an interesting little section—a sort of autohomage—and it's fun to browse through.

ENOLAGAY

This code essentially drops a nuclear weapon onto the battlefield, destroying everything around (including you) with billowing waves of destruction. It's the perfect way to exit a mission with style.

TLOFRONT

TLOFRONT turns your rear camera into a front camera. What good is this? None!

ICANTHACKIT

As in, "I can't hack it." This code lets you automatically succeed in your mission and move on to the next one, though you don't get any honor points for doing so. Finish the game in minutes!

IDKFA

Typing this popular Doom code prompts the program to inform you that this *isn't* Doom. Then it blows you up. Hey, it serves you right.

MICHELIN

This code displays the bounding spheres on 'Mechs, as seen in Figure 17-3. Bounding spheres are invisible spheres drawn around each part of a 'Mech, and if you hit the sphere with your weapons fire you damage the 'Mech in that area. If you've wondered why it's so tough to get a head shot against your opponents, turn this on and you'll understand: The head sphere is tiny and thoroughly obscured by the other spheres! Leaving this option engaged makes it easier for you to target specific parts of enemy 'Mechs.

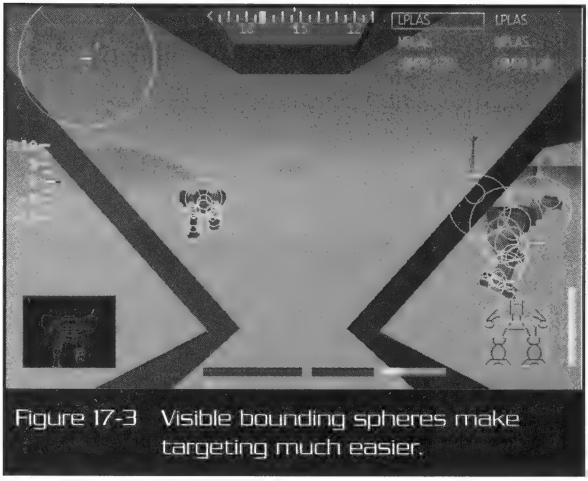


Figure 17-3 Visible bounding spheres make targeting much easier.

MIGHTYMOUSE

Assuming that you have Jump Jets, this code provides you with unlimited jump fuel. This code is great for speeding up slow missions without unbalancing play: You can just stock up on jump fuel and blast through the boring parts of the NAV sequence, stopping only when something good turns up.

XRAY

This command puts your view into Enhanced Imaging mode, but with the bonus that you can see right through mountains and other objects! Press W once to disable this mode and get into normal Enhanced Imaging mode.

ZMAK

This code starts time expansion. What is time expansion? Essentially, time expansion puts the game into slow motion, which can be useful in combat if you feel that everything's going too fast. Type the code again to disable it.

BLORB

Blorb makes you invulnerable, just like the Altered Reality option, but it does not affect honor or mission advancement.

TINKERBELL

This code turns your External Camera into a free-floating camera that can be controlled with Ctrl–←, →, ↑, ↓. You can then elevate your perspective to look at vast chunks of the battlefield or lower it into the dirt—why you'd want to do this I don't know, but you can.

What, Me Cheat?

Don't be afraid to use these cheat codes if they add to your enjoyment of the game. Many missions in *MechWarrior 2* are a breeze, but others are almost impossible if you play them with no cheat codes at the hardest difficulty level. If you find yourself at a juncture where "legitimate" tactics just won't work, look to the codes for a little help, be it unlimited ammunition, invulnerability, or just some free Jump Jets that let you get around more easily. Don't lose sight of the fact that *MechWarrior 2* is a game—a realistic and engrossing game, but a game nonetheless—and games are created for your enjoyment.

Good luck in all your battles, and may your greatest deeds be preserved forever in the heroic verses of the Remembrance.

M.D.09.12.3055

After the ceremonial banquet was finished and all the dignitaries had clambered from their seats, a young MechWarrior from the Inner Sphere rose from the table and approached Gregor Pyre, newly appointed Khan of Clan Wolf.

"Great Khan, I would have a word with you."

Gregor smiled at the honorific: It was good to be Khan. "Yes, MechWarrior? Say on."

"Sir, I have heard tales of your many battles—who has not? But some of these tales are strange, relating times when your BattleMech vented all its lasers but produced no heat, or when its autocannons could fire on and on but never go empty. Or, strangest of all, that your 'Mech was invulnerable to enemy fire, and you walked like the Angel of Death through ranks of Falcon 'Mechs, mowing them down like stalks of wheat before the bitter scythe."

"Hmm, yes." Gregor frowned slightly and gazed up at the ceiling, formulating his response. "Those are just figures of speech, my boy. Artistic license, you see, on the part of the writers. No doubt these things will be set straight when they are added to the Remembrance."

"Ah, I understand. How foolish of me! Thank you." The young MechWarrior bowed and took his leave, while Gregor stood lost in thought. Those *were* just figures of speech, were they not? The life of a Khan was not easy to sort out, even for the Khan himself. Fact and fiction intertwined with the passage of time, obscuring the simple truth and cloaking it in the stuff of legend.

Gregor shook his head and smiled. It was late and his mind had become addled. It was time for bed.

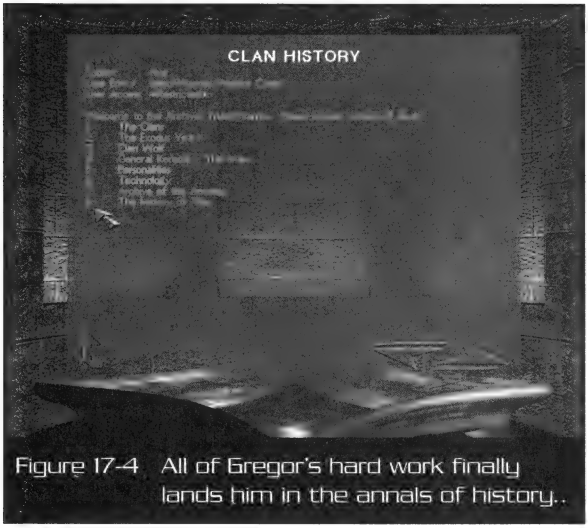


Figure 17-4 All of Gregor's hard work finally lands him in the annals of history..

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