

WBC 2010 **Britannia** Tournament

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It was a great year at the WBC for Britannia! We had the highest turn out ever for the demo with about a dozen folks checking the game out and staying all through the demo. And then, the first heat had 10 games! Forty players in the heat launched us to a grand total of 49 players for the tournament. Taking a look, that's the highest total since 2000. I have no idea why the bump from the 37 last year, and Lew Pulsipher was equally mystified, but everyone was quite pleased to see the interest in the game. I'd say we're still going strong after 20 years of tournament play.

And a corollary note of thanks on that massive first heat. John Henry and Tony Newton were not able to make it to play in that first heat, but they thought I might need their games, so they dropped them off with me to use as needed. And we did indeed need them! That's the kind of unselfish act that really helps to make the Britannia group not just a group of tournament players but instead a community. So John, Tony, thanks!

And here's another note on how the Britannia tournament really is a community. We had four father-son pairs playing in the tournament this year, and two of the pairs made it into the semi-finals. Congratulations to the O'Connor's and the Hultgren's for placing one quarter of the semi-final participants. And lastly, my thanks for John Rinko and Samuel Covington for gaming with our two youngest participants and having a rousing game in the process.

Now, on to the heats! We had 19 games in the heats this year and yellow had an amazing number of wins with 4 in the first heat and 10 total in the heats. Coming in next was blue with 4 wins in the heats (which is a great improvement from last year when there was only 1 blue win in the heats). Following up were red with 3 heat wins and green with 2.

For the heats we had the usual closest win plaques for each round, as well as the high score plaques. The close win plaques were taken by Mark Smith, me and Randy Schilb with wins of 9 points, 5 points, and 13 points respectively (yes, I do like games down to the wire.)

For the high score plaques, we had only one huge score this year. Ed O'Connor topped the red pile with an impressive victory of 315 points. Chris Trimmer did notably with green taking the top score with 266 points. Tony Newton then came in with a fine blue score of 252. And, last but not least, the yellow high score was taken by Ewan McNay with a 277 point win in the 3rd round.

Now, I saved the yellow high score for last because it was amusingly notable. We thought we had tied yellow high score winners after the first round when Micah Hultgren and Matt O'Connor both scored 276, a very tidy score, in their yellow wins. Matt was then playing in the game which Ewan won in the 3rd round. And the nation that tipped

Ewan over the top to get that 277 point high score in the end...some Romano-British who were still around in turn 16 in Lothian of all places.

Naturally, having a tied yellow high score plaque is a notable event. We've not had even the possibility of that before. But, then losing that high score by one point, and to turn 16 Romano-British?! That I had to memorialize, so I created special "Battle of Stamford Bridge" awards for Micah and Matt and shipped them off after the WBC. Congratulations folks, and keep up the great play next time, your turn will come!

Last, of course, from the heats, my perennial favorite award, Ethelred the Unraed, was taken by Greg Hultgren for his 126 point game where his green Welsh, Caledonians and Jutes were pretty much all wiped out. Congratulations Greg! And Greg had the very nice consolation of making it into the final anyway based on his first heat win.

Now, for the semi-finals, we had some spectacular games. With the larger number of players than usual, we had a record number of winners advancing to the semi-finals this year with 15 winners and only 1 alternate playing in the games. Perhaps most interesting was how little the color wins in the heats predicted the semi-finals. In the semis, we had 3 blue wins and 1 green win. All of the games were nice and tight, with an average of 15 points between 1st and 2nd and an average of 33 points 1st to 4th. One of the semi-final games was particularly interesting given that the cards dealt 3 of the finalists from 2009 to that same table. Naturally, that game had the tightest 1st to 4th spread at 19 points.

And so, Greg Hultgren, Randy Schilb, Chris Trimmer and I advanced to the finals. We started a little early Sunday morning, as Randy had a plane to leave for at 1, so at 8:30 AM, with coffee providing some alertness, the Romans marched forward. The cards had dealt me Yellow (ahem, not my favorite color.) My Romans were marching against Chris Trimmer's Blue, Randy Schilb's Green, and Greg Hultgren's Red.

The Romans encountered immediate success...in losing legions. There were 5 of Rome's bright boys dead on the first turn and stellar dice rolling by Blue and Green took down a total of 12 legions by the time the Romans pulled their tired patrols back across the channel. Meanwhile, the North Country was proceeding to demonstrate that it was going to be wild and wooly throughout the game.

On the first turn, the Brigantes moved into Dunedin against the Picts and proceeded to deal with the decimated Romans to try to get 5 spaces to grow into, although the bellicose Romans allowed only 4. Meanwhile, the Welsh had also decided to hold off submitting to the Romans and ended up taking back the fort in Devon before humbling themselves to the Roman masters, although probably mostly because they were laughing too hard behind their hands at how the Romans were doing to fight them.

And so the Romans withdrew south, leaving the hapless Romano-British behind to be swiftly taken apart by Greg's Saxons. The Saxon invasion went sufficiently well that by turn 8 the Romano-British had departed the world, garnering only 6 points total. The final smashing of the Romano-British left the Saxons weak enough though to give the

Jutes a continuing foothold in Kent, leaving them to score their 4 points there in rounds 7 and 10.

Up to the North, my Scots decided to persecute the Caledonians in the Hebrides. This proved an ill-advised venture as Randy's Caledonians kicked them right back off the islands. So the Scots ended up dealing with the Chris's Picts and just going for their usual territories of Skye, Dalriada and Dunedin. Unfortunately, the hapless Scots were led by the same dull witted leader as the Romans and, while making peace with the Picts, forgot to round out the negotiations by including the Angles in the quest to keep Dunedin free of Blue. So naturally, the Angles came in and smacked the Scots right back out of Dunedin, killing them to a man heedless of the presence of Fergus.

A quiet middle game, with a dearth of Bretwaldas, followed. Well, there was one Bretwalda, although I suspect that something was happening at the polling stations as the Saxons all voted for the Brigantes, giving them the 4 points. ;-) Meanwhile, there was just enough in-fighting between the Green, Red and Blue forces to thin the midlands. Thus, the Danes faced a fairly empty middle board to come ashore to as everyone pulled back at the sight of the Danish invasion fleet sailing in. Even with the emptied center, Randy's Danes did only moderately well on points, scoring 32 on turn 12. That score was also influenced by the Danes admirable eye on force preservation. They were ensuring that they would not fade away immediately after their invasion as so frequently happens.

Back up in the North, Greg's Norse came on and blitzkrieged the Orkneys and Caithness, losing only one man in the process. Randy's Caledonians and my few remaining Scots were quaking in their boots waiting for the onslaught to continue. But it was not to be for the mighty Norse, as a clutch roll in Skye by the Scots felled two Norse and the wounded Vikings decided they had had enough.

Back in the South, Greg's Saxons were setting up for a mighty turn 13, adeptly targeting point maximization for the scoring round. Unfortunately, in going for King, the Saxons counted the Danes at only 4 spaces, and learned to their chagrin that they actually had 5 to the Saxons 9. Nonetheless, it was an impressive round for Red as they racked up 52 points on turn 13 (31 Saxon, 12 Brigante and 9 Norse.)

The Danes came back strong on turn 14 and used their strength on the board and the thin spread of the Saxons to grab the Kingship before Cnut sailed away to the homeland.

For the endgame, the Danes strength also led them to put 3 armies in York to bravely defend against the incoming Norwegians. Meanwhile, to the south, the weakened Saxons played cover for Harold, who occupied the traditional citadel in the Downlands, awaiting the onslaught of the Normans and their cursed horses.

The Danes served as little resistance to the Norwegians, but took out enough that the Norwegians were forced into a peace settlement with the remaining Angles in the north in order to maintain the integrity of their armies. The usual 28 points were scored and enough reinforcements were coming to make close to the full tally of Norwegians. The

spread out armies of the Norwegians ensured that the last of the troops would come aboard.

In the south, the Normans traipsed around Harold in the Downlands with little opposition, garnering 28 points, but losing enough infantry and cavalry to slow their advance. Nonetheless, they did manage to put 4 reinforcements on the board.

There were minor dramas around the board as various nations fought for their border territories on turn 16, but the real denouement to the major invasions of turn 15 occurred with Harold in the Downlands. The Norwegians had made a bold move to the south to try to gain territories to become king. But kingship was denied, with admirable political acumen as the Danes managed to swing Harold into taking out the southernmost Norwegian stronghold in South Mercia. After that the Normans spread out a bit and the game was done.

With the smoke clearing, Randy Schilb and his Greens, in his first time back to the convention in 5 years, picked up a 2nd Britannia crown with 239 points. Meanwhile, my Yellow troops claimed 2nd with 232 points, Chris Trimmer's mighty Blues took 3rd with 219 and Greg Hultgren's brave Reds made 4th with a solid showing of 193 points.

The final 4 chose from books of Welsh history and folk tales as their special gift this year, Wales being one of the few areas not covered in the recent extras. Now I have to come up with a new idea for the finalists of next year's game.

And, on a last note, after many years of service, the Britannia plate will be retired with honor and the names of 20 winning years on it. It will show up for one more year to make the tour with the full 20 names. And for next year's winner...well, we'll have to see, I'll come up with something to affix the names of the next 20 years of winners to. See you all next year and thanks for making it another great year for Britannia!