

WBC 2016 Britannia Tournament

By GM Jim Jordan

First, a note on the venue this year. Wow! What a contrast! Seven Springs is a really nice place and the game spaces were terrific compared to those we've had in the past. Now, on to the games!

It was a very Roman at the convention this year. Six wins in 16 heat games is pretty good. And there were many cases of the Romano-British staying around for a long, long time, in some cases, indeed, until the end of the game. It's always a bit bewildering when the Roman-British form part of the shield wall against the Normans. And those weren't the only interesting occurrences. There were a couple of cases of long lasting Jutes as well. In one of my games, the Jutes defended Kent against the Normans and York against the Norwegians. Sadly, it was a weak defense.

While we had a number of interesting games in the heats, one that stood out was the game where Ed O'Connor earned the Green high score plaque. It was a game that saw the Saxons wiped out after turn 7. With all that space out there, Ed's Greens and Jeff Martin's Blues divided up the map, but the Angles rapidly died out as Ed's Danes and Scott Pfeiffer's Dubliners took over. While Ed got the high Green out of the game Scott would have, if 2nd place figured in the running for high score plaques, gotten the high Yellow with a score of 261, and Romano-British who scored on turn 16.

But the high score plaques go only to the game winners, so Rich Curtin and Greg Hultgren tied for the Yellow high score plaque with fine scores of 249. Ewan McNay took the high Blue score plaque with a nice tidy 263. And rounding out the high score wins was Chris Trimmer with the Red plaque. And I believe that gives Chris a full set of the high score colors!

My favorite Ethelred the Unraed award, for the lowest score by a semi-finalist, was won by Llew Bardecki. Llew seems to have a gift for getting the Ethelred awards. He seemed to recall having about 4 at this point!

Overall in the heats, there were, as I said, 6 wins for Yellow. Blue came second with a total of 4 wins. Red and Green each had 3 wins. We had very narrow wins in each of the three heat rounds. The closest victory plaques in the rounds were won by Jeff Martin in the first round with a 225/223 win. In the second round, James Tyne won a 1-point nail biter 229/228. Finally, in the 3rd round, Mark Smith pulled out a 211/209 on, if I recall correctly, the final die roll. Mark's game was also notable in that the low score was 203. Only 8 points from first to last...

We had three semi-finals, so the highest 2nd place from those games would go to the final. In one game, two Britannia rivals, Nick Benedict and Ewan McNay went toe to toe and ended up taking each other out of the game. Ed O'Connor, with Red this time, managed to take advantage of the situation to win that game. In the second game, Matt O'Connor played a closely run game to win with Red. In the final game, we had another nail biter as Greg Hultgren and your GM slid in 1 point apart, as Blue and Yellow, with Greg winning the game 216/215. And with that 1 point second place, your GM was also going to the finals.

So, in an interesting twist, we had Greg Hultgren, myself, and two O'Connor's, Ed and Matt, father and son, in the finals. The draw came up with Ed as Yellow, Matt as Green, Greg as Red, and myself as Blue. It looked to be a good fight, and I had drawn my favorite color.

On the first impulse of the Ed's Roman invasion though, my Blue Belgae had no hits against the Romans. To top things off, Boudicca then attacked York, which was occupied with 1 Roman and a fort. Boudicca lost three and killed no one. Sighing heavily, I retreated her to Lindsey. I then changed dice.

Greg's Brigantes then attacked Lothian with 3 and lost 1 and retreated to Galloway. My Picts, inspired, sent three into Galloway and killed the Romans, after many die rolls, only losing 1. Must have been those changed dice.

On turn 2, Boudicca, hanging out in Lindsey, had a bit better luck as she managed to kill two more of Ed's Romans before dying in battle. With everyone submitted by turn 2, the Romans then settled into defending their areas for a boring turn 3.

On turn 4, with the Roman's defending the coastline fiercely, only my Angles attacked. They swept into Dunedin with 3 and lost 2. They then ran back to sea. So much for changing my dice.

Turn 5 saw the usual round of raids on the British coast, with the Greg's Saxons and Matt's Jutes each taking down a fort and my Angles taking down 2. Greg's Irish also picked off Avalon.

Turn 6 saw the Ed's Scots and my Picts dividing up Scotland, deciding that peace was a great way to go.

Greg's Saxons, on their major invasion, attacked into Devon, looking for a place to fort up against Arthur. But losing 3 to Matt's Welsh discouraged them and they retreated to Wessex with a stack of 3 and Aelle. In a counterstrike, the Jutes then attacked Sussex with 1. With no hits, Greg's Saxon gratefully retreated to Wessex to strengthen Aelle's army to 4. But with 4 RBs in Downlands, Ed's Romano-British were able to drop 4 foot and 2 cavalry and Arthur against Aelle. Aelle's retreat cutoff by a sacrificial army in Avalon. In just two rolls Aelle and his mighty army was dead. By the end of the fray there were just 4 of Greg's Saxons left alive on the board. But Ed's Romano-British also paid a price for their victory, losing 3 to over population.

On turn 7, with various arduous discussions, Greg's Brigantes worked out deals with my Angles for 4 spaces and possibly with Ed's Scots to stay alive. Of course, the deal included submitting to my Angles. Then Greg's Irish took Gwynedd with 3, losing no one. With few places to spend the aggression of their major invasion, my Angles bravely killed 1 Irishman with about 10 or 12 Angles + Ida. Eh, it was something to do.

On turn 8, Matt's Welsh made a deal with my Angles to get to York. And Greg assured Matt that the Angles would honor the deal. Having troops freed up, the Welsh then took 5 into Gwynedd to knock Greg's 3 Irish back out of the homeland. My Angles then foolishly missed Bretwalda for turn 8, despite an easy empty area. But the Welsh passage to York was assured.

With peace breaking out everywhere, turn 9 went by swiftly with a little Welsh tourism in York.

On turn 10 though, the battles started again. Ed's remaining Romano-British tried to take Suffolk with 2, but two of my Angles with Oswiu killed them both. Greg's Brigantes and Ed's Scots then fought over Dunedin, with the Scots being pushed back. Matt's Welsh dove into the Angles with large armies taking out March and Cheshire. My Angles struck back in Cheshire and against Greg's Saxons in Hwicce for turn 10 points and for the last Bretwalda.

Turn 11 saw Matt's Welsh come back out at the Angles in anticipation of the Danes. Matt's Welsh also hit the Saxons. Greg's Saxons retaliated against the last holdouts of the Jutes in Kent.

Matt's Danes then romped against my Angles in Lothian and Norfolk. The Danes also scared an errant Welshman who had wandered into York, running him back into Cumbria as the Danes scouted into an empty March. Much tattered, I pulled my Angles into the best strongholds they could find.

Turn 12 saw more Welsh adventurousness, as they killed and pushed my Angles out of March and York. Greg's Brigantes then headed north into Dalriada, pushing Ed's Scots even further back. Ed's Scots kicked Greg's Norse out of the Hebrides, only to be kicked out by more Norsemen. Ed's once mighty Scots were now down to just 2 in Skye.

Matt's Danish invasion then went well, garnering 37 points and pushing my Angles further north. Greg's Saxons were also kicked out of South Mercia. Matt's green score was suddenly looking very formidable with many Green pieces controlling the board. Greg's Saxons then came back and hit the Danes in South Mercia and Suffolk but successfully managed to kill no Danes! My Angles headed for the Pennines and hunkered down. With a deeply divided England, there was no King.

Turn 13 opened with Matt's Welsh, deciding that one look at York was not enough, taking 4 Welsh into York and killing one more of my Angles. Greg's Brigantes hunkered in Strathclyde with a mighty army. Greg's Norse then attacked the last two of Ed's Scots in Skye killing both but losing 1. Matt's hefty Welsh army in York proved a conundrum for the Dubliners. Not wanting to risk the losses against the Welsh in York, Ed took his Dubliners south into Dyfed. That gave the Dubliners a scoring area, but also ensured that they could get to Cumbria by taking Cheshire from Matt's Welsh, which they did. Matt's Danes then decided to investigate the Dubliner issue and killed the Dubliners in March and pushed the Dubliners in Cheshire back into Cumbria. Matt's 4 Welsh in York, having roused the people of the North against them, were attacked by my Angles and exterminated.

On turn 14, Ed's Dubliners were kicked right back out of Wales and Matt's Welsh hopped into Avalon as well, just for fun taking out a Saxon. Naturally, the fight in Avalon also helped pave the way for Cnut. Matt's Danes had been so successful that Cnut could only bring 5 of his 6 usual armies on, so he only had to go home with 3 units after handily becoming King. The stage was definitely set for Matt's Greens to dominate the end game.

Turn 15 opened with Greg's Brigantes pouncing on Ed's Dubliners in Galloway, kicking them out. So Ed's Dubliners, lacking space, and not wanting to get in the way of the Norwegians, went back to Lothian, sending an Angle fleeing to the hills. Ed's Norwegians had a tragic invasion as Matt's Danes killed 3 Norwegians in one fateful roll in North Mercia. Losing one or two in other battles meant Ed's Norwegians did not get March and only had 4 Norwegians left post invasion with just 2 guarding Harald. To the south, Greg's Saxons guarded their king with 4 in the Downlands. In response, Harold was ignored and my Normans circled around and took out all of the lowland Saxons, leaving the king in his hills.

On Turn 16 Matt's Danes killed Harald and spread out for a huge kingdom. My Normans spread out, fortunately, just enough to prevent any king at the end. As the dust settled, Matt's Greens pulled out a huge 50-point final turn, settling the matter right there. So, it was Matt O'Connor winning the tournament this year with Green and 252 points. Matt handled the Green sided splendidly to a well-

deserved win. Congratulations Matt! I look forward to seeing your name on the Britannia sword. Meanwhile, my Blues pulled in at 2nd with 225, Ed's Yellows came up 3rd with 215 and Greg's Reds put together 205 points. It was a very good game.

Thanks as always folks, it was a great year and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone again next year in Seven Springs!