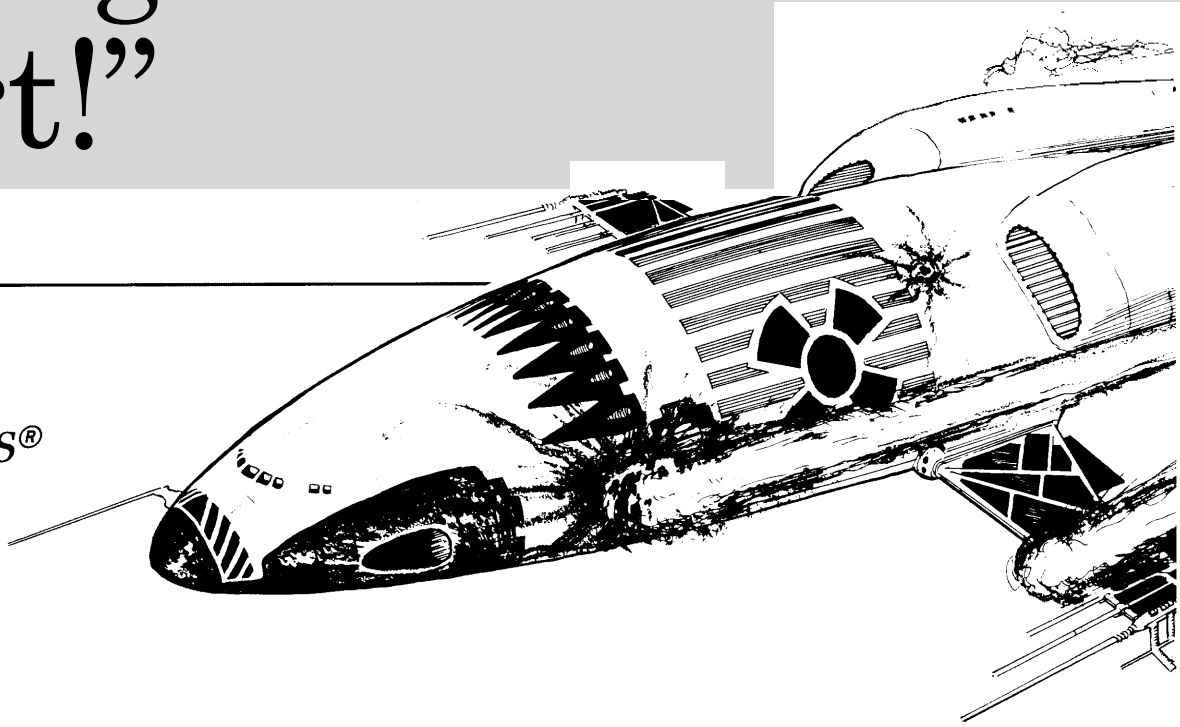
by Richard M. Hinds

"Damage control — report!"

Revised starship combat for the STAR FRONTIERS® game



The Nemesis *rounded the final arc of the planetary orbit set up by its crew for mapping procedures. On the bridge, Commander Marc-sur-Lars patiently awaited the incoming information. The system didn't show much promise. It was more like a rest stop — but one far behind enemy lines.*

"Sir, I'm picking up a faint energy source." Hortlefloo, the Osakar pilot, examined his control screen. "It's at the sensor limit, over the approaching horizon. It might be a starship engine."

"Full alert," Commander Lars said evenly, pressing a small button on the side of his own command control panel. They were deep in Sathar territory; he couldn't take any chances with his 13-million-credit ship or its crew. The bridge lighting dimmed and slowly turned red. Lars could hear the alert warning in the corridor outside. So much for the rest stop, he thought.

"'I've got a fix on the ship on the main screen," said the astrogator. Lars looked up and examined the image on the screen. It wasn't any known type of Sathar ship, but that meant nothing. The Sathar had all sorts of ships.

"It's powering up its weapons," warned Hortletloo. "Now it's closing in. It's got us."

"Battle stations. Conflict imminent." Lars punched a second button and a warning klaxon sounded in the hall outside the bridge. Running feet pounded past the bridge door as crewmen ran for their combat posts.

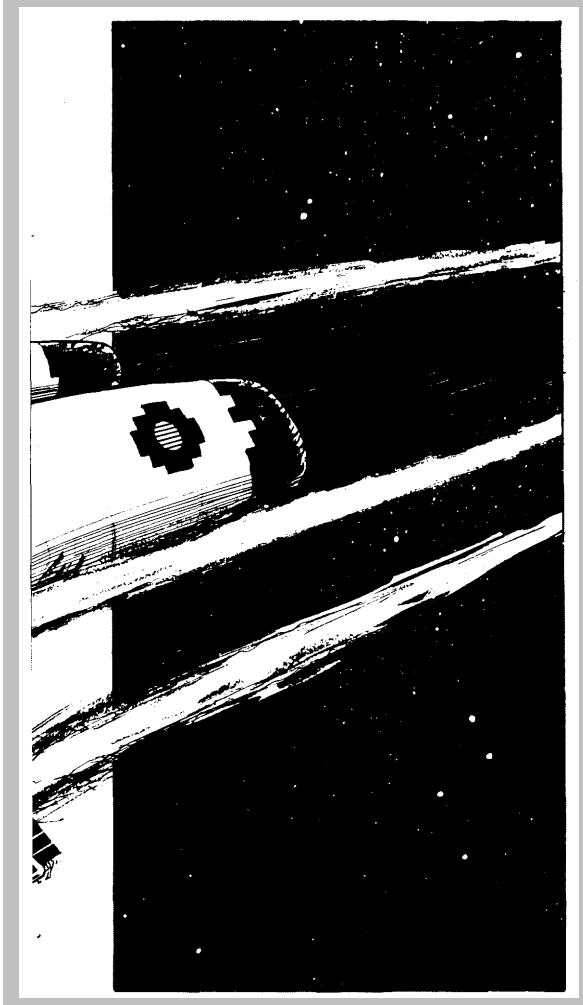
Lars allowed himself a brief smile. "Mr. Harrachi," he said, turning slightly toward the Yazirian weapons officer. "Please give our neighbor our warmest greetings." And pray, he thought, that we give them ours before they give us theirs.

In the STAR FRONTIERS® game, starship combat is played out using the Knight Hawks board-game system. Players in campaigns centered around a starship, like those concerning exploration missions, often find that starship combat is a time when they hang up their characters and concentrate solely on the dice. Here are some suggestions to liven up combat and bring characters out of the background.

In the Knight Hawks game, starship combat has two phases, movement and combat, with each side taking turns in a fixed order to perform its actions. Instead, a more flexible initiative system is in order. Initiative should be dependent on several factors: the maneuver ratings (MR) of the ships, the pilots' initiative modifiers, and the gunners' initiative modifiers. To determine the starship initiative modifier, find the ship on each side with the highest MR. Add the initiative modifier of either the pilot or the gunner (whichever score is higher) to the ship's MR. The total is the starship's initiative modifier. Repeat this for as many combatants as needed. Then each side rolls 1d10 and adds the initiative modifier. The highest resulting number becomes side A, the first side to move, and the sequence of play in the Knight Hawk's Tactical Operations Manual, page 3, is followed thereafter.

After three turns in the advanced Knight Hawks game, there is a repair turn. This does not mean that the starships have disengaged and decided to start repairs, but it instead shows the culmination of efforts over the past three turns. For a more realistic approach, let repair rolls be made at the end of each combat turn. Of course, if the engineer starts work on one project, then another problem requires more attention a few turns later, the character will be faced with some interesting dilemmas. To have the engineer use his DCR rating, he must maintain work on a damaged system for three turns. If he stops to work on something else without completing the previous repair, all his work will go to waste.

In the advanced game, percentile dice are rolled when a ship is hit by enemy fire, and the Advanced Game Damage Table from the Tactical Operation Manual, page 12, is consulted. This table has little to offer player characters but major sys-



Modified Advanced Game Damage Table

Modified die roll	Type of damage
–20-05	Hull hit: Double normal damage by weapon type
06-10	Ship's boats *
11-20	Crew casualties *
21-25	Cargo hit*
26-45	Hull hit: Normal damage by weapon type
46-48	Drive hit: Lose 1 ADF
49-51	Drive hit: Lose half of the total ADF (round up)
52	Drive hit: Lose entire ADF
53	Drive hit: Fuel loss*
54-57	Steering hit: Lose 1 MR point
58-59	Steering hit: Lose entire MR
60	Steering hit: Continue current course indefinitely
61-62	Weapon hit: LC; LB; PB; EB; AR; RB; LP* *
63-64	Weapon hit: PB; EB; LB; RB; T; AR; MM* *
65-66	Weapon hit: DC; LC; AR; T; LB; FB* *; SM* *
67-68	Weapon hit: T; AR; EB; PB; LB; RB; TB* *
69-70	Weapon hit: LB; RB; T; AR; PB; EB; LC
71-72	Internal systems hit *
73	Soda machine* * *
74	Power short circuit: Lose all screens and ICMs
75-77	Defense hit: PS; ES; SS; MS; ICM; ENS* *
78-81	Defense hit: MS; ICM; SS; PS; ES; MF* *
82-84	Defense hit: ICM; SS; PS; ES; MS; ENS* *
85-87	Combat control system hit: - 10% on all attacks
88-90	Life support hit*
91	Computer hit *
92-96	Navigation hit: Lose all maneuvering control, moving at random
97	Holo games * * *
98-105	Electrical fire: Roll additional damage at +20 each turn
106-115	Damage control hit: DCR cut in half
116	Steam baths * * *
117-120	Disastrous fire: DCR cut in half; lose entire ADF and MR; - 10% on all attacks; roll damage at +20 each turn

Any hit that cannot be applied is treated as a normal hull hit.
* This effect is described in the text.
* * All of these abbreviations are based on the weapons and defenses given in Gus Monter's article, "An Interstellar Armory," in DRAGON® issue #115. The abbreviations are as follow: LP = laser piston; MM = maxi-missile; FB = fusion bomb; SM = screen mine; TB = tractor beam; ENS = energy shield; MF = masking field. If this article is not available, ignore these results.
* * * These areas can be hit only once. Subsequent hits here are treated as normal hull hits.

tem difficulties, ending in a quick death for the PCs and the loss of their expensive starship. The modified damage table with this article was developed to take into account other systems that could be damaged in combat. Some of this damage may not be immediately threatening, but it could cause trouble later on. The new results in the modified table are explained below.

Ship's boats: This hit disables one of the following, selected by 1d10 roll: 1-2, life boat; 3-4, launch; 5-6, workpod; 7, shuttle (if an assault carrier is hit, score the hit against a fighter); 8, fighter; 9-10, escape pod.

Crew casualties: Casualties depend on hull size and, to some extent, ship type. In any case, a single hit cannot reduce the crew to less than half of the last turn's total (to save PCs). Below is a table of hull sizes and the number of crewmen and passengers that can be lost.

HS	Crew lost
1-2:	1
3-4:	1-5
5-7:	1-10
8-10:	2-20 (if an assault transport or passenger liner is hit, 20-200 are lost
11-14:	3-30
15-18:	5-50 (if an assault carrier is hit, 10-100 are lost
19-20:	10-100

Cargo hit: One hull unit of random cargo is lost.

Drive hit, fuel loss: The fuel storage has been damaged. On atomic-drive ships, one engine has lost 1-5 fuel pellets. Ion-drive ships lose one-quarter of their stored hydrogen. Chemical-drive ships lose half their fuel.

Internal systems hit: This hit could affect combat performance but will more likely be a nuisance after the battle. The internal systems that can be hit are (roll 1d10):

1-2. Elevator: The emergency ladders will have to be used, so travel time between decks is doubled.

3-4. Food service: No food can be served from the galley as the food dispensers have been disabled.

5-6. Cameras: Internal cameras have failed.

7-8. Robots: Computer robot links are down, so robots will not respond to computer commands. This hit may not show itself for quite a while, until someone breaks into the ship and the security robots fail to investigate.

9-10. Intercoms: Internal ship communication is down.

Life support hit: This hit gradually incapacitates the life support system. On the first hit, the main life support's capacity is reduced by half. The second hit knocks it out completely. The same progression is followed for the backup units.

Computer hit: This hit can be a real menace. First, determine at random which mainframe was hit. Good starship designers have a network of mainframes to prevent the destruction of all the computer programs at once. After determining the mainframe hit, randomly destroy one of the programs in that mainframe. Ω