

I've often wondered if people really read designer's notes. Are they really necessary in learning how to play a game, and if so, is there something lacking in the rules that several more paragraphs are required to clarify. And if so, is that an indication of a weakness in the rules themselves? Since the release of *Flying Colors* by GMT Games in early December 2005, the reactions I've received have been both positive and negative. Those comments that fall into the latter category come from those players who either want *Flying Colors* to be something it was not intended to be (a new version of the current crop of highly complex games on the topic) or simply don't understand my intent in designing *Flying Colors* in the manner I did. I hope that this brief document will both clarify my intent and provide some insight to those who intend to take a stab at wargame design.

The first question that should be addressed, I suppose, is why did I design *Flying Colors* in the first place? In retrospect, that's actually hard to say. I don't think that there was any single factor leading to a spontaneous rush to crank it out. It was likely more a series of inspirations that led to its eventual development. Clearly the basis of the design is an interest in the works of C. S. Forrester (creator of Horatio Hornblower) from whose works I took the game's title. The initial release of the game in its desktop published form from Relative Range (my DTP company) coincided interestingly enough with the film adaptation of Patrick O'Brien's "Master and Commander," so several players thought that that may have been an inspiration. I've never read any of O'Brien's books and the design was well underway before the movie was released. So much for that theory! On the other hand, the excellent television adaptations of the first few Hornblower books may well have been a catalyst in the game's creation as it probably got me thinking about the good old days of playing Age of Sail games.

There are several games that have in some way inspired the design of *Flying Colors*, but in the acknowledgements section of the rules, I list the three games that provided the greatest: *Fighting Sail*, *Close Action* and *War Galley*.

Of these three, *Fighting Sail* is the initial model for *Flying Colors*. My initial goal was to create more scenarios using Joe Balkoski's excellent game as it was quick playing and fairly low in complexity (two huge pluses in my book). After having my interest in the topic renewed by the Hornblower television series, I likely began to revisit the idea of creating larger

scenarios for *Fighting Sail*. Ultimately however, after reviewing the game system, I recalled two things I didn't like about it. First, there was too much math involved. To me, the more time spent calculating is less time spent blowing stuff up. The second item is *Fighting Sail*'s use of a square, rather than hexagonal, grid for movement. This option is a sound, flexible concept providing greater fluidity to movement for a subject where just that sort of thing is called for. Nonetheless, it adds what I consider a "kludge" to the system: carrying over movement points into the next turn. Even with those "problems," *Fighting Sail* was easily my favorite game on the topic if for no other reason that its abandonment of pre-plotted movement, using instead a marker specifying changes in direction for each ship and an impulse system to simulate simultaneous movement and fire. This system works admirably for smaller engagements, but for larger scale battles (read: Trafalgar) it will bog-down as players spend more time plotting – or rather, plodding – their movement. For such a system to work for large-scale actions, a different movement control mechanic would be required.

As Ted Raicer has noted on several occasions, "good designers borrow ... great designers steal." Thus enters Richard Berg's *War Galley* into the design process. In *War Galley* (a game on ancient naval actions) Richard introduced an initiative/command mechanic allowing the activation of groups of ships for individual movement. The better the commanders, the more ships could be activated – thus stressing a fleet's cohesion and flexibility once engaged. Adopting this system to the Age of Sail would resolve all of the ship activation issues in larger engagements as it could be used to both eliminate pre-plotting as well as stress the importance of leadership to a fleet, the latter being an issue mostly glossed over in previous games. Fleets operating under older, more rigid commanders would have to maintain formations (i.e. follow the rules of engagement) in order to retain cohesion, were as fleets under more forward thinking commanders such as Nelson and Duncan would be able to retain cohesion regardless of formation. Loss of cohesion would allow an opponent to call the shots in a battle, leaving your fleet vulnerable to defeat in detail. Admittedly, the abandonment of pre-plotted movement for a limited form of "igo-hugo" movement is not without its problems. You can't have your cake and eat it too, as the saying goes. But one can make the pill less bitter through the adoption of other simple mechanics to ultimately achieve the result you're looking for. More on those mechanics later!

This leaves the last inspiration to the development of *Flying Colors: Close Action*. *Close Action* can best be described as an anti-inspiration. It is exactly what I did not want in *Flying Colors*. This is not to say by any means that *Close Action* is a bad game. I do in fact view it as the single most complete simulation of Age of Sail combat currently available in the same sense that *Advanced Squad Leader* is the most complete simulation of squad-level combat. But I don't play that either. Generally, I don't like complex games, so I have no intention on designing one. Rather than deal with the minutiae (hull shapes, cannon loads, crew qualities, etc), I opted to abstract these concepts as much as possible and still allow reasonable results. One would say that I took a top-down approach rather than bottom-up. It's simply not possible for two players to complete Trafalgar in an evening (my ultimate goal) using *Close Action*. When initially designing *Flying Colors* as well as during its "redesign" for GMT, there were several cries to add in complexity. These were all weighed against the ultimate goal of the design, and if they pushed it too far of its intended mark, they were abandoned. I firmly believe that wargame designers ultimately design games that they want to play. Since we don't live in a vacuum, it's likely that there are other players out there with our same tastes, so it's for that audience that a game is intended.

That's enough about the philosophy of design. Let's get into the details!

It seems the easiest way to describe the mechanics of *Flying Colors* by following the sequence of play and pointing out specific concepts. Before getting into that however, the first item requiring mention are the game's components themselves and how they work into the scale of the game.

One of the first decisions I had to make when putting *Flying Colors* together was how the game should be visually presented. As indicated earlier, it would be a hex-based game to avoid perceived kludges in movement mechanics. For counter sizes, I opted for one by one-half inch sizes for ships of the line and half-inch counters for frigates and smaller vessels. The decision to use these sized simply stemmed from what I was used to. My key inspirations used those sized units, so I saw no need to stray from the ordinary (using the smaller size pieces for smaller ships provided the added benefit of greater maneuverability for smaller vessels within the scope of movement mechanics). The same goes for the scale of the game. This was actually a secondary

consideration (oddly enough) as I chose to emulate other Age of Sail games. *Flying Colors* is essentially the same scale as *Fighting Sail* and *Wooden Ships & Iron Men*; and a third greater scale than *Close Action*. Adhering to parameters set by these other designs freed me to work on mechanics to speed play. One design disadvantage to this emulation is one that hardcore enthusiasts may quibble over. In the scenario design, the ships are much closer together than they would have been historically. Generally there should be an additional one to two hexes distance between the ships per the doctrine of the period. I'm sure that GMT wouldn't have been happy at having to include twelve maps in the game, rather than three! Call this the first major abstraction in the game. I could have reduced this abstraction by going to half-inch units for all ships, but there would be too much other detail lost in the process (such as maneuverability and individualized ship names – which of these is more vital, I'll leave up to you).

A question that often comes up is the use (or lack of use of smaller (5th Rate and below) ships in the game. When designing the Relative Range version, my goal was to only include ships of the line – no smaller vessels at all, since they did not play a major role in the larger battles I wanted to play. When introducing the game to GMT, the first question I got was "what about frigates?" If GMT were to accept the design, there would have to be some indication that they would be covered within the system. The first attempt to do this was to include them as "repeaters" to extend the command radii of the leaders. This option didn't work out very well in playtesting and ultimately seemed "cheesy." I decided instead to include a couple of smaller scenarios that would include a few frigates instead, as something of a teaser for future expansions to the system and to show how the smaller vessels would operate using a core set of movement rules. I still have not included many of the smaller ships in the selection of scenarios for the same reasons that they were not included in the original design. I did not see where they had too much of an impact on play, and in this first outing thought it best to minimize the headaches of dealing with smaller vessels mixed into "the Line."

For those of you who dig frigates, you'll enjoy the next game in the series that will cover frigate actions.

With the pieces on the map, we come to what I consider the highlight of the game, its command system. As noted, the command system in *Flying Colors* was borrowed directly from Richard Berg's *War Galley*. The command system is the means by

which I was able to discard pre-plotted movement. Commanders can command ships in one of two ways. Either those ships can be in a "formation" (thus, following rules of engagement "by the book") or they can be within command influence of a commander. It's this latter ability that separates the stodgy, old-fashioned commanders from brilliant ones. Generally, the more ships that are in a command as well as the number of commands available to a fleet indicate its flexibility. Being forced to maintain formations forces a fleet to stand off from the enemy, lest the line is broken and part of it cut off and destroyed. A commander with a high command radius on the other hand can allow ships to break out of formation and act independently. This latter feature, in essence, shows the impact that Nelson's pre-battle orders had on fleets under his command. It also shows Byng's hesitance at Minorca to engage the enemy (thus resulting in his court martial and death by firing-squad). In order for this system to function properly, I had to limit the number of commanders available to each side. By design, the more commanders available, the greater flexibility of the fleet. This raised some hackles during the development process from those who felt I was not giving a fleet's commanders sufficient credit. You give some ... you take some. Consider the "existence" of the non-represented commanders as rolled up in the scores of the commanders provided.

The "right" to act first in a turn or to demand that your opponent act first is dependent upon who wins the initiative for each turn. Initiative is not determined until after commands have been defined, so players must define their commands in order to maximize their fleets effectiveness based upon either the gain or loss of initiative. Acquiring the initiative is based on two things: the quality of the fleet admiral (the big cheese) as well as the fleet's Audacity. Ahhhh ... the Audacity rating!

As noted previously, there are several key abstractions built into *Flying Colors* in order to exchange complexity for speed of play. The Audacity rating is "the big one" and the one that's raised the most comment and criticism from those seeking greater detail in the game. On its face, a fleet's Audacity is a simple measure of one fleet's quality – as a whole – as compared to its opponent. It's an indication that "this side" was better historically than "that side" and is expected to win a specific scenario. All the detail that goes in to making one fleet better than another is rolled up into its Audacity. But it is a double-edged sword. The onus of attack is on the side with the higher Audacity. Failure to attack with an advantage

in Audacity results in an automatic loss. Refer back to my comment regarding Admiral Byng at Minorca. A high Audacity rating can also get a fleet into trouble if a player's not careful. Over-confidence while playing the winning side can get real ugly, real fast!

Getting back to fleet activations, once the initiative has been determined, the side with the initiative chooses whether he or his opponent will activate the first command. Then, players alternate activating commands during the duration of the turn. One side activates a command and then the other side activates a command, and so on and so forth until all commands have been activated. After all the commands have been activated, out-of-command ships (those that could not be included within a command for whatever reason) are activated individually in the same manner as full commands; one at a time, alternating back and forth between players. The penalty of being out of command is the inability to *initiate* an attack. The penalty of being out of command forces a player to do his best to retain a fleet's cohesion during play. That being said, there is still a chance for out-of-command ships to act independently of a fleet, but this comes down to the quality (again) of the fleet admiral. Nelson at Trafalgar is the best commander in the game, and even under him, and out-of-command ship is only able to behave independently 50% of the time. Note as an aside that the ability of ships to act independently in this fashion is yet another indication of those "missing" commanders.

Okay, so what happens when a command is activated? This is where the serious game mechanics kick in, specifically ship movement and combat. The latter takes place during the former, so a discussion of movement first is in order.

Unlike land-based wargames where units can move one-, two- or twenty-steps at a time, sailing ships are subject to the whims of the wind. *Flying Colors* is as much about fighting the wind, as it is your opponent. Since the scale of the game was borrowed from similar titles, movement rates were borrowed as well. The angle of a ship relative to the direction of the wind dictates the number of movement points a ship has on that turn. And unlike their land-based counterparts, ships must expend *all* of their movement points.

Ship movement in *Flying Colors* is likely the mechanic that changed the most between the DPT version of the game and the GMT version. In the new

version, weather effects were introduced (increasing or decreasing movement rates) as well as turning rates when turning a ship into a less advantageous position with regards to wind direction. These changes were hammered out between the development team and vocal members of ConsimWorld, to great advantage to the game. Keeping in mind my desire to limit the complexity of the game based upon that aforementioned design goal, this was one of those changes that significantly enhanced play without losing sight of that goal.

The greatest change with regards to movement between the new and old versions of *Flying Colors* is the collision rules. In the older version, it is far too easy to collide with an opposing ship than it was historically. Perhaps this was a hold over from the adoption from *War Galley* or an artifact of playing *Wooden Ships & Iron Men* where fouling was a standard tactic. *Flying Colors'* developer, John Alsen, suggested an alternate movement mechanic to limit the likelihood of collisions. I took that suggestion a step further to allow movement through opposing vessels, as given the time structure of the game and its attempt to simulate simultaneous movement in a non-simultaneous fashion, this struck me as "realistic" within the constraints of the design. In the new version, collisions are extremely difficult to achieve and grappling can only affect ships that are dead-in-the-water. This change further reduced complexity and added accuracy. A two-fer!

Adopting the ability to move through other vessels also allowed me to further clarify and enhance the use of point-blank fire. Previously only ships that were fouled or grappled could use it. Now, there really is fire from a range of zero, making "crossing the T" that much more effective a maneuver.

One movement feature that was retained between the versions was the clear distinction between wearing and tacking, the two turning maneuvers available to ships. Wearing is a long, roundabout manner of turning while keeping wind in a ship's sails at all times. It is a stern-based turn; so all rotation of the counter involves moving a ship's stern. Tacking is a bow-based maneuver that involves the rotation of a ship's bow into and through the wind (running a chance that of the ship becoming stuck into the wind or "in irons"). During the redevelopment of the game, there were a lot of questions as to why there was a mechanical distinction between the types of movement. What difference does it make anyway? Isn't that a needless addition of complexity? When

designing the game I determined that it was necessary to show that distinction, not so much for educational purposes (bow maneuver vs. stern maneuver) than for mechanical ones. In order for a ship to get to the *same place* on the map using either wearing or tacking requires the distinction, all else being equal.

Now that ships are moving, we come to the reason for playing *Flying Colors* in the first place: trying to sink 'em! In retrospect, the mechanics I used in the combat system are likely derived from a couple of my favorite games. I did not do so intentionally, but I guess one uses what one likes.

The first item of note is the structure of the ship counters. Each has a front (undamaged) side and a back (damaged) side. On each is a Damage value indicating the number of hull hits a ship must sustain before being flipped to its damaged side and then sustained before it has a chance of sinking or striking. Kind of like Dan Verssen's *Down In Flames* series? Yeah, kinda like that ...

The second item of note is the determination of a ship's firepower at a specific range. Depending upon the ship's "relative rate" (now there's a giveaway!) a ship will have a certain amount of firepower at a specific range. This value is modified to result in a fire strength used on the combat results table. Kind of like Courtney Allen's *Up Front?* Yeah, kinda like that ...

The concept of "relative rate" is directly attributable to *Flying Colors'* historical research expert, Niek van Diepen from whom I've learned a heck of a lot about both the subject matter as well as the game design process. I can definitely say that *Flying Colors* is a far, far better game for his suggestions than the original Relative Range version. "Relative Rate" is a measure of the size of a broadside a ship can fire, not just the number of the guns it carries. A third-rate 74-gun ship may actually be carrying enough firepower to qualify as either a second- or fourth-rate ship, relative to other ships in its or its opponents' fleet. Ships with a relative rate value bound in a white circle are carrying a relatively heavy broadside and those in a black circle a lighter broadside. Making this simple distinction allowed us to add a lot more variety to the game at very little cost in added complexity (again, keeping that goal on target).

Another new addition to the GMT version of the game is the inclusion of carronade modifiers. Many other games include these short-range "smashers" as individual gun types. Rather than make that

distinction, it seemed a more appropriate treatment would be to add them as a firepower modifier when at close enough range. Depending upon the year in which a scenario takes place and the nationality using them, this modifier will increase or decrease according to their use. The one standout worth mentioning is the British vessel "Glatton" that was predominantly armed with carronades. She is one ship that you *never* want to get behind you at close range!

The damage table probably went through the most changes throughout the design and redesign process, tweaking it to get the right "feel." It was designed in a fashion similar to other Age of Sail games (again for the sake of familiarity), using a progressive damage style. The closer a ship is to its target, the greater its resulting firepower, resulting in a range of higher damage possibilities. The rolls on the damage table are further modified by environmental conditions and to some extent doctrinal tendencies (note, that's "tendencies" for you hard-core types ... it was not French doctrine to fire at rigging ... it just worked out that way). The higher the modified roll, the greater damage dished out. Of course, raking fire increases damage.

Since we're on the topic of damage, here's a good point to discuss another key abstraction: Hull vs. Manpower hits. Another large difference between *Flying Colors* and the more pencil-intensive Age of Sail games is the lack of crew hits. The use of the term "Manpower" (probably a bad choice, in retrospect) has led to confusion on this issue. Manpower does not equate to crew hits in other games. Hull hits are a combination of the loss of gun crews as well as guns. As a ship sustains Hull hits, its relative rate decreases (or increases, depending on your point of view); that is, the strength of its broadsides are reduced owing to gun and gun crew losses. Manpower, on the other hand, is simply a reflection of a ship's ability to launch a boarding action when grappled to an enemy ship. No more than that. When a ship sustains a Manpower hit, its upper deck has been put into disarray and may have suffered enough Marine or deck-gun losses to reduce its boarding ability.

The final key abstraction should be noted here as well. That is, what exactly comprises a broadside, relative to the time scale of the game? Each turn represents roughly 7.5 minutes, give or take a few. In that time, a gun crew can fire multiple times. So to be more accurate, each ship should be able to fire in just about every hex it enters, more than once per hex depending upon the number of movement points the ship earns

relative to the wind. You can imagine for yourself the huge spike in complexity that would cause. Therefore, each broadside is an abstraction of all the lead a ship can fire during a turn. This is also why a ship can fire out of both broadsides per turn without penalty.

Since pre-plotted movement has been eliminated from the game, what's to keep an active ship from moving unmolested into an opposing fleet and firing? To keep that from happening (or at least to discourage it to a certain degree) is the introduction of a defensive fire mechanic. As soon as an attack has been declared, any one enemy ship (not necessarily the target) may fire at the moving ship prior to the attack being resolved. This mechanic encourages fleets to be self-supporting. To add an additional wrinkle, however, the moving ship need not fire on the intended target in order to draw fire from opposing vessels. This forces the defending player to decide whether or not to hold defensive fire for later during the turn. Decisions, decisions! An optional rule also exists to allow defensive fire to occur at any time during movement of an enemy ship. This allows for greater flexibility in defensive fire, but also slows the game down significantly and is therefore not recommended for larger scenarios.

You'll recall the mention that having a high Audacity can get you into trouble if you're not careful. This comes in to play when firing on a ship holding a commander (particularly the fleet admiral). Every time a ship with a commander takes damage, there's a 10% chance that the commander will be wounded. Each time a commander is wounded, there's an additional 10% chance that the commander is killed, modified upward by +10% for each point of Audacity that commander is operating under. In addition, Audacity is used as a negative modifier when checking for command transfers to another ship. Nelson at Trafalgar will head into the allied fleet standing on the top deck of the Victory and won't be heading anywhere when the Victory starts to take hits. If he goes down, that's a big chunk of the British fleet that will go out of command!

Once all movement and combat have been completed for a turn, ships that have grappled have the opportunity to initiate Melee. As indicated earlier, the ability to initiate a Melee has been significantly decreased between the current version of *Flying Colors* and the Relative Range version to keep more in line with history. Boarding actions were rare, but they did occur; most notably Nelson's capture of two ships during the battle of Cape St. Vincent. To allow

this to occur, the "Nelson's Patent Bridge" rule was included. The odds of this actually occurring are pretty small, but if the opportunity does arise, there's no reason to deny a player Nelson's glory!

After Melees have been resolved, ship status checks are made. This involves checking the status of ships on fire (and whether or not they might explode) and the chance for those ships that have sustained enough damage to sink or strike. Explosion checks were included to make sure there is a chance of emulating the loss of the French flagship *Orient* at the battle of the Nile. Ships that have struck have given up the fight in order to attempt staying afloat. Ships that have sunk have ... well ... sunk. There has been some discussion on ConsimWorld that ships sink too easily. Playtesting has not borne that out, but to make it a little tougher for Struck ships to sink, I've allowed remaining Manpower on a Struck ship to be used as a die roll modifier when checking for sinking.

Once ships have begun to sink or are struck or captured, fleet morale has to be checked. If a fleet sustains enough damage, the survivors make a break for the nearest port, granting victory to their opponent. The Break Check die rolls are modified by the relative pummeling that each fleet has taken, along with the fleet's Audacity. This mechanic was included to remove the "fight-to-the-death" syndrome present in other Age of Sail games. The mechanic also helps keep playing time limited.

Those are the key concepts and the rationale behind their use. It's not an exhaustive overview of the game system, as the unmentioned mechanics are straightforward.

As I've noted on several occasions, *Flying Colors* was designed with a specific goal in mind, which was to create a fast-playing Age of Sail wargame where to players can complete the battle of Trafalgar in an evening. Have I succeeded? In my own estimation, I'd have to say: almost. Trafalgar cannot be completed in an evening, but it can be completed in one long sitting. I've done it several times with victories on both sides. I really feel that I've created the Age of Sail wargame that I want to play, and judging from many of the responses I've read on-line, that many other players want to play as well.

I don't think I'm over-simplifying, but for all intents, I took an over-all look at what mechanics were available and removed what I did not like, simplified where necessary, and retained what I thought most vital. The result is the game at hand.

But is the game for everybody? Absolutely not, since everybody has their own tastes. But to those who think it could be their game but for a few wrong-feeling mechanics, I can promise that *Flying Colors* is still a work-in-progress. During its development, from initial design to publication I only had a dozen playtesters. Even if only a tenth of those who preordered the game are playing it, that's still ten times the number of folks who have been at it since its inception. And that's a lot of great feedback!

If there's something about the game that just doesn't seem right, I'm asking for your suggestions. All I ask of you is to keep the original design goal in mind.

Potential changes to the rules aside, plans to extend and enhance the system through expansions and additional series games are extensive. There are lots of battles to cover, from frigate actions to oar-driven galleys and from the early 1700s to the end of the Age of Sail.

Here's hoping you all will stay aboard and thank GMT and all you *Flying Colors* players for your continued support!

Mike Nagel

mp_nagel@verizon.net

Design Notes Addendum

It's been about six months since *Flying Colors* sailed into the hands of P500 customers, and in that time there has been a lot of good discussion about the pros, cons, merits and faults of the game system. As I indicated, I consider *Flying Colors* to be a work in progress, a point reinforced by the recent release of the game's first set of "Living Rules."

I think I've made it abundantly clear that I don't want to take changing the game mechanics lightly. The game conforms well to my concept of what it is supposed to accomplish, so any changes must address some serious issues ... or at least those issues that receive a large amount of discussion traffic.

As there were simple but substantive changes between the DTP version of *Flying Colors* and its GMT reincarnation, so too a few issues have cropped up that generated enough concern to deserve a "second look" and a tweak or two since the game's professional release. Specifically these cover the sequence of play and "raking."

In the first version of the rules, it is possible, owing to maneuver, to put one or more ships in the center of a formation out of command. During the next turn, players would have to wait until the end of the turn to get these ships back into formation. This would have an “odd” effect on a Line in that the rear of the line would “leapfrog” past the center and then the center would have to catch up. Sometimes this would create gaps, depending upon the position of other ships. Obviously, I did not have a problem with this, as it provides one more penalty to the loss of formation, but there was enough consternation about it for me to look for a fix.

In order to allow a fleet to maintain its line in a more orderly fashion, I've changed the sequence of play to integrate the activation of in-command formations and out-of-command ships. Rather than play “leap-frog,” players can activate the out-of-command center of a line on a ship-by-ship basis before bringing up the rear of the line. Large line formations are better maintained, and fleets are better able to complete turning maneuvers. This change also eliminates a step from the sequence of play, simplification always being a good thing.

I did not see this turning issue as much of a problem, but the rake mechanics worried me a bit.

A few critics of the combat system likened raking in *Flying Colors* to aerial combat in the classic Avalon Hill game: *Richthofen's War*. In this game, aircraft are often reduced to flying in circles, where one plane fires on another's tail and the latter circles around to return the favor. Several *Flying Colors* players saw the same mechanic duplicated with regards to raking. I rake you ... you rake me. This had to be fixed.

Rather than making rakes automatic, I've made them a function of the distance between the firing ship and its target. And even then, it's not a sure thing as a die roll determines if the attack will be a rake or just a broadside. When opting to break an enemy's line, you're taking a risk in that your moving ships may well be setting themselves up for raking fire from the enemy. Under the new mechanics, a captain has to think twice about taking this audacious step and not being certain that a rake will be achieved.

The new rake mechanics add a little more “wristage” in that there will be a die roll prior to every rake attempt. To simplify things, I've moved current rake result modifiers from the backend of the process into

the rake roll. This keeps complexity at about the same level and the pace of play on the right tack.

Apart from these two major mechanical changes to the game system, a couple of minor changes have been made that significantly impact play. The first is the elimination of a fleet's flagship as a gratuitous target. Sinking a flagship no longer results in the immediate loss of the battle. The second is the elimination of the audacity penalty applied to firepower on a side with a poorer quality fleet.

The rest of the changes to the game involve the incorporation of clarifications and errata with an eye to making the game as accessible to new (and especially non-naval game) players as possible. Admittedly, there are a few other mechanics about which players have indicated some concern; most notably the break check rules. As yet, no one has been able to convince me that these issues require modification.

So what's down the road for *Flying Colors*? The next item you should be seeing is the first expansion to the game, to be titled: *Ship of the Line* (again, borrowing from C. S. Forrester). This expansion should include roughly a dozen more scenarios, most of which have already been determined. Most of the action therein will be from the American Revolutionary War period, with an emphasis on the exploits of French admirals De Grasse and Suffren. After *Ship of the Line* is available, work on the second volume in the series, focusing on frigate actions will begin in earnest. I've already begun testing the new card-based initiative system that will appear with this volume and you can expect to see the American fleet sail into action with that release.

Until then, keep your shot hot and your powder dry. And thanks again for all the interest and outstanding feedback!

-- MPN