



Building for Success

Epic Army Competition winner!

By Tim Hunt

Over the years I have spent far too much time staring at army list or rulebooks looking for that perfect army. The one that no matter what you face you know will never be beaten. Now in some systems this is possible or the possibility of rules creep will result in a new army appearing that has the ability to beat any army that it faces. Thankfully this is not a major problem with Epic Armageddon due to the extensive amount of playtesting that is carried out throughout the Epic community.

With creating a new army the first thing that I tend to look for is the spark of inspiration that jumps out of the army list and says this is why I want to collect this army. For example, Imperial Guard and my love for the down trodden trooper; Orks and the ability to play with a Great Gargant; Speed Freaks and all that lovely speed.

In some instances it may be just a single model that either from its stats or because the model that is produced is just so lovely that I want an army to fight around it. A perfect example of this for me is the Imperial Guard Vulture. Long before I saw the model I saw the proposed stats and straight away wanted this unit in my army. Each vulture has two one-shot Anti-Tank missiles that have a range of 120cm and hit on a 2+. This coupled with the Vulture being a skimmer gives it the ability to pop up on the first turn and immediately provide problems for an opposing formation that is relying on transports or enemy artillery. My desire to play with this unit was further increased once I saw a picture of it.

Previous articles, by others, have discussed optimal army composition and desired activations for an army, I would recommend reading these first to understand some of the background mechanics to the game play.

Onward and upward to designing the army, in this instance I am going to look at a 3000pt. Ulthwe list. Now I have always liked these guys as they have a large standing army of standard troops and don't rely on Aspect Warriors like Biel-Tan. This therefore gives me a starting point and theme for my army, lots of Guardians. With the Ulthwe army list still being completed I will use the standard Biel-Tan Eldar list for this article, but I hope to modify it once the Ulthwe list is confirmed.

So my first formations on my list are chosen by the theme of the army, Guardians, and to start off with I will choose three of them. Now standard guardian units on their own are weak, no ranged shot and no armour save. What they are good at is fire fighting as part of an engagement. Therefore I then upgrade two of the formations so that they are transported by Wave Serpents. This will then give the guardians the mobility to get into place to engage an opponent and have some units that have a save, the Wave Serpents, at the front of my formation. I now have two formations that can either be used in an offensive manor or as a mobile reserve across my back line.

The third formation of Guardians looks a bit weak on its own so here I bolster them up by adding Wraithguard and Wraithlords. This almost doubles the size of the formation and turns it into a formidable fighting formation with lots of Reinforced Armour and Macro Weapon attacks; this is suddenly a formation which you don't want to mess with. This formation can be used in

several ways, to defend the Blitz objective, as the pivot point for the army to attack around or as a main attacking formation. As no two battles are the same and I might just want to deploy this formation into the heart of my opponents attack I then pick a Wraithgate. This allows me to replace an objective in my half of the table with the gate, which acts as a portal and allows a formation with only infantry, light vehicles or armoured vehicles with the Walker ability to pass through and enter the table at that point. With a Wraithgate I don't have to expose the formation at the start of the battle and they can emerge fresh through the gate to strike at the enemy.

So my first three formations picked and already 1225pts spent (Guardians + Wave Serpents = (150+200) twice (700pts), Guardians + Wraithguard + Wraithlords = (150+150+175) = 475pts and Wraithgate = 50pts).

Next I need something with a little bit of a punch so working my down the army list I pick the Engines of Vaul and Titans. Now the Cobra is perfect if you know that you are going to be facing a big titan or lots of infantry, but its shot ranged and I am looking for a long reach to my punch so down to Scorpions or titans, a Void Spinner is out if I want to keep to my Ulthwe ideals. A phantom could work with twin pulsars, but I would tend to be too defensive with it; so what about a pair of Revenants? Now these are nice, they pass the good looks test and they are armed with scout pulsars and AA weapons. However at 650pts this is a bit of a turn-off. So it must be the Scorpions for me then.

Well no, I could have two scorpions for 500pts; they could either act together in one formation or separately. Each Scorpion has a 60cm MW2+ pulse weapon, but they just don't have the flair for their role. Also and most damning in my opinion is the number of dice that you roll when firing in comparison to Revenants. Let me explain, take a pair of Scorpions and a pair of Revenants. Both move into range of target formation and fire. Now the Revenants might become more exposed due to their shorter ranged weapons and hit less due to the slight difference in hit start points, but the potential to kill more is with the Revenants. Each Revenant has two shots compared to one from each Scorpion giving the Scorpions a maximum potential number of hits of 6 from the pulse rules and the Revenants a maximum of 12. Hmm, possibilities of 12 macro weapon hits or 6. I'll pay the extra 150pts for that. Don't get me wrong I would play with Scorpions but designing to face a tournament army the potential damage factor swings it for me. So adding 650pts to my list brings it up to 1875pts and almost 2/3's complete, but with only 4 activations I need to bulk the army out somewhat.

My first problem is this rogue 75pts in my list. There isn't much in the Eldar army list to balance out the points into round 100's and 50's which most of the formations are made up of. I have two basic choices Rangers or Night Spinners. Neither of these formations jump out and grab me as the Night Spinners only put out 3 Barrage Points per turn, a single barrage template and the Rangers tend to end up a glorified speed bump. However the Night Spinners do give me a much needed artillery boost and can persuade an opponent to spread out their forces which can also be an advantage. So the Night Spinners are added at 175pts and my running total increases to 2050pts.

As I said before the Eldar list has a lot of '00 and '50 point formations and now I start to look at them. So far I only have anti aircraft capacity in my Revenants and for an Eldar army this is almost sacrilege so I need to add in more AA to my army and there is nothing quite so frightening to a Marine player than placing Fire Prisms on the table. Fire Prisms have an almost ridiculous range and the Lance ability which negates Reinforced Armour re-rolls. One formation of Fire Prisms then joins my army and I have 700pts left to allocate.

Looking at my current forces I see that there is a lack of support for my main strike formations, the Guardians. This is coupled with a lack of AT fire. I am currently left relying on my Revenants, Fire Prisms and Wraithlords. To try and rectify this I then add two formations of Falcons to accompany my guardians and give them support in engagements. Again due to my lack of aircraft I swap a pair of Falcons from each formation for Fire Storms. This gives me additional AA cover as well as more AP shots. The 500pts for the two formations leaves me with 200pts left and not many formations that I can spend the points on.

Looking down the army list I am left with five possible options to finish off my list, Rangers, War Walkers, Windriders, a Vampire Raider or a further Guardian Formation. At present I don't want any more guardians and I have already stated my dislike of Rangers. So War Walkers, Windriders or a Vampire Raider. Whilst some people like to use them, I am just not happy with the feel of War Walkers, they just feel too exposed for my liking and so I discard them.

The choice between Windriders and a Vampire is much more difficult. The Vampire will give me a much needed opportunity to attack my opponents back line and sneakily grab an objective in the last turn if I need it to. However the Windriders give me a more sustainable attacking option which can be used in conjunction with my existing formations as well as they can enter the table through the Wraithgate. With this last point I opt for Windriders and choose five bikes and one Viper. The one viper gives the option to place Blast Markers on a formation although I wouldn't expect it to get a kill.

Finally add in the free Avatar to make an Ulthwe army ready for the battlefield.

Avatar -	Free
Wraithgate	50 pts

Warhosts:

Guardians + Wave Serpents -	350 pts
Guardians + Wave Serpents -	350 pts
Guardians + Wraithguard & Wraithlords -	475 pts

Troupes:

Night Spinners -	175 pts
Fire Prisms -	250 pts
Falcons (incl 2 Fire Storms)	250 pts
Falcons (incl 2 Fire Storms)	250 pts
Windriders (5 Jetbikes & 1 Viper)	200 pts

Titans/Aircraft:

Revenants	650 pts
	3000 pts

This gives a fairly straightforward Eldar Army, which I believe will be moderately successful and can be built by most people. Now if you are lucky, you will have some models that you can put down on the table and mess around with to see if the army fits your style of play. If you are really lucky then you'll have the correct models to play around with. But most of us are not that lucky and we need another way to test the army.

What I do with all my armies is to place myself in my opponent's position and mentally face my army across an imaginary battlefield. Holding in my head dice rolls, casualties, ranges, blast markers and orders I fight my way through game after game perfecting my style of play, dropping elements that are not effective and trying out new combinations.

Well not exactly what I do, but part of it is true. I look through the army lists of other armies and spot the formations that I would pick and see what sort of damage they would do to my army. A prime example of this is the Vultures from the Imperial Guard list that I mentioned at the start of this article. These could be used in several different ways to disrupt my Ulthwe's battle plan. First turn they could pop up and fire 8 shots at my Revenants. Potentially this could destroy one of them, but I wouldn't do it if I was commanding them I would attack a weaker formation either the Guardians, Falcons or Fire Prisms.

If the Guardians lose one or two Wave Serpents they are severely restricted in their movement and become a handicap rather than a main attack formation. Potentially a formation of Fire Prisms or Falcons could be wiped out by this sort of attack. An answer to this is to use the Fire Prisms to dart forward and attack the Vultures before they can. However Fire Prisms can also be used against enemy artillery in the same way, so I change my list to include a second formation of Fire Prisms and drop a formation of Falcons in a straight change. Losing this formation then changes my battle plan to requiring the Windriders to support the second Wave Serpent riding Guardian Formation.

Looking back across my imaginary gaming table at my army I still have the feeling that my opponent's initial deployment will not be affected by the deployment of the Ulthwe. The only area of concern for them would be whatever pops out of the wraithgate, as this is the closest thing to me.

So I go back to a formation that I initially discarded and pick a Vampire Raider. As I said earlier the Vampire gives me the ability to reach over the table and affect areas that normally wouldn't be open to Eldar. Due to the two pulse lasers the Vampire has the ability to hit up to 6 targets which can be a serious problem for artillery. It also has a damage capacity of 2 allowing it to withstand a certain amount of flak. This puts me 200 pts over my limit and I need to take something out to balance things up again. The simplest option is to remove the Windriders, but this contradicts my initial reasoning and so I leave them in. However the upgrade of Wave Serpents to a Guardian Host is 200pts. By taking the Wave Serpents off the Guardians I can pay for the Vampire and transport the guardians in it to the heart of the battle. This has several advantages, if a simple ground attack by the Vampire is not suitable I can instead engage my target formation with an air assault backed up with the Guardians and changing this formation to air mounted also releases the Windriders back to their free role.

This then gives the following list:

Avatar -	Free
Wraithgate	50 pts

Warhosts:

Guardians (in Vampire Raider) -	150 pts
Guardians + Wave Serpents -	350 pts
Guardians + Wraithguard & Wraithlords -	475 pts

Troupes:

Night Spinners -	175 pts
Fire Prisms -	250 pts
Fire Prisms -	250 pts
Falcons (incl 2 Fire Storms) -	250 pts
Windriders (5 Jetbikes & 1 Viper) -	200 pts

Titans/Aircraft:

Revenants -	650 pts
Vampire Raider -	200 pts
	3000 pts

Looking at the list I now feel that the army is in split in three attacking elements, Guardians in Wave Serpents supported by Falcons, Air Assault Guardians and back line or wraithgate deployed Guardians plus wraith constructs. Now whilst having flexible options to attack with in an army is good I find that I tend to make mistakes if I have to remember how each element best works and attacks. So I then look at how to simplify my army and therefore my tactics.

Having just changed one of the Guardian Hosts to ride in the Vampire I leave this alone and look at the other two. The Guardians with the wraithguard and lords are the more powerful as can be seen by their higher cost with respect to the Wave Serpent transported Guardians. As I mentioned above Wave Serpents although well armoured are like all transport vehicles vulnerable to the loss of one from the formation disrupting movement unless you leave troops behind, not a good idea for the already fragile Eldar. So looking at my list I need to transport my infantry to the battle without losing transport vehicles. I am able to do this with my wraith boosted formation through the Wraithgate, but they have a limited zone of influence, so its back to the army list and a new vehicle that has appeared in this incarnation of Epic, the Storm Serpent.

This Engine of Vault does not have much in the way of armourment, but it does carry a Webway portal. This could answer my problems with regard to transports and my zone of influence from emerging from a Wraithgate. So drop the transports off the second Guardian host and add in a Storm Serpent. This gives me a problem as I have gone over the points again and my second guardian formation looks very vulnerable. So to bulk up the Guardians and give myself the points to pay for the Serpent I need to drop an existing formation. The Night Spinners are an obvious choice but taking 50pts off the 175 for the Night Spinners only gives me 125pts left to bulk up the guardians and from the list I could only give them Support Platforms at 50pts leaving 75pts unallocated. However, if I drop the Windriders I can pay for the Serpent and have 150pts left over for Wraithguard to be added to the Guardians.

My revised list gives me two hard hitting Guardian formations which can be deployed from a Storm Serpent or through the Wraithgate, a further formation to air assault a base line target and support troupes that can pick off enemy units from a distance whilst providing me with anti-aircraft cover.

Again the Vultures pop up in my mind, 8 shots at my Storm Serpent, I wouldn't expect it to survive and there goes my battle plan. Therefore I need to add some redundancy into my list and so I drop one of the Fire Prism formations and add in a second Storm Serpent. If one is lost then the second can carry out its duties and if they are both operational then I can attack more than one area in the same turn. Once the portals have been used Storm Serpents become the poor cousins of the other Engines of Vault and even of Falcons, but they can be useful to go and sit on objectives at the end of a game. So here is my final, for now, Ulthwe list:

Avatar -	Free
Wraithgate	50 pts
Warhosts:	
Guardians (in Vampire Raider) - 1	50 pts
Guardians + Wraithguard -	300 pts
Guardians + Wraithguard & Wraithlords -	475 pts
Troupes:	
Night Spinners -	175 pts
Storm Serpent -	250 pts
Storm Serpent -	250 pts
Fire Prisms -	250 pts
Falcons (incl 2 Fire Storms) -	250 pts
Titans/Aircraft:	
Revenants -	650 pts
Vampire Raider -	200 pts
	<i>3000 pts</i>

As all commanders should do, I will continue to think about the development of my army, but after the first mental attack on my forces I have enough confidence to buy some models and start painting.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

'Tiny' Tim Hunt is the Call to Arms Epic Champion 2005 and the Fury of Champions 2005 Epic winner, so he knows what he's on about!