



NECRON TACTICS

By Elan Stein

The following is a fleet analysis of the Necrons in Battlefleet Gothic. The article is broken down into five segments: Necron Advantages, Necron Disadvantages, Individual Vessel Capabilities Assessment, Commonly Used Tactics, and Common Necron Player Errors.

NECRON ADVANTAGES

The Necrons' offensive advantages stem mostly from their unique weapons systems. The weapons available to the Necrons are the Star pulse generator, gauss particle whip, lightning arc and portals.

Gauss particle whips act as lances, but with a pair of advantages over typical Battlefleet Gothic lances. Not only do these weapon systems hit on a 4+, but any hit of a 6 will bypass a target's shields. In addition, particle whips, unlike other lances from any other race, will automatically bypass an Eldar vessel's holofields or shadowfields.

The lightning arc is the Necron equivalent of batteries, but once again has a pair of advantages over typical weapon batteries. Firstly, all targets count as closing, regardless of the target's actual orientation to the firing vessel or vessels. Secondly, the lightning arc is completely unaffected by holofields or shadowfields, and not only ignore the 2+ Save like every other battery, but – and this is the unique part about it – never getting a right column shift for firing at such a vessel.

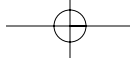
The Star pulse generator is a unique Necron area-effect weapon, which can potentially strike any ship within 20cm. Like most Necron weapons it has the ability to ignore holofields and shadowfields.

Finally, the Necrons' portal arrays are an entirely unique ability on the fleet's part and gives additional teleport attacks to the vessel.

The Necron defensive advantages lie with their reactive hull plating and their Armour Save capabilities, in addition to their turret protection and ability to phase out on a whim.

Necrons lack true shielding in preference for an Armour Save system (much like the saves earned by ships on Brace for Impact). This allows Necron vessels to make Armour Saves against ordnance and attack craft which otherwise would have been far more dangerous to a ship which relies on shields.





Reactive hulls provide numerous benefits to the Necrons' vessels. First off, it gives the ship immunity to the affects of any solar flares, radiation bursts, dust clouds, gas clouds, or Blast markers. This extends into a benefit towards damage repair checks, as they will never be halved due to being in contact with Blast markers or dust and gas clouds. Secondly, any repair checks done are successful on a D6 roll of 4 or higher, unlike everyone else who must score a 6. This means the Necron fleet can make many more repairs than most fleets per turn. Thirdly, the reactive hulls allow Necron vessels to increase their Armour Save to a 2+ if braced, rather than its typical save. Finally, all Necron ships, escorts included, start off with the highest Armour rating possible from all angles, making it difficult to hit them with battery fire.



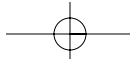
Add to that the large amount of turret coverage on Necron capital ships and one ends up with a fleet that is difficult to harm using ordnance and fairly resilient against other forms of attack too. Also, Necrons possess the ability to phase out vessels at the player's choice without needing to roll a Leadership test at the end of the Necron Movement phase, thus avoiding the death of certain high priced vessels.

The Star pulse generator also provides a considerable defensive advantage, since it can also be used for the job of ordnance removal. As a defensive weapon, it can do a lot of damage to enemy ordnance within its 20 cm radius of effect, all the more so when two or more Star pulse generators are 'layered' or used at the same time on the same slice of space. As it hits all targets within its range like a turret, and as it can take on all types of ordnance simultaneously (ie, both attack craft and torpedoes), it can clear a swathe through ordnance filled space very quickly and very efficiently.

The Sepulchre is a 0-1 choice available as an upgrade to the Cairn. This means that the upgrade is optional, but if one is taken, it is the only one that may be used, and a fleet may have only one Sepulchre because of it. Against ordnance, it functions like a Star pulse generator with the exception that it destroys all ordnance on a 4+ including pesky Eldar, Space Marine or Tau ordnance which normally require a 6 to destroy.



In addition, the Sepulchre may also be fired against an enemy ship. If so, it can potentially reduce the enemy vessel's Leadership permanently, as well as disallow that vessel any special orders for the turn, including Brace for Impact. It also gives the Cairn using this upgrade a Leadership value of 10.



Finally, although not a weapon system per se, the Necrons' speed is a major advantage. It can be used to flee, fight, or reposition them to do one or the other quickly. The fleet is amongst the fastest in Battlefleet Gothic, only matched by the Eldar and Dark Eldar. However, even the Eldar are blown away as soon as the Necrons' special Inertialess Drive is given All Ahead Full orders. This makes the Necrons both the most manoeuvrable fleet under All Ahead Full as well as the fastest possible fleet in the game.

NECRON DISADVANTAGES

For every advantage, the Necrons have a disadvantage.

The offensive disadvantages are found in the Necrons' firepower. Point for point, the Necrons are undergunned compared to most fleets. This means that in an equal points engagement, the Necrons will be unable to cause as much damage to the enemy fleet per turn as most other fleets could. In addition, the ranges of Necron weapon systems are decidedly short, with the one weapon reaching past 30cm being their gauss particle whips. This forces the Necron fleet to fall back on their defensive advantages to win through attrition, sometimes utilising their Brace for Impact 2+ save, which in turn has the disadvantage of halving the ship's already low levels of firepower in addition to disabling any Portal and Teleport attacks, and can cause their defensive disadvantages to become more telling.

Defensive disadvantages for the Necron fleet can be found in the Armour Save system. While it is true that having an Armour Save will prevent damage under a hard bombardment in a way superior to shields, and whilst it may prevent damage by ordnance, it offers worse protection per hit inflicted than shields.

This makes the Necron fleet more susceptible to taking damage from pot shots. This is especially true when faced with the prospect of lances being fired towards them, which bypass the Necrons'

typically high armour of 6+ by hitting them on a 4+ instead. This could make it necessary for the Necron vessel or squadron to Brace for Impact, which brings with it yet further difficulties.

Like portals and teleport attacks, the Star pulse generator and Sepulchre cannot function when under the Brace for Impact special order. In addition, since a ship can use only a single special order at a time, Bracing for Impact will prevent the use of All Ahead Full special order, and so the extreme mobility of the Necron fleet is lost.

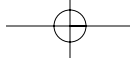
As a final disadvantage, the Necron Victory Points table is extremely severe if any ships are lost. At all costs, one must never lose a capital ship, or else they might very well lose the game then and there, even if the enemy fleet is completely neutralised. Even worse, the harsh cost of Victory Points against the Necron fleet provides yet another incentive to Brace for Impact, imparting all the negative side affects of this special order.

INDIVIDUAL VESSEL CAPABILITIES ASSESSMENT

The Cairn class Tombship

This vessel is the closest to a battleship the Necrons possess. As far as its basic stat line is concerned, it is no faster than most battleships, and certainly is not the fastest of its equivalent class. However, it possesses perhaps the biggest firepower levels of any battleship in the game. Its total capabilities are nearly on par with those of a pair of Scythes working together. It is also the only vessel in the Necron fleet which can take a Sepulchre. Able to reap an impressive amount of damage at 30cm or less, this ship is a threat on the battlefield. Even at 45cm, this ship's lances are able to keep an enemy cruiser at bay. It is both a powerful weapon and a serious liability. Powerful in its weapon systems, but due to the Victory Points table the Necrons suffer from, if this vessel becomes hulked or even destroyed, it could spell end game to Necron fleets at or below 2,000 points.





The Scythe class Harvester

This is the Necron equivalent to a full on cruiser. With a strong, multidirectional lance array and a respectable battery load out, this ship forms the backbone of many a Necron fleet. Highly capable against any adversary, it has no single glaring weakness other than the Necrons' typical capital ship Victory Points table and minor undergunning for its points value. A pair of these are much more preferable than a single Cairn with a Sepulchre, offering tighter turns, faster speed, double the Star pulse generators, 2 more teleport attacks, 2 more gauss particle whips, and 4 more combined Hit Points at the cost of 4 less lightning arcs, and under the mass turrets rules the duo can put out just the same amount of turret coverage per vessel. In addition, having a pair of Scythes act as damage control as far as VP are concerned over taking a single Cairn. For example, a Cairn with Sepulchre which takes 6 points of damage puts out 275 points to the enemy, but if the two Scythes take 6 points of damage between them, it is, at most, 138 VP. It could even be no VP if both ships took 3 hits.



The Jackal class Raider

This is one of the two escorts that the Necrons possess. It is a fast, very well armed vessel with the unique ability amongst any fleet's escorts to initiate teleport attacks against other vessels, so long as the target has 6 hits or less remaining, that is. Jackals are powerful ships, and as they are escorts, they do not suffer from the Necron Victory Points table.



The Dirge class Raider

The Dirge is the other escort available to the Necrons. It is a lighter armed, faster ship than the Jackal. This makes it ideal to take on the faster fleets in the game, such as the Eldar or Dark Eldar. Once again, as an escort, it does not suffer from the Necron Victory Points table.



COMMONLY USED TACTICS

Necrons can epitomise the meaning of shoot and scoot. They were designed originally to be a true raiding fleet, to hit hard and fast, than get out before taking too much damage. However, while the Necrons are capable of such a thing, they can also be capable of full on, drag out fleet engagements. Listed below are a few common broad Necron tactics favored amongst players of the Necron fleet, as well as a short description of each:

The Pincer: Deployment of the Necron fleet would be so that all the vessels would be angled towards the closest edges of the table, towards the enemy of course. This would be done on both sides of the deployment zone. On turn one, as many ships as possible are to activate their inertialess drives to race down both sides of the table with the hopes of getting to the sides and behind the enemy fleet.

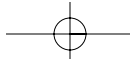
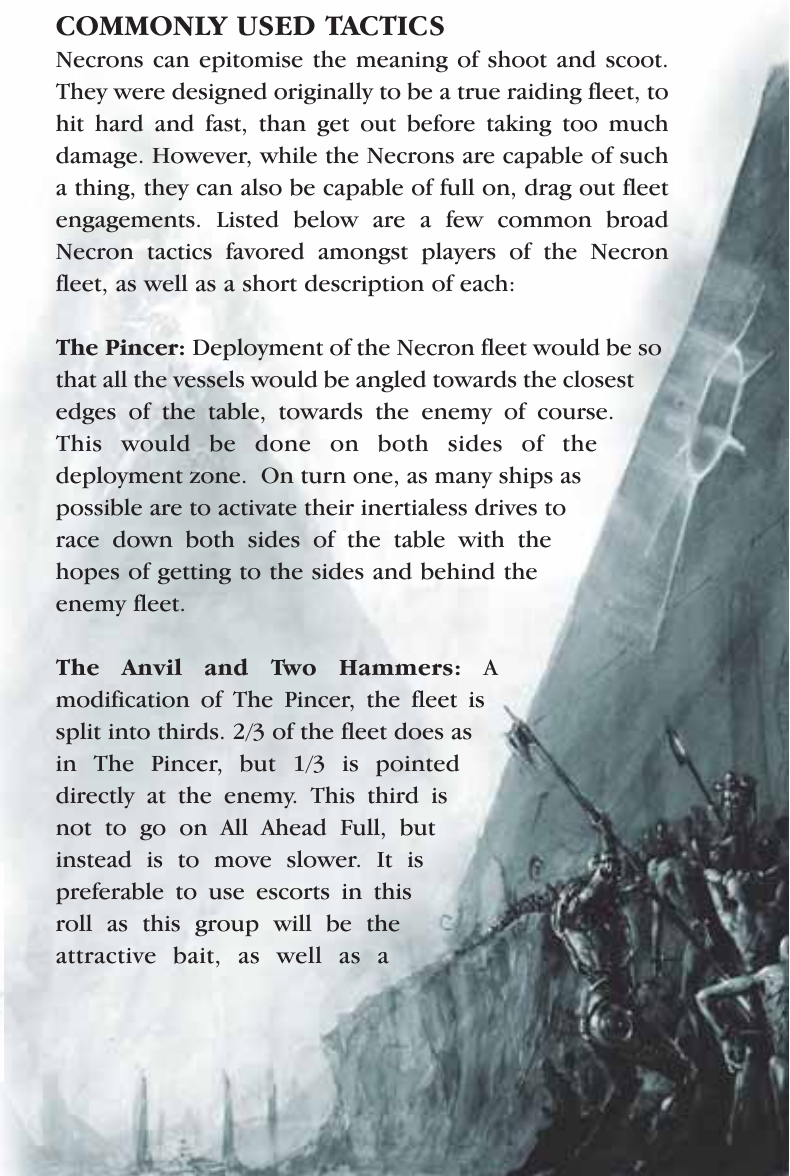
The Anvil and Two Hammers: A modification of The Pincer, the fleet is split into thirds. 2/3 of the fleet does as in The Pincer, but 1/3 is pointed directly at the enemy. This third is not to go on All Ahead Full, but instead is to move slower. It is preferable to use escorts in this roll as this group will be the attractive bait, as well as a

The Shroud class Light Cruiser

This ship can provide invaluable Leadership boosting capability to the rest of the fleet. It can also provide an Achilles heel as well. With its sensor abilities, one's fleet can get between +1 and +2 Leadership to all vessels so long as one Shroud is not crippled.



However, if it is crippled, those abilities go away, and as a Shroud only has 4 hits, only 2 hits must be inflicted to render its gift to the fleet dead. That is why, if this ship is taken, it should be used with care. Never field it alone. Always have it paired up with at least 2 Scythes to run interference against attack runs made towards it. Keep it as far away from the enemy itself as possible. It does, however, boast a potent lighting arc array which can come in handy as extra attacks against an enemy vessel. This ship is a true double-edged sword as it can either help the fleet's Leadership out in an important time, or else hurt the fleet severely if killed due to the Victory Points table the Necrons possess.



massive speed bump in the enemy fleet's movement. As capital ships have the Victory Points table working against them, the escorts are the logical anvil; however the inclusion of a lone capital ship in the anvil might pose useful to entice the enemy to go after this central force. Meanwhile, the two 'hammers' are to move up and around the enemy fleet as in The Pincer. Typically this tactic works better than The Pincer alone, but depending on one's fleet composition and points limit, one might be preferable over the other.

The Blind Charge: The name says it all. The entire fleet heads directly towards the enemy, trusting in the protection their armour gives them, and locking onto individual clusters of ships at a time whenever possible. The idea behind this tactic is to cause crippling damage as quickly as possible so that the damage inflicted to the Necron fleet is made up for easily, later on, once the fleet is at close quarters with the enemy.

The Tacking Charge: This is similar to The Blind Charge, but slower and less likely to result in catastrophic failure.

This is done by zigzagging across the table to present the side arch as often as possible, making it much harder to harm the fleet with battery fire. It also, however, exposes the fleet to an increased time out in the open, meaning more time for the enemy to fire upon the fleet.

In addition to broad tactics, there is also a universal pair of secondary tactics that can also be utilised by any fleet. These would be to either Focus Fire on a particular ship or group of ships, or to Spread the Firepower out amongst multiple ships and squadrons. Both methods have their own advantages and disadvantages. For example, by focusing fire, one can be rid of individual enemy ships faster, but leave most of the rest of the enemy fleet unharmed and still fully dangerous, and by splitting fire amongst multiple targets one can hope to damage a large number of enemy ships and squadrons relatively evenly, causing a dramatic decrease in the enemy fleet's firepower at a sudden time in the game, but unfortunately it also takes longer to pull off as each target ship or squadron gets relatively little incoming weapon's fire.

This was just an outline of commonly used Necron tactics. There are definitely more tactics out there, but these are used quite often by Necron fleets.

COMMON NECRON PLAYER ERRORS

Necron players usually do worse when they get arrogant in their fleet's capabilities and special rules. In fact, it is at the root of most Necron losses. At times, it may actually be prudent to charge the enemy and rely on the vessels' armour to get them through the worst the enemy can fling at them, but at other times – most of the time – it is not a very good idea. Knowing when to do this and when not to is

a deceptively difficult skill for some new players to understand, and to learn this skill is a great step towards mastering the game. However, Necron players tend to charge when they become arrogant and stuck in the mire of their special rules, thinking that they will be fine because of their special abilities.

Still others who get too into using their Inertialess Drives might find themselves shooting off the battlefield, even with the steerable nature of Necron All Ahead Full. Once again, arrogance in the special rules

of the fleet could cause one to miscalculate just how much room there really is, and take unnecessary risks doing so.

Holding off on a chance in order to use the special attack methods is another issue with new Necron players. They get eager to use their portals, Star pulse generators, and Sepulchres when they find they just so happen to be in range to do so, and sometimes lose out on the possibility of killing off an enemy vessel by instead using these secondary attack methods and doing next to nothing to the enemy. Just because an option is available does not mean it should always be used. Once again, it is an option that must be weighed heavily before being decided on; is it worth the risk if I use it, and what are the immediate risks if I don't use it?



These are the common Necron player errors, and do not encompass all the possible mistakes one might do while playing as Necrons.

Conclusion

This concludes the analysis of the Necron fleet for Battlefleet Gothic. It was intended to help those new and old who utilise this fleet, and even, perhaps, as a means to defeat the Necrons by those who use other fleets. It is my hope that the information contained in this article will be of some use to any who read it.

Author

Elan is a BFG veteran and is also a member of the Battlefleet Gothic Yaboo group community.

Further Information

Interested about Battlefleet Gothic? More can be found in Battlefleet Gothic: Armada, whilst the full range of Battlefleet Gothic ships, including the Necron fleet, is available from Games Workshop.

Websites

www.BattlefleetGothic.com

