Part Three: Designing a Table

So I've covered the rules/guidelines for dispersing terrain, as well as how big certain types of terrain should be and how they impact the game. Now it is time to put it all together and design a balanced playing table.

For this table, we are going to follow the two major guidelines: 25% coverage and 8 inch spacing. As an added challenge, I will try to accommodate the two main deployment zone types: 8 inches from the long edge, and opposing corners. The deployment zones look something like this:

Now to select our terrain pieces. For this demonstration, I will use the templates I designed which you can print out on 8.5 x 11 paper. If we pretend we roll strictly average on the terrain chart, and ignore comets, ghost stations, and gravity wells, we will get something similar to this:

This is not exactly 25%, but it will work for now. To reach 25%, the easy solution is to take the smaller gas clouds and asteroid fields and make them a little larger, or just get one more of each.

Designing the Table

When I design a table, I always start at the center and work outwards, as the center is the most prominent and important part of the table. The first thing to determine is if you're going to put a terrain piece smack in the middle. For today, I'll chose to place a large planetoid in the middle. A central planetoid really shapes the game, while being very balanced. A large central debris field or asteroid field has a similar effect.

Planetoids

The most important thing for Planetoids is the Gravity Well effect, as it boosts movement. There are two guidelines I follow for this:

1. Ensure the entire Gravity well is on the table (so the Planetoid shouldn't be any closer than 4" from a table edge

2. Keep access to Gravity Wells balanced. In other words, if one player has a gravity well in or near their deployment zone, then the other player must have the same.

So, I place the small planetoids in opposite corners. This gives both players a small bunker, as well as a gravity movement zone bonus. In addition, Bull99 developed a very popular scenario with this set up, so why not use it?

Asteroids

I find Asteroids are the hardest to place, so I normally place them first. Some basic placement guidance I try to follow:

Don't place them in Deployment Zones

That's it, really, because no one is going to place Models directly in an Asteroid field. This limits our options. That said I placed the small ones on the centerline at the table-edge. It turns out you can't actually place the 40mm bases here, so it's minimal deployment impact.

In addition, placing asteroids near the center makes Shunt Entry a bit riskier, and placing asteroids at the table edge definitely makes flank entry risky. Also, I think it's good to have LOS Impeded or Blocked along all table edges; otherwise, they are open fire lanes.

Debris Fields

To me, this is the perfect terrain, so I am always a little sad that there is so little of it to use. And with only two pieces, they should be on opposite sides of the planetoid. I could not figure out where to put them, so I came up with two placements. I'm not sure which is better.

Potentially a better solution is to use a third or fourth debris field; we are a bit short of 25%, but let's see what we get with this first.

Gas Clouds

Place the Gas Clouds last, as they do not impact LOS. There are generally two ways a Gas Cloud is used:

As a bunker, often for torpedo-lobbing units
As a hiding place for a Fold-Space Escape

So let's place the medium-sized gas clouds towards the center for the latter, and in the empty corners for the former. This gives us the following layouts.

I realized after writing all of this, that I had previously recommended using long, narrow asteroid fields for various reasons, and here I am using medium-size, 8x10 asteroid fields. So, I broke them up into four different asteroid fields, and did my best to adjust the current layout to accommodate them. I also added two more half-page Debris Fields, and ended up with this.

I couldn’t figure out how to get all these pieces to fit while maintaining 8” spacing, so I cheated a bit. If you’re going to cheat with the spacing, I suggest you only cheat a little, and push terrain towards your gas clouds. In fact, I’ll be showing you a table design in the future where this is taken to a bit of an extreme to follow a theme, but this is enough for now.

Next, I’ll show you one of my themed table concepts, which will hopefully show you how you can work within the recommended terrain constraints and build interesting tables. If all goes to plan, variants of these tables will be used at the NOVA Open in 2016.

-Ryjak