

Final Tiers

a. Tier 1 – 1000 Points for the Doubles; 2000 Points for the Singles; The armies in this tier are as follows:

Daemons of Chaos
Vampire Counts

b. Tier 2 – 1100 Points for the Doubles; 2250 Points for the Singles; The armies in this tier are as follows:

Beastmen
Bretonnia
Chaos Dwarfs
Dark Elves
Dwarfs
Empire
High Elves
Lizardmen
Tomb Kings
Warriors of Chaos
Wood Elves
Skaven

c. Tier 3 – 1200 Points for the Doubles; 2500 Points for the Singles; The armies in this tier are as follows

Dogs of War
Ogre Kingdoms
Orcs & Goblins

Our Thought Process

There were several driving factors in our decisions on where to place armies within the tiered system. We thought it would be best to take some time to explain the thoughts behind the movements that occurred (or not) over the last few months.

1. Tier 2 is the default position for all armies. We decided that the best perspective to work from was that all armies start at a default position of tier 2. Therefore all considerations on moving armies up or down must be considered from that initial position.
2. Wielding the “tier-hammer” should be a rare occurrence, with several factors weighing in on the decision to move an army up or down. Some armies are definitely stronger than others, especially when limited to just X vs Y. When writing 15 different army books over a lengthy period, such situations will occur. The following are the criteria we used:
 - a. Average build – is the average build by the average player no-brainer ugly? If so, we need to consider it for tier 1. Conversely, is the average build by the average player simply uncompetitive? If so, we need to consider it for tier 3. In either circumstance,

will the shift result in the army being too heavily penalized or boosted to become “un-fun” for the player and his or her prospective opponents?

- b. Power build – is the fully tweaked power build too high on the competitive scale? Is that tweaked list going to make the event “un-fun” for all opponents? For those armies on the cusp of being bumped to tier one, does moving it there render it uncompetitive against the next closest two or three armies in tier 2? For those armies on the cusp of being bumped to tier three, does moving it there result in them being too competitive against the next closest two or three armies still in tier 2? We also had to bear in mind the fact that wherever we draw the line between tiers, there are players that will be able to capitalize on that delineation, taking the best of whatever tier they choose.
- c. Occurrence of the army at the event? Has the overwhelming presence of this army resulted in players with other armies to decide not to attend a tournament? Is this army under-represented because players do not believe they can compete at the same point level as their opponent’s armies?
- d. Feedback from potential attendees. What are player’s thoughts and justifications for wanting armies moved? How strongly do we weigh those who did not voice an objection to the current tiers to those who did?

The changes:

Tomb Kings: Started in Tier 3, but migrated back to Tier 2. Our initial rationale was that Tomb Kings are clearly underpowered relative to their undead cousins, the Vampire Counts. The army is hardly ever seen in tournament play in this region. Therefore, the question was – are the average and power builds too good for them to remain in Tier 3? So I took it upon myself to finally get my army up to a reasonable 3-colour minimum and took it to a tournament. The result was a 3-1 record, with the three wins coming against tier 2 armies in 3 turns against very good opponents, and the loss also coming against an excellent opponent. I then play-tested the army at a tier 2 level and continued to enjoy substantial success. The final decision was that an unbreakable, immune to psychology army doesn’t belong in the third tier.

Orcs & Goblins: Started in Tier 2, but have received a bump to Tier 3. Our initial rationale was that the power build for Orcs and Goblins is quite good and lots of people play them for fun. However, it became clear over tracking play-testing and performance of the Orcs and Goblins at tier 2 that the average build in the average player’s hand created tough matchups, especially against the newer books in the game. There is very little the army can do to mitigate psychology (notably fear and panic), and animosity can be crippling for any player. When looking at the power build, even at 2000 points, all the character, special and rare choices to make it work are present, which meant that a boost in points helps to add core units to the list. In the end, we decided that the need of the average build for the average player should be paramount for the placement of this army in tier 3.

Dark Elves: Started in Tier 2, and remained in Tier 2 (barely). There is no doubt in our minds that Dark Elves were the closest to getting bumped to Tier 1. The feedback we received reflected this fact as well. There is no doubt that the power build for Dark Elves is very, very good. However, the average build by the average player is not unreasonable to play against with any army. Dark Elves have also had a very low presence in a lot of tournaments over the last decade, and it didn't feel right to deny a resurgence unless absolutely necessary. Further to that, we considered how well a Dark Elf army at tier one would fair against other top end tier 2 armies (Lizardmen, Warriors of Chaos, High Elves, Empire, and Skaven are good examples) and it was felt that they would struggle at that disadvantage. We then considered how Vampire Counts would fair in this situation, and as a long-time Vampire player myself, I didn't consider the disadvantage to be enough for me to feel that I couldn't win. Also, if we were to move Dark Elves, then we almost certainly would have to move at least two other armies, and arguably up to 4 or 5 armies into Tier one, at which point we might as well keep everything at the same points level and accept that older and weaker books simply won't be viable or present.

Lizardmen: Started in Tier 2, and remained in Tier 2. Lizardmen were right behind the Dark Elves on our power grid. The power build is very hard to deal with the first time you fight it. The average build is very reasonable. Lizardmen are particularly good at grinding down the Tier 1 armies. They are not nearly as proficient at that task against combined arms forces that are typical in Tier 2. Ultimately, we decided that they would remain in Tier 2.

Skaven and Beastmen: The new books will be in our default Tier, which is Tier 2. Skaven are definitely on the higher end of Tier 2, but again the average build by the average player is not over the top. The new Beastmen look like they fit well in Tier 2 as well, and the few games played with/against them seem to indicate that even a Ungor/gor free list is not too far beyond what is reasonable.

Finally, I do want to thank those who provided feedback. You may or may not have gotten the changes you wanted, but every opinion was strongly considered in our decision-making. We will definitely be taking this year's results, further feedback on tiering in general, and the progress of the meta-game in the year ahead to establish what we do in 2011.