VEHICLE DESIGN RULES – THE SOUPED-UP VERSION! - December 2000

Ever since the Vehicle Design Rules (VDR from now on) came out in WD 251 I've had people bending my ear about them. "Well Jervis," they say. "Your rules have caused quite a furore – it's all anybody seems to want to talk about on the net these days." Fortunately, although quite a lot of the stuff that has come up has either been rules queries or dull questions about game balance, just as much has been really very exciting stuff about vehicle variants, scratch-built models and cool things that the VDR allow people to do in their Warhammer 40,000 games. As the VDR were written to stir up interest in this sadly neglected aspect of the hobby, I'm more than pleased with the response so far, and am quite happy to weather the occasional brick-bat from players who worry that the rules may unbalance the game.

This isn't to say that the rules are perfect. Far from it; the article has more than its fair share of typos and gaffs. Fortunately all these things are easily sorted out, which is the purpose of this follow-up article. Hopefully we'll be able to look at some of the cool new vehicles I've been hearing about in more detail in White Dwarf in the coming months. For the time being though, this article has been written to answer the questions that have arisen, and to close a couple minor loopholes in the VDR that, erm, creative players round the world have considered exploiting. Here goes…

THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE – AGAIN!

Before I get down to nitty-gritty revisions and Q&A, I must point out very strongly that it is VITAL that people using the VDR obey 'The Most Important Rule', which is that in order to use a vehicle created with the VDR it MUST be represented by a PAINTED WYSIWYG MODEL. There are NO exceptions to this rule: if you don't have a painted wysiwyg ('what you see is what you get') model then you can't use it.

Almost all of the arguments I've seen for unlikely 'game-winning' vehicles fall down on the fact that the author is clearly never going to be able to produce a painted wysiwyg model, and that if he did it would take so long to make and cost so much money that, to be honest, the player would deserve the slight gaming advantage it might give. A classic example of this kind of thing was the 'lumbering war machine with 100 bolters', which while a scary prospect to be sure, is much scarier as a modelling project than it is as a tabletop opponent!

The other thing that many players seem to forget is that a vital part of the 'wysiwyg' approach is that the resulting model should not be in any way confusing to an opponent. As noted in the article 'Basically, if you think to yourself "Will this confuse another player?" and the answer is "Yes" then you shouldn't do it!' . A lot of the stuff I've seen about changing the characteristics of existing models to suit the player's own tastes fall foul of this. For example, if you decide you want an armoured Sentinel, you must come up with a wysiwyg model that no opponent can mistake for a normal Sentinel sporting the standard 'extra armour' upgrade. If they looked at your model and could be confused by it then you're breaking the wysiwyg rule and can't use it. There is more about designing variants on existing vehicles below, but for the time being, just bear in mind

that using the VDR to field a normal model but with a new set of stats is breaking the rules and you won't go too far wrong!

OPEN-TOPPED & FULLY ARMOURED VEHICLES

Probably the biggest problem with the VDR that appeared in WD251 is that I had failed to appreciate that they allowed players to create 'fully armoured' versions of what would be usually 'open-topped' vehicles in the Codex army lists. The best example of this is the armoured Sentinel model mentioned above, which is exactly the same as a normal Sentinel but not open-topped, and which comes in considerably cheaper under the VDR than it should do. Fully-armoured versions of Ork buggies have also shown up this flaw in the rules.

Fortunately fixing the problem proved really easy once I knew about it, and I have to say that the solution below rather improves the earlier rules, as it encourages players to make lightly-armoured vehicles open-topped and heavily armoured vehicles 'fully armoured'. It works like this…

Vehicle Design Step 3a. Pick if Open-Topped or Fully Armoured

The 'open-topped' vehicle upgrade is no longer used. Instead, when designing a vehicle, you must decide whether it will be open-topped or fully armoured. When working out the points value for the vehicle, look up the total armour of all four facings on the table below and modify the points value of the vehicle appropriately. The points modifier is not used for flyers, which always count as being 'fully armoured'.

Total Armour	Open-Topped	Fully Armoured
36-42	0	+20
43-46	0	+10
47-50	0	0
51-54	-10	0
55-56	-20	0

REVISED WEAPON COSTS

The second area of the VDR which caused problems was the weapon charts that appeared in WD251. Not to put too fine a point on it, they are riddled with mistakes, and they also lack any guidelines as to which charts to use when designing a vehicle, and which upgrades can be applied to which weapon (eg, can I really have a twin-linked gatling flamer, and how does it work if I can?). The following revised charts and rules fix these problems.

Weapon Charts

The following weapon charts replace those from WD251. Weapons are limited to the weapons belonging to one race on a vehicle (ie, you can't mix and match weapons from different races on the same vehicle). In addition you must use the weapons for the race of the army the vehicle is being made for (i.e. a vehicle for an Eldar army must use Eldar weapons). Any race without a Codex, with the exception of the Tyranids, may use Imperial vehicle upgrades until their own Codex comes out. Rules for designing Tyranid 'vehicles' will appear in a future issue of White Dwarf. Last but not least, Orks may not use 'captured' vehicles designed with the VDR for another race.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Weapons marked with a '*' on the chart below are 'small-arms'. Such weapons may NOT be given certain weapon upgrades as explained later on.

IMPERIAL WEAPONS

Weapon		BS4	BS3
Assault Cannon		+35	+25
Autocannon		+35	+25
Autogun*		+3	+3
Battle Cannon		+50	+50
Bolter*	+4	+4	
Demolisher Cannon		+50	+50
Earthshaker Cannon		+60	+60
Flamer*		+10	+10
Grenade Launcher*		+15	+10
Griffon Mortar		+40	+40
Heavy Bolter		+20	+15
Heavy Flamer		+15	+15
Inferno Cannon		+30	+30
Lascannon		+35	+25
Lasgun*		+3	+3
Meltagun*		+15	+10
Missile Launcher		+25	+20
Mortar		+25	+25
Multilaser		+35	+25
Multimelta		+40	+30
Plasma Cannon		+40	+30

Weapon	BS4	BS3
Plasma Gun*	+15	+10
Storm Bolter*	+5	+5
Vanquisher Cannon	+55	+50
Whirlwind Multiple Missile Launcher	+40	+40

DARK ELDAR WEAPONS

Weapon	BS4
Blaster*	+15
Dark Lance	+35
Destructor	+15
Disintegrator	+45
Shredder*	+15
Splinter Rifle*	+4
Splinter Cannon	+20
Stinger*	+10
Terrofex*	+15

CHAOS WEAPONS

Weapon	BS4
Combi Bolter-Flamer*	+10
Combi Bolter-Meltagun*	+15
Combi Twin Bolter*	+5
Blast Master	+30
Doom Siren	+15
Sonic Blaster*	+15

In addition, Chaos may use any weapons from the Imperial list.

ELDAR WEAPONS

Weapon	BS4	BS3
Bright Lance	+40	+30
Eldar Missile Launcher	+35	+25
D-Cannon	+30	+30

Weapon		
Lasblaster*	+3	+3
Pulse Laser	+40	+30
Shuriken Catapult*	+4	+4
Shuriken Cannon	+25	+20
Star Cannon	+45	+35
Scatter Laser	+35	+25
Reaper Launcher	+35	+25
Death Spinner	+15	+10
Prism Cannon	+55	+45
Shadow Weaver	+25	+25
Vibro-Cannon	+40	+40

NECRON WEAPONS

Weapon	BS4
Gauss Gun*	+5
Gauss Blaster	+8
Gauss Cannon	+40
Heavy Gauss Cannon	+45

ORK WEAPONS

Weapon	BS2
Big Shoota	+15
Kombi Shoota-Rokkit*	+10
Kombi Shoota-Skorcha*	+12
Kustom Mega-Blaster	+20
Rokkit Launcha	+15
Shoota*	+3
Skorcha	+15
Lobba	+40
Zzap Gun	+40
Kannon	+35

Weapon Upgrades

Use the following chart to determine what upgrades can be given to different sorts of weapon. Note that the chart includes some new upgrades which are described later on.

Upgrade	Small-arms	Barrage	Flamer	Other
Blast	N	Y	N	Y
Co-Axial	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gatling	N	N	N	Y
Gun Battery	N	Y	N	N
Long Barrel	N	Y	N	Y
Mega-Weapon	N	Y	Y	Y
Shorter Barrel	N	Y	N	Y
Slower Rate Of Fire	N	N	N	Y
Titan Killer	N	Y	N	Y
Twin-Linked	Y	N	N	Y

VEHICLE SPEED RULES

The last bit of the VDR that caused problems was the rules for deciding the vehicle's speed. Unfortunately during editing a sentence was added which wasn't in the original manuscript, which directly contradicted the rules for souped-up engines later on. Wooops! The correct rules for working out a vehicle's speed are as follows.

Ignore the reference to upgrading your vehicles speed to 'your choice' at the start of the section about working out vehicle speed (page 74, middle column, last sentence in the first paragraph). The only way to modify a vehicle's speed is to give it a souped-up engine.

The souped-up engine entry should be changed to read as follows:

'Souped-up Engine: Some vehicle engines can be souped-up to make them faster.

Lumbering vehicles and walkers with souped-up engines count as being agile.

Normal vehicles with up to 36-42 points of armour count as fast.

Normal vehicles with 43-49 points of armour count as agile.

Flyers, immobile vehicles, and normal vehicles with 50-56 points of armour may not be given souped-up engines.

OTHER RULE REVISIONS

The three items above are the most important changes to the published rules. Other minor corrections are listed below:

Normal sized tanks can have 56 points of armour.

Ignore the reference to 'Normal Sized Light Vehicles' on the summary sheet. Instead normal sized tanks & light vehicles with no more than 50 points worth of weapons and the transport upgrade may be taken as transport vehicles by squads allowed to take transport upgrades.

Side armour of 10 should cost +10 points per facing, rather than 5.

GENERAL NOTES ON THE VDR

Remember Blast & Mega weapons can only be used by immobile vehicles or war machines.

The summary for Eldar Fields is right, the rules wrong (i.e, you can have no more than one Eldar Field per facing). Note that all shields and fields only work against shooting attacks. Note that the Dark Eldar may use Eldar Fields.

On the Speed Chart on page 74 the entries for small and normal sized walkers should read 'Walker' rather than 'normal'.

Flyers & Immobile vehicles may not be given souped-up engines

Vehicles apart from walkers that are fitted with close combat weapons can fight in close combat, but close combat results are not worked out (i.e. they get to fight but otherwise the rules for vehicles in close combat apply).

The rules for Tyranids and Eldar Wraithlords are coming soon.

You may only use vehicle upgrades for the race of the army the vehicle is being made for (eg, a vehicle for an Ork army must use Ork upgrades). Any race without a Codex, with the exception of the Tyranids, may use Imperial vehicle upgrades until their own Codex comes out.

The targeter upgrade may only be given to Imperial and Eldar weapons with a BS of 3.

Any transported models in a flyer that is shot down will be killed outright.

NEW UPGRADES AND OPTIONS

While working away on Imperial Armour we came up with a few new weapon options. Here they are:

Carriage: Allows vehicle to be towed (see Imperial Armour for rules). + 5 points. Immobile vehicles only.

Gun Battery: For barrage weapons only. Adds one extra template when firing a barrage at +50% in cost. May be 'stacked', ie, 'Gun Battery (2)' would add +2 templates at +100% cost. Each extra template requires an additional gun barrel shown on the model.

Shorter Barrel: Range is halved and cost reduced by 25%.

Slower Rate Of Fire: Number of shots is reduced by 1 or more to a minimum of 1. Each shot lost reduces cost by 25%.

Titan-Killer: May be applied to mega weapons only. Causes D3 structure points damage per hit, rolling separately on damage table for each point. Each hit will only knock down one shield. Cost +50%.

Tow-Bar: Allows vehicle to tow other vehicles that have a 'carriage' (see Imperial Armour for rules). +5 points.

DESIGNING VEHICLE VARIANTS

One thing that many players have tried to do with the VDR is use them to modify the characteristics of existing 40K vehicles. This is fine in principle, just so long as it doesn't break the rule that all vehicles created using the VDR are 'wysiwyg' models. What this means for variants of existing vehicles is that any and all changes you make need to be blatantly obvious, and the finished model must clearly be different from the 'standard model'. Although there are some examples of vehicle variants in the Codexes that have thicker armour which is not shown on the model per se (eg, the Leman Russ Demolisher), you are NOT allowed to do this when using the vehicle design rules to create your own vehicles, and any extra armour must be shown in some way on the finished model.

For example, say you decided to design a new version of the Leman Russ, with a gatling lascannon in the turret and a souped-up engine to make it agile. Such a model would need both modifications clearly shown upon it; it would need at least a triple-barrelled lascannon for the turret, and the rear engine casing would need to show the improved engine. Do both things and you'll clearly have a different Leman Russ variant, and the model would be legal as far as the VDR are concerned. Scrimp on either these things and you would be breaking both the letter and the spirit of the rules.

If you really have trouble with this concept, then take a look at some of the Forge World vehicle variants, and note how all of the changes to the standard rules for the vehicle are 'driven' by changes to the appearance of the vehicle. This concept lies at the heart of the GW hobby; what we do is 'model driven', in that the rules come from the models, not the other way around. Bear this in mind when designing variants of existing vehicles and you won't go too far wrong.

One final caveat to this section: if you find yourself designing a vehicle variant because of its effect in game terms rather than because you think it's going to look great, then you still haven't quite understood the spirit in which the VDR are written. Nuff said, I hope.

CONCLUSION

I hope the changes described above sort out all of the quibbles I've seen raised about the VDR so far, and will allow you to use them confident in the knowledge that they are fair and balanced. Hopefully now the debate will move on a bit from the rather abstract musings I've seen so far (eg, "Hey guys, did you know you could use the VDR to do

this…") and onto discussions about actual models that have been made and used ("Hey guys, take a look at these pics of a cool new model I designed using the VDR…"). Apart from anything else we'll be looking to feature the best conversions and scratch-builds in White Dwarf and on this very website, so make sure you let us know about any new models you come up with.

Happy modelling!

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