



Monstrous mounts in Warmaster
by Mike Headden

Monstrous mounts are an integral part of my strategy when fielding High Elves, and my army rarely leaves home without at least one Dragon mounted character. It seems to me that players often discount Monstrous mounts without a great deal of consideration. When you are worrying about Break points, armies immune to terror or the sheer points cost of a Monstrous mount it is easy to decide that you are better off with another unit or two of your favourite troop type.

I believe that players who take this approach may be missing out on a potential battle winner. The big advantage of a character on a Monstrous Mount is that they act as what is sometime known as a 'force multiplier'. What this means is that rather than applying damage directly, they increase the effect of another unit. They do this by adding attacks and sometimes by causing or negating the effects of *Terror*. All of this increases the amount of damage you do

compared with the amount of damage the enemy can do. Adding a second unit to a combat often increases the number of enemy stands, or even units, involved in the combat but adding a character on a Monstrous Mount does not. If the second unit has a lower armour value it can actually lead to you having less chance of winning the combat! By applying maximum pressure on the narrowest frontage you should have the greatest chance of winning the combat.

Not only do Monstrous Mounts give you additional attacks but also these can be concentrated where they are most needed. For example, a Hero riding a Dragon and armed with the *Sword of Might* gives you five extra attacks. You can use him to pick on a specific unit if you are engaged with multiple enemies – sometimes enabling you to wipe out a unit or to concentrate on the least armoured enemy.

One word of warning – don't put your General on a Monstrous Mount unless there are exceptional circumstances. A monster-mounted character needs to get in to close combat for all those points to have been wisely spent. Given that the battle is lost if the General dies you really want to keep them out of the thick of the action. Most of the time save the monsters for heroes and mages.

Those mounts that cause *Terror* are especially useful. Even against Undead who are not affected by *Terror* they can allow you to attack the Sphinx and Bone Giant without losing an attack for fighting an enemy which causes *Terror*.



Here be Dragons...



With three melee attacks, three shooting attacks, the ability to *Fly* and to cause *Terror* the Dragons of Chaos, the High Elves and the Undead are the top monsters in my opinion.

The Lizardman Stegadon is limited by the fact that it is only available to the Lizardman General and I've indicated above what I think about Generals on monsters. Having said that, those extra five attacks may justify its use, occasionally... providing you can keep the General close to units big enough to protect him from counter-attacks.

Wyverns, Griffons and T-Rex don't quite have the killing power of their bigger cousins but then they don't cost as many points either and they still cause *Terror*.

Giant Eagles, Chariots, Pegasi, Unicorns, Bears and the like are less of a 'must have'. However, although they have fewer attacks and no *Terror*-causing ability, they are well worth considering as an alternative to magic items as a way of getting something with those last few points that won't quite buy another unit.

The disadvantage that monster-mounted characters have is the restriction on what terrain they can enter. If your tactics are likely to revolve around moving through woods and hiding in villages you may find your characters unable to join units because they are in terrain the characters mount can't enter.

Players always need to think hard about how the mounts fit in with their overall strategy for the battle. Will they be an extra punch

that will allow your attack force to crush the enemy? Will they be the 'stiffening' that causes the enemy to bounce off your defensive line, leaving them at the mercy of your counter-attack? Will they always be in the wrong place, adding to a combat you've already won easily or not tough enough to save a unit from destruction but merely adding to the tally of points lost?

There – that's why and when you should take Monstrous Mounts but what do you do about the ones the enemy uses against you?

The main thing is that all this killing power is for nothing if you can isolate a character and simply overrun them. Even a single stand of Skinks can kill a Hero on Dragon if they 'march through' him when there are no friendly units within 30cm that he can join. Sometimes, it is better to avoid overrunning a character on the way into a melee, if you can, so that you can overrun them with a fall-back once their supporting units have been wiped out. At other times it is better to force the character and mount into a unit so that you can concentrate on the unit and wipe out both unit and monster-mounted character.



When, inevitably, you are attacked by a unit with a monster-mounted character attached there are a couple of techniques you can try that allow you to absorb the attacks then counter-attack and destroy them.

Here be Dragons...

If your army has weak, cheap troops – Chaos Hounds, Skeleton Warriors and the like – then use them as a screen. If they are hit and driven back into other units it is often worth refusing to make way rather than risk confusion and/or other units being drawn into the battle. If the screening troops die where they stand then the enemy has to use their one Advance for the turn if they want to contact the unit behind rather than Pursuing into them. If this tactic works then the enemy use a powerful unit with an attached character to kill a couple of weak units and with luck your counter-attack then crushes something worth far more points than you sacrificed.

If your army has tough troops – Chaos Warriors, Dwarf Warriors, Sphinxes, or similar – then you may have another option. Try to arrange them so that the enemy has to deal with supporting stands or defended terrain or, better still, both. In this situation you may well be able to bounce them off. Even a Stegadon unit with a Slann Mage-Priest on a Stegadon (15 attacks on a 40mm frontage) or a Dragon Rider unit with a Hero on a Dragon

(10 attacks on a 20mm frontage) will have a hard time shifting a Chaos Warrior unit on a hill with full support. In this event it is usually better to deploy in column if you can. This allows you to remove the rear stand without losing support and if you beat an enemy you can pursue, then units don't get left behind because they were only supporting the combat.

Sometimes, it may be a case of fighting fire with fire and placing a character on a Monstrous Mount of your own on the most likely, or most important, target available to the enemy. Once again the Dragons with their ability to use their breath weapon against chargers are the top choice for this.

So, let me sum up. Monstrous Mounts, wisely used, can be a way of applying that last bit of pressure that cracks your enemy's battle line. Some ways of employing them will bring more success than others and there are ways to minimise their impact if they are used against you. They are not a sure fire winner – nothing in Warmaster is, that's part of the attraction of the rules but they are definitely worth experimenting with.

