

Battle Report - 1500 Points
Bryan (Salamanders) vs Liam Kofi Bright (Imperial Guard)
Salamanders Victory: 48 - 18

Bryan List - Emperor's Chillies (1500pts)
(Firestorm Assault Force)

Adrax Agatone

- Warlord
- + Lieutenant
- + 6 man Bladeguard Veteran Squad

Vulkan He'stan

- + 10 man infernus Squad

Captain in Gravis Armour

- + 6 man Aggressor Squad
- starting within 1 x Landraider

3 x Eradicators

1 x Outrider Squad

5 x Intercessors

Bright List - Civil Protection Force (1500pts)

Platoon Commander

- Warlord
- + a commissar (Death mark of Olanious)
- + 4 man command squad
- + 20 man infantry squad

Death Korps Marshal

- Enhancement: Drill Commander
- + 20 man Death Korps of Krieg squad

Death Rider Squadron Commander

- + 5 man Death Rider squad

Cadian Castellan

- + 10 man infantry squad

5 man Tempestus Scion Command Squad

- Enhancement: Grand Strategist
- + 5 Tempestus Scions
- starting within 1 x Taurox Prime

1 x Scout Sentinel

2 x Tauros Venator

2 x Tauros Assault Vehicle

1 x Elysian Drop Sentinel

1 x Cyclops Demolition Vehicle

5 x Tempestus Scions

1 x Hellhound

3 x Mortars

Time for my third game of Warhammer 40K! Once again I am commanding the humble PdF of my Civil Protection force, this time facing up against war-crime loving humanists of the Salamanders Astartes chapter. My head-canon: this is a prequel to my previous battle. As the Imperium prepared its retreat from the Damocles crusade, a Salamanders successor chapter (true to form given their actually-caring-about-people bona fides) ran training simulation exercises with the PdF of this reconquered world — which I guess needs a name now? Let's call it *Wiase-Domhain* — so they might actually be prepared for reprisal attacks. Given how things went we can say *Wiase-Domhain* remaining loyal was due to the extra spice provided to the PdF by the Emperor's Chillies!

And Bryan's list is indeed as spicy as the name suggests. 4 of its 7 units can delete my largest squads in one go. And given the land raider 2 of them can be delivered danger close (where the stratagems and rules available to this detachment make them incredibly dangerous) in a way I can't seriously touch. Given the detachment rule making it possible for all his units to get extra movement and still do/kill things, along with his bike and super armoured transport, he also negates the thing I was planning on generally doing better than other people - being much faster than them. So I can't bog him down because he will just kill me, I can't kill him before he kills me, and I can't run away from him. Feels lore-accurate for facing space marines I guess!



Eeep

Hmm.

OK ok ok — if the God Emperor had meant our service to be easy he wouldn't have given us toes that can get stubbed. I'm gonna have to work for it. I still have the numbers advantage and I am probably still able to zoom about faster than he is given all the speedy vehicles and deep strike/ infiltrators shenanigans I have available to me. And if I can somehow survive his initial strike without dying (and prevent him getting back into the landraider) then I can bring down those marines through sheer weight of numbers. Drown them in our blood!

So here is the plan. His strength is he can deliver two of his 4 super-killy units to a place in a way I can't touch. And anything he gets near he kills. But the emphasis is on a *place* and *gets near* — I have to prevent there being any one place that is near to all my key units. I have to spread out and go for plan 6 — attack attack attack, along the whole line at once. I can't really control where he decides to concentrate his forces, if he does. I will lose that fight wherever it is. But I can use my speed and ability to rapidly redeploy through reinforcements to at least recuperate some losses by immediately just ceding that to him. And in the mean time (presumably after stopping for a cup of liber-tea) my scions and drop sentinel can be scoring secondaries and providing at least a little bit of counter-punch to mean his second wave won't be as devastating as his first. On the other hand if he tries to split his forces up then I might be able to make the local fights last long enough that he is tarpitted in each section of the line and I am able to grind out a victory by outperforming on secondaries while he chews through my forces.

To be honest I am not confident in this plan. I collect very much on the basis of "what I think would be on theme and look cool" and unfortunately I just haven't persuaded myself that a glorified police force would have any serious main damage dealers. (I did allow myself a hellhound tank, but that is because I figure given the Imperium's stance on human rights — to wit, Imao — a giant flame thrower would seem like a pretty natural tool of police crowd control.) And I expect this battle to kinda expose that in the end to actually win games I need some way to kill or deter the giant armoured tank transport with laser canons and filled with murder machines. That said, Bryan and I are both clear that we're playing for fun rather than to win (he was even kind enough to tone down his list to give me a chance beforehand. A gracious opponent once more!) and I'd rather lose on theme than win off theme. Death before dishonour!

Anyway all this I wrote before the battle. Let's see how things actually go once the dice start rolling. I am very much looking forward to it!

The Battle

Lol. Lmao, even.

Ok so that didn't work.

The first thing that went wrong for me was the mission we drew- it was The Ritual. What that means in real terms is that all but the middle objective in no man's land went away. And Bryan immediately picked up and remarked upon the consequence — now he could concentrate his forces. What's more, I would find it very hard to stop him getting primary points since he could make his own where he wanted them and I would have a lot of trouble killing him off objectives.

Being myself exactly the sort of general 40k lore assures us often lead the Imperial Guard, I resolved not to let the mere fact that the fundamental presuppositions of my original plan had been undermined in any way change what I was going to do. So I deployed ready to spread my forces out on three different fronts. To be honest the terrain might have forced my hand a bit here since I had too much stuff to effectively use cover, but even there mistakes were made. I put the Scout Sentinel in a place where even with its 9' pre-game move it could not actually go anywhere useful and it ended up just being sent to the centre for lack of anything better to do. It was not long for this world. Probably my only good decision was placing the death riders (I proxy them with motorbikes! Love that for me) in a position to immediately set up a new objective on turn one.

Bryan on the other hand had much fewer units, The eradicators were in reserve and the aggressors in their transport. He deployed everything else so it was in a position to quickly move out, with probably his only misstep being that Vulkan's unit were placed quite far out of position; that basically prevented them ever having a real impact on the game, although the nature of the ritual meant that even then they could make and hold primary objectives so they earned points.



Deployment as it appeared to me.

Bryan got first turn, and secondaries one of which I forget but the other of which was area denial. His landraider and bikes sped into the centre, his intercessors made to sticky his home field objective (meaning he would be able to score points from it without keeping units there), and his two character units — Adrax on the right flank as it appeared to me, and Vulkan on the left — ran out from their respective positions heading straight for me.

His aggressors got out ready to burn away my biker boys and here is where I was a real prick about things. In going to look up their defensive stats I checked out their rule, and found out they had a reactive move available when he moves a unit near mine. This meant I could move them out of range of his weapons! Now the thing is: when I had gone over all my special rules and what not at the start of the game I had not mentioned this, for the simple reason that I have never used that ability before and did not know it was available. So it was a gotcha, I was being That Guy! Bryan very kindly allowed me to make the move (I very much would not have held it against him if he had either said not this turn or had taken back his own movement that triggered it) but it means that his aggressors didn't really have much to shoot at this turn. Still, he blew up the scout sentinel and killed two of my three mortar teams so it wasn't all a waste. All in all he had scored 7 points on his secondaries (full area denial and I forget what else) and was off to a good start.



Farewell sweet Scout Sentinel, we barely knew thee.

My turn one was... not as good. I got deploy teleporter homers and cleanse. We interpreted the cleanse rule that it would allow me to create and cleanse an objective in one turn (was that right?) but since you can only create one objective per turn that is all I was going to get on that (3 points). Between me and the only other objectives were a bunch of angry space marines with war crime guns, so there was no hope of reaching and taking them turn one. As for teleporter homers, my army is set up to be incredibly good at this... providing I don't get it on turn one, where there are

rules against bringing in units from reserves. I thought I would rather have more shooting than waste a unit for the small midfield points (this was a mistake I now think, but it would not have changed the game so meh) and so I resolved to set that aside.

Instead I moved things out to try and get every canon and missile I could pointed at the landraider, my hellhound looking to preemptively war crime his war crime marines, and moved forward my leftmost and central infantry squads later on general grounds that it might be a good idea for me to be able to contest the middle later. I think the only thing I will blame on bad luck for my performance is that I then fired 5 hunter killer missiles and two lascanons at the landraider and did a total of 2 damage. My hellhound then only got two shots (neither of which wounded) from its main canon into the aggressor squad — it gets 2D6 shots and I rolled snake eyes! — and just in general my shooting simply failed to do things. This was the point in the game when I had maximum order coverage of my units, all my hunter killer missiles, and the enemy had done minimal damage to me. I think between everything I wounded a bike, got those two wounds off a landraider, and killed a couple of the blade guard who were directly in front of my kriegers. To be honest Bryan was actually very unlucky in his save rolls for the blade guard so things balanced out here, but on the whole this was rough.

Honestly, with hindsight, while this was bad I want to be clear it wasn't all bad luck. It was actually in large part the result of my bad decision making. More on this at the end!

I then thought that I would charge him to try and at least tie him up. My infantry squad and one of the Tauroses hit his bike squad, and another of my Tauroxes hit his aggressors... I then found out that Aggressors are actually an incredibly tough close combat unit. Whoops, probably should have checked that before I charged! So the Taurox that hit them was just kaput, but to be fair to them the infantry squad that hit the bikers actually did some damage, with the Castellan even punching out a bike! I'd like to think that little guy will be drinking out on that memory for the rest of his life, Emperor bless his socks.

So his turn two rolls around and Bryan gets max primary (he holds his home objective, the central objective, and the one he created), and for secondaries gets extend battle lines and defend strong hold. I was actually in a position to take his backfield from him so he discarded that, but would score a nice round 5 points on extend battle lines.

He then basically presses his advantage in the same way as before. The landraider repositions itself to ensure it is holding both the objectives he created while Vulkan's squad moved out to create yet another. His bikes fell back from the combat towards the centre (The Castellan always ends his pub tale with "and I woulda taken the rest of 'em too if the bastards hadn't run scared!"), his intercessors move towards the centre, his aggressors move forward enough to induce some more movement shenanigans from my death riders (which I actually use to keep them safe from Vulkan's squad) and the blade guard stand menacingly in front of my Kriegers.



The left flank.



The right flank.

After shooting and combat he has by the end wiped out the Kriegers (I get them back through reinforcements), obliterated my hellhound tank between his special immolation stratagem and just being stompy in combat, and taken the Death Riders objective from them by consolidating into them with the aggressors once they had finished pulverising my tank (to their credit the biker boys actually managed to kill one of the aggressors in turn - they were actually a revelation in how good they were for me this game. Turns out I love movement shenanigans!). Most but not quite all of the infantry squad led by the Castellan was blasted away too.

Going into my turn two the only objective I score is my backfield one held by the mortar. I get assassinate, and area denial for secondaries. Neither of which I have a chance of doing — again because of my own mistakes. But it's not all bad! By sacrificing the Death Riders to an inevitable overwatch when they fell back, I yeet the transport with all the scions in it out to deposit them right in front of the aggressors, using my orders to give them all the buffs. I use my drop sentinel to line up more shots on his land raider while stealing away his home objective. And I (in what turned out to be a terrible move) elect to bring my Kriegers in next turn, since I would then have more choice about which board edge to bring them in from.

The bright spot of all this is that the same Castellan who managed to punch a bike out also managed to incinerate a space marine with his plasma pistol. Checking the photos from the battle report against the Tau I realise I used this model for my platoon command squad leader there. Between that and this I have decided to name that model and give him a back story. The other bright spot is that since Vulkan's squad was within range and in their line of sight the big infantry block on the left flank manage to do a non-trivial amount of damage to them.

But the scions just bounce. They kill a couple of the aggressors, while their vehicle did basically nothing at all. What's more about this point we realised it was almost out of time; so much for saving the Kriegers! So having done next to no damage and only got 5 points, Bryan would go into turn 3 getting full primary again. This even though I stole his home objective! All was not well.

We wrap up turn 3 pretty quickly. Bryan gets Engage on all Fronts which he can fully score by making a charge (which he does) and Tempting Target, and his bikes are easily able to reach the one objective in no man's land I controlled. He wipes out the Scions (to be honest the wankers had it coming after failing me so badly), his eliminators bounce so I at least have one of my Tauros assault vehicles left at the end of the game, and he picks up the last of the infantry squad... the Castellan, however, survives on a wound! What a legend!

We work out I'll get 10 on primary cannot score secondaries, so shake on it. An extremely well deserved victory to Bryan! Clearly Wiase-Domhain's defenders need to step their game up.



The Emperor's Chillies bringing you a heresy free tomorrow, today!

Concluding Reflections

Yeesh. The considerable 30 point gap between us still undersells the felt difference at the tabletop. Bryan completely outmatched me here, and I think it was a very well earned victory on his part. He basically did exactly what I thought he should to defeat me; concentrated most of his force in the centre. To that he added one of the ultra-killy units able to roll up a flank all by itself. He controlled an area I had to contest, then punished me when I did.

He probably could have done even more. His one mistake was that Vulkan's squad was inefficiently used. It earned him plenty of points, but he could have swapped its role with that of the intercessor squad. Vulkan's squad would have been even more devastating in the middle and just utterly drove a wedge through the heart of my forces — I think I would not even have been controlling my home objective if he had had two ultra-killy units in the centre rather than one. Of course, the only difference that would have made is winning by even more! Hardly a serious fault.

For my part I think I over-learned the lessons of my first defeat. My first game (also the ritual! Curse this mission!) I psyched myself out and abandoned my plan; I then lost. Whereas in my second even in the face of my opponent's scary units I had simply said "reform lines — quick march!" And went ahead with what I was going to do anyway. The lesson I learned from this was; stick to your plan, better to operate according to a coherent idea. Except... not if its a bad idea.

Whereas I should have learned (from my second game) that the only way this army kills anything is by massive force concentration: everything of mine firing at one thing of theirs. My turn one bonanza's failure to kill anything was really my bad generalship. (I was honestly a bit unlucky with the scions bouncing mind you.) Rather than force his units to spread out, I had simply spread mine out. So now he did concentrated damage while I pitter pattered to no effect! So my lesson from this battle: sometimes I must accept heavy casualties in order to concentrate my forces. (Also, I fell into the trap laid by the Guard's detachment rule and twice elected not to move for the sake of getting my lethal hits. This meant I was boxed into my deployment zone all game. Bad.)

I try to console myself that at the end Bryan found he actually had to leave my drop sentinel alone to hold his backfield because he didn't have the resources to send back to kill it. This was something like my overall plan working as intended. And it got me 5 points, yay! But really all that shows is that my original plan had relied on their being set objectives we could both contest and which I could force him to make difficult choices on. The ritual meant that simply wasn't true. So my plan of spreading my forces out would only have worked in this case if he had been silly enough to take the bait just for the sakes of chasing me around and killing me. But Bryan is actually good at the game! So he stuck to doing what he needed to do to win... and won.

Overall I had a lot of fun, and feel I learned a lot from the experience. Bryan was straight up just a lovely chap, I liked talking to him throughout and it turns out we share enough cultural tastes to enjoy similar nerd references and do a bit of LARPing with our armies. I hope we meet again!



Castellan Caolán:
Hero of the Imperium