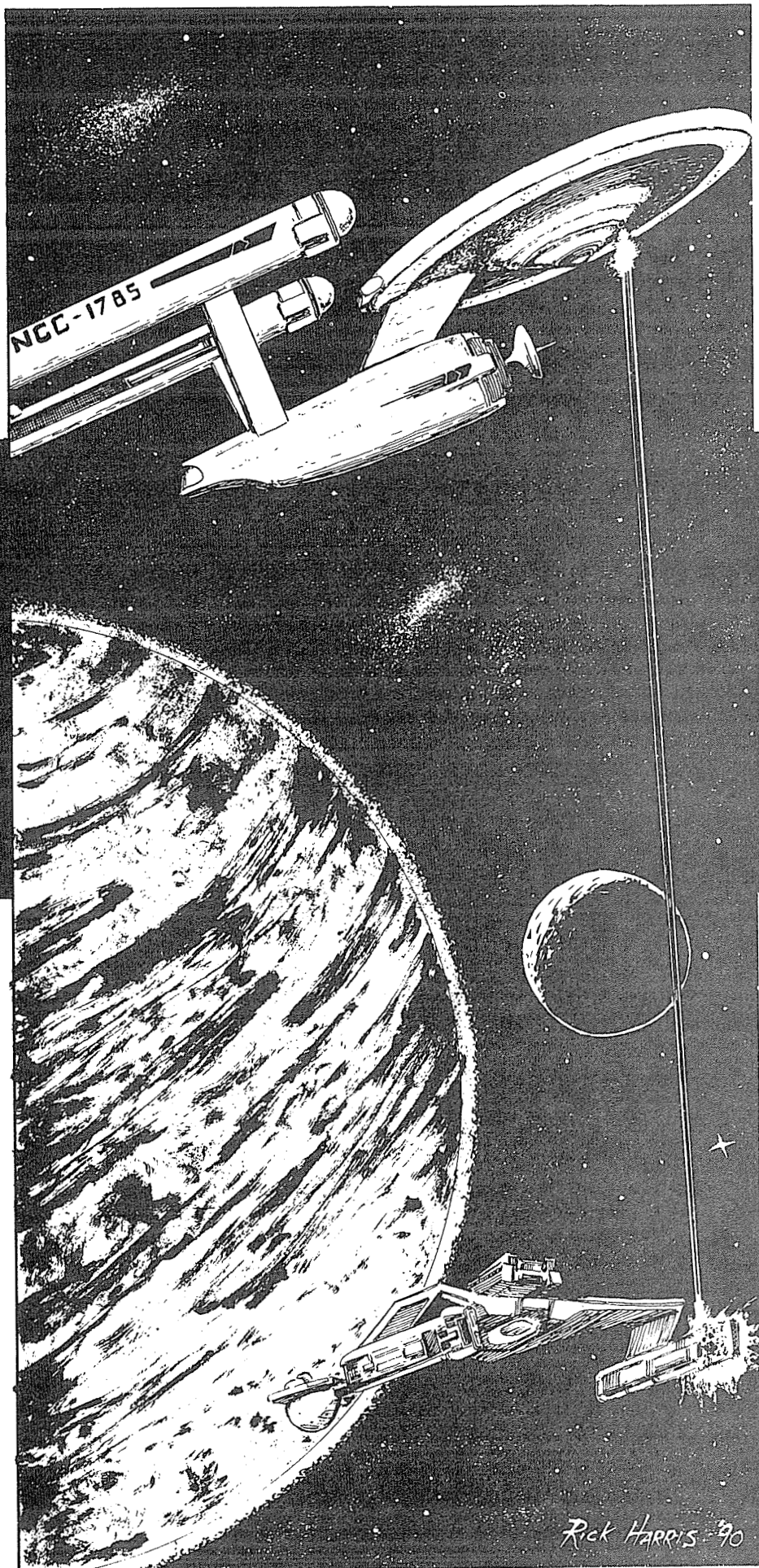


Star Fleet Tactics

A Lesson
for Star Fleet
Students on the
Finer Points
of Combat

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**It's not what
you've got that counts.
It's how you use it.**

Rarely has this maxim been more appropriate than in space combat, where mighty starships may be defeated by inferior forces. You all doubtlessly know how to operate modern space weapon and defense systems. This course will teach you some of the finer points of combat so you can use weapons and defenses to their maximum potential to achieve your goals.

This is what the study of tactics is all about.

TACTICAL CONCEPTS

In order to successfully use tactics, it is a good idea to understand *why* they work as well as *how*.

The power of starships lies in the fact that they can affect things through a distance or *range*. Range is the measure of distance through which a starship can have an effect on something or, conversely, be affected by something. Star Fleet measures general tactical range in terms of the longest ranged weapon known, the FH-11 phaser cannon. Zero to 9000 kilometers is considered short range; 9000 to 18,000 kilometers is medium range; 18,000 to 24,000 kilometers is long range; and anything over 24,000 kilometers is extended range. This general tactical range scale is referred to in terms of tactical movement and is the benchmark against which all other tactical ranges are measured.

Each weapon has its own range, and comparisons between them are relative. For example, an FP-4 photon torpedo is considered a long-range torpedo but is only a medium-range weapon when compared to the benchmark range of the FH-11 phaser.

Furthermore, a ship's firing accuracy at different ranges varies with each weapon it uses. Star Fleet has combined the ranges and accuracies of all known weapons into 25 standard targeting profiles, or *firing charts*. Each weapon has its own set of important targeting ranges according to its firing chart.

A weapon's maximum effective range or, more simply, *maximum range*, is the longest distance the weapon may fire

through with at least a 10% chance of hitting.

Perhaps even more important than maximum range is a weapon's *critical range*, the longest distance which the weapon can fire through with 50% accuracy (in other words, the range at which the weapon's chance of hitting is at least equal to its chance of missing).

Finally, the *optimum range* is the longest distance the weapon can fire through with the greatest possible accuracy. Most weapons have an accuracy close to 100% (or "autohit," as tacticians like to call it) within their optimum ranges.

Targeting profiles are so important because a vessel's effective *firepower* depends directly on the accuracy of its weapons. Spaceships attack with *salvos*, or groups of shots fired within the same time period (note that even a single shot is considered a salvo if no other weapons fire at the same target at the same time). Usually, except at autohit ranges, some of the shots fired in a salvo may not hit their target. Since the weapons that miss have no effect on their target, the effective power of a salvo depends only on the weapons that hit. It thus follows that the greater the accuracy of the weapons, the greater the number of hits in a salvo and, consequently, the greater the effective firepower of the ship will be.

To illustrate this point, consider a Klingon *D-7m* and a *Mark I Reliant* cruiser. Although the maximum ranges and levels of raw firepower are identical, the *Reliant's* phasers are more accurate, so its phaser salvos should generally be more effective than the Klingon's disruptor salvos.

Of course, this comparison brings up another important issue—weapon concentration. The Klingon *D-7m* has its four disruptor cannons individually mounted, giving it four separate, medium-power shots. The *Reliant's* four phaser cannons are in two banks, giving it two high-power shots. The diffused firepower of the *D-7m* gives it a better chance of damaging multiple systems on an enemy's ship, while the *Reliant's* concentrated weapons are more likely to cripple an enemy with a direct hit. Against heavily shielded opponents (factor 15 or higher) the *Reliant* has an advantage—its concentrated, "shield-busting" phaser shots need only one hit

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to do damage, while the diffused firepower of the *D-7m* must score at least two hits out of four shots. At long range, the odds of scoring two hits in the same salvo drop off greatly.

BASIC TACTICS

Besides using its weapons to affect things through a distance, a ship can also change its position through tactical movement. This is usually done to increase or decrease the range to a target or to maneuver to an angle where a ship can bear on a weak shield or avoid enemy fire. In any case, tactical movement is more effective at short ranges than at long ranges simply because there is less distance to cover to achieve the desired effect.

Advance

The advance is one of the most basic tactics. As the name implies, the advance involves distributing power among movement, weapons, and shields so that a ship can close the distance to its target at a moderate rate while maintaining a credible weapons salvo. This tactic is generally used by Star Fleet, the Klingon Empire, and the Romulan Star Empire to set a ship up in a position for a more potent offensive tactic like a rush or "stand and deliver."

Retreat

The retreat, as the name implies, is the reverse of the advance. Primarily a defensive tactic, the retreat is usually used to reduce the effectiveness of an opponent's weapons by increasing the distance they have to fire through. A retreat, unlike a strategic withdrawal, is not necessarily an attempt to disengage from combat and may even be used as part of an offensive strategy like the hit-and-run strategy.

Both Star Fleet and the Romulan Empire frequently make use of the retreat as a tactic since both are concerned with reducing unnecessary damage to their ships. The Klingon Empire does not often use this tactic because its ships are more powerful at

close ranges, and the retreat is a somewhat unglamorous (but not shameful) tactic. As students of Star Fleet tactics, you are strongly encouraged to familiarize yourself with the retreat since it has proven to be very effective as a part of a larger combat strategy.

Stand and Deliver

Stand and deliver is one of the oldest and simplest battle tactics, and is very effective. The basic method is to hold position, keeping minimal power in the maneuver systems and powering the shields as needed. The majority of the vessel's power is then kept free for high-power weapons salvos.

Stand and deliver serves well as both an offensive and defensive tactic. As an offensive tactic, stand and deliver allows an attacking ship to deliver potent strikes to a target within critical range. When used defensively, its strength lies in the fact that the attacker must divert weapons power into maneuver systems and therefore will generally have a less potent weapons salvo than the defender's full-power salvo.

While stand and deliver is a very useful tactic, it does have its weaknesses (which are generally known to the major starfaring races). The main problem is that stand and deliver creates its weapons strength by weakening movement and deflector systems. Therefore, a ship may be outmaneuvered by a faster vessel which, say, moves to attack an underpowered shield. Stand and deliver also often becomes a death trap when used to defend against multiple attackers since it gives the attackers the opportunity to do just what they want—surround the defender and ravage it at close range. Stand and deliver is generally not effective against an opponent when one is at a great accuracy disadvantage since the advantage of increased raw weapon power is often negated by the lower accuracy. Finally, if two ships employ stand and deliver against each other, especially at short range, both will usually take heavy damage before one is defeated.

Captains of the Klingon Empire consider stand and deliver to be a very courageous tactic and frequently use it at all ranges. The Romulan Star Empire does not use it as much, primarily because most of its ships have weaker

firepower than those of the other major starfaring races. Star Fleet favors this tactic highly, but its use at close range is often discouraged to minimize the damage that will be absorbed.

Rush

The rush is considered to be one of the most potent and flexible offensive tactics. It is also one of the most risky. The basic concept behind the rush is to close the distance to a target quickly, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the weapons salvo. The rush is generally executed at short to medium range because most maneuver systems require far too much power to yield the speed needed at long range.

In order for a rush to be effective, a ship must be able to close the desired distance (usually to optimum range) and fire—without giving the defender a chance to cripple the attacking vessel before it can unleash its salvo. Thus, a rush generally requires about *three times* the maneuver power of an advance in order to close the same distance in one-third the time. Obviously, this drastically reduces the power available to the weapons systems. However, it usually leaves enough maneuver power for a follow-up tactic.

You may have already deduced that ships equipped with photon torpedoes have a significant advantage when rushing that other ships lack. This is because a torpedo requires relatively little energy to fire, and rushing ships so equipped will need less weapons power to fire an effective salvo. In fact, ships with photon torpedoes are able to execute a special form of the rush called the *missiler's rush* where beam weapons are given little or no power, and the torpedoes supply almost all the firepower of a ship's salvo.

What makes a rush (and all its variants) so dangerous is that it is very unpredictable and flexible. If a captain decides to prepare a defense against a rush, he will need to divert more weapon power into shielding and/or maneuver systems. This can put the defender at a significant disadvantage if the attacker was not planning to execute a rush after all. A rush can be used simply as an attack or as a means to an end which enables a ship to swiftly move into a strategic position while still doing significant damage to an opponent. A

clever attacker may hold back and trick his opponent into firing a weaker, longer-ranged salvo before rushing the then-defenseless ship. The rush and its variants can turn close-range combat into a tricky tactical guessing game.

The Klingon Empire frequently uses the rush and all its variants. The Klingons consider the rush to be a bold and clever tactic, and the success of it often reflects highly on the captain. The Romulans do not use the rush as often, except with plasma bolt weaponry (since both the firepower and the accuracy of plasma bolts increase greatly at close range). As a student of Star Fleet tactics, you should be thoroughly familiar with the rush in order to defend against it and use it when necessary.

Flank Rush

The flank rush is a variant of the basic forward rush. Like the name implies, the flank rush involves rushing at an opponent's side (flank) and firing side weapons at the opponent. This tactic is usually used when the defender's flank shields are underpowered. This tactic is also often used as a follow-up to a forward rush. The Klingons and the Romulans have not been known to make flank rushes often except as lead-in or follow-up tactics. Star Fleet captains often favor it because flank rushes frequently leave an enemy's warp drives exposed, permitting the Star Fleet vessel to weaken an enemy's power systems with minimal loss of life.

Reverse Rush

The reverse rush is actually a rather new tactic. Originally developed by the Klingons, the reverse rush enables a ship to use its defensive aft firing weapons in an offensive manner by "rushing" straight past an opponent and firing aft weapons into the enemy's usually underprotected stern. The defense against the reverse rush is simple. Strengthening the aft shielding and arming the aft weapons for a counterattack will often suffice. However, this action draws energy from the ship's other systems and thus weakens its defenses against other attacks.

The Klingons remain the primary users of the reverse rush, and it is considered a tactic of great cunning among their warriors. While originally developed as an offensive tactic, it can

also be used for an aggressive defense. Star Fleet has thus adapted the use of the reverse rush to its own vessels, and it remains a favorite of many captains and tacticians, particularly Andorian ones. The Romulans have not been known to use the reverse rush frequently, probably because they prefer the use of the cloaking device to accomplish the same end.

Enforced Extension

The enforced extension is a highly effective (under certain circumstances), purely defensive tactic since it relegates any vessel using it to a completely reactionary role.

Any ship using an enforced extension must have a significant accuracy advantage at long range, and it must be able to penetrate an attacker's shields and do it damage with one shot of any given weapon fired.

The enforced extension is a kind of combination of stand and deliver, plus the retreat. The idea is for the defender to place an ample amount of power into maneuver systems in order to keep an attacker at long range while taking advantage of its own superior accuracy. By doing this, the defender can minimize

the amount of damage received while slowly wearing down an attacker with its "shieldbuster" shots.

The enforced extension generally does not do a great deal of damage to an attacker, but over a period of time it can weaken the attacker enough to make it vulnerable to a coup de grace offensive tactic or force it to break off its attack.

The enforced extension generally works best at a range where a vessel's weapons are at 20% to 30% accuracy, and against an opponent without concentrated firepower.

The basic weakness of the enforced extension is that it is a purely reactionary tactic. As such, a ship using it may not be able to compensate for an unexpected tactic like a high-speed rush.

The Klingon Empire has rarely been known to use the enforced extension. Klingon ships are generally unfit for it since they have diffused firepower and generally inferior long-range accuracies compared to their Federation and Romulan counterparts. Furthermore, most Klingons consider the purely defensive enforced extension to be an extremely cowardly tactic and will usually only use it as a show of contempt

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for a weak enemy. When faced with this tactic, Klingon captains will often choose to "bite the bullet" and simply charge the extended ship at full speed, with mixed results.

Intelligence reports show that the Romulans do not seem to use this tactic. It is possible that they may not have developed it yet.

Since Star Fleet is primarily a defensive organization in terms of military power, the enforced extension is one of the most useful tactics available to Federation captains. Furthermore, since the Federation possesses the most sophisticated weaponry of the major starfaring races and concentrates the phaser power of its ships into banks, Star Fleet ships are especially well suited for its use. However, since the actual implementation of the enforced extension is often tricky, you are encouraged to practice it thoroughly in simulation. Ω

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