

UNSTABLE SIGNALS

No. 01



THE MISFIRE ISSUE

THE TERRA CONFLICTUS HOBBY MAGAZINE

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WEEKLY ISSUE // 06 JUN 2066

NO. 01 // THE MISFIRE ISSUE

THE HOBBY ZINE

PLAYTEST RECORD // SHOW YOUR WORK

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NO. 01 // THE MISFIRE ISSUE // HOBBY ZINE SEVEN GAMES.

FORTY MISFIRES. // SHOW YOUR WORK // THE DICE DO NOT LIE //

OUT NOW 7 REPORTS COMPILED REPORT OF THE WEEK // DRY FIRE Q2 2066

// ROLL IN THE OPEN // COUNT THE DICE // BLAME THE TERRAIN // FILE

THE REPORT //

// UNSTABLE SIGNALS // NO. 01 // THE MISFIRE ISSUE

The first issue, and the week handed us a theme on a plate: the misfire. Six jams in one skirmish, a natural one that killed a commander on the opening card, a hunt won on the last die. This issue is about the moment your plan meets the thing you cannot control, and what the good tables do next.

THE MISFIRE ISSUE

NO. 01 // THE MISFIRE ISSUE // 2026-06-06

THE MAKING OF THE THING // THE DICE ARE ON RECORD.

// THE FREQUENCY

This is the first issue, so a word on what it is. The daily desk plays a game every day and files what the dice did. This page collects the week and puts the hobby around it: the build, the lore, the table craft, the people in the chairs. We do not replay the games. We read the record and we tell you what to steal.

I had a theme picked out for issue one. Something tidy about terrain. Then I read the week back and the dice had already chosen for me. Seven games, and the spine of nearly all of them was the misfire. The shot that should have killed and did not. The reroll that crashed back to a three. The natural one on the card that mattered.

Start with the report of the week. Two splices walked into the same flank over three dead relays and spent eight turns finding out whose gun would actually fire. Six jams. A Climax that lit up with nobody in the kill zone to trigger it, so it did nothing at all. Tib calls it a referendum on luck, and he is right, but look closer at who won. Ash Canto did not roll better. They held the relay that did not need a working weapon to hold.

That is the thread. ONE PIP lost its commander to a natural one before the deck was clear and still walked a lone driver to one health box off the kill. TWO OF FOUR read the whole board on a natural twenty and lost anyway, because one event roll cut the clock in half. ROOFLINE was decided by which crew choked one fewer time at the core. LAST BOX came down to a last die on a last health box. The week did not reward good luck. It rewarded the tables that built a plan luck could not fully wreck.

So this issue is about the misfire. Quill takes apart a dead relay you can build from a busted router and shows why a three-foot wall of dead infrastructure changes a firefight. Rio digs into the relay rats, the people who keep the water on, and how their corridors put a clock on your table. Tib gives you seven ways to run a cold night without letting the dice run the room. And we sat Grouse down, who killed a third-generation boar on her last box and would like you to know that was not bravery, it was math.

Roll in the open. Count the dice. The good news, if you want some, is that the misfire is the part you can plan for. Read on.

// MARGIT KOSE // DESK HOST

// THE WEEK ON THE TABLE

// REPORT OF THE WEEK

DRY FIRE

OPERATOR TACTICS // SKIRMISH // ASH CANTO 5-0 // T8 // BY TIB MARLOW

It earned it by being the clearest lesson of the week. Six jams across both splices, a Climax that rolled an exfil window with no carrier in the crossfire so it fired into nothing, and a stack of rerolls that crashed back to threes. Ash Canto did not out-shoot anyone. They sat on the objectives that paid out whether or not a gun worked, and let the other splice spend the night clearing chambers. When your dice go cold, this is the game that shows you where to stand.

OPERATOR TACTICS // RPG

WALK HIM OUT

Steal the patience: five operators cleared the dock silent before a shot went loud, which bought the whole back half of the raid. When the awareness clock finally climbed, they were already inside the room they wanted.

OKAFOR EXTRACTED // T9 OPERATOR TACTICS // THREAT RESPONSE

TWO OF FOUR

A natural twenty read the whole board and it still was not enough. The lesson is the clock, not the dice: one pressure event halved the window, so bank your objective before the event phase can move the goalposts.

LOOP RUPTURES // 2 OF 4 OPERATOR TACTICS // HVT

ONE PIP

Do not put your only Initiative on the first card. A natural one killed the commander before the deck was clear and left a boat driver to solo the target. He got it to one health box. Spread the roles that lose you the game.

HVT SURVIVES // 1 HP OPERATOR TACTICS // BIG GAME HUNTS

LAST BOX

The Read is the whole hunt. Grouse mapped the vital organ, the plate seam and the trigger before a shot, banked Tempo, and that reserve token was the only reason the kill landed on the last die. Prep beats nerve.

SPECIMEN DOWN // T3 OPERATOR TACTICS // RAID RACERS

ROOFLINE

Heists are won at the core, not on the climb. Both crews threw natural ones all night. RATLINE won because the rival thief choked the contested Lift, so put your strongest Jumper on the grab, not the approach.

RATLINE EXTRACTS // T6 OPERATOR TACTICS // SKIRMISH

THE KILL BOX

A stealth grab that needs two rolls to go right will fail one of them. When the smoke scattered and the grab fumbled, the firepower splice did the math. If your plan has no backup for a blown roll, it is not a plan.

IRON TITHE 6-o

// THE WORKBENCH

The report of the week was fought over three dead relays, and I want you to build one. Not a clean sci-fi pylon. A dead one. The whole point of a signal relay on the table is that it is a tall, narrow piece of cover that two splices will both want to stand next to, which is exactly the fight DRY FIRE turned into. Mine is built from a busted home router, a deodorant cap, and the kind of plastic sprue you have already thrown away once this month.

Start with the silhouette, because the silhouette is what the table reads from across the room. A relay needs to look like it used to talk to something and stopped. That means a vertical mast, a sensor head that is now junk, and a base big enough that a 28mm operator can actually hug it for cover. I gut a dead router for the board inside, because nothing sells dead infrastructure like a real circuit board behind a cracked panel.

The failure point, and I have done this twice so you do not have to: do not glue the mast to the base before you weight the base. A relay is top-heavy by design and a light base will tip every time someone leans across the table for a measurement. Pour the weight first. Two-pence coins, washers, a blob of cheap modelling putty, whatever you have. Weight, then cure, then build up.

On the table it does real work. It is line-of-sight blocking from the waist up, so an operator behind it is in hard cover but can still shoot over a shoulder. Three of them on a centerline gives you the Crossfire layout straight out of the skirmish book without buying a single official piece, and it gives both splices something worth the Pressure token they spend contesting it. Build three. They photograph as a set and they play as a board.

// BITS // WHAT GOES IN

- **Mast:** deodorant cap or a thick marker barrel, 60 to 80mm
- **Guts:** one dead router or remote, cracked open for the board
- **Sensor head:** a bottle cap plus a lens off a broken pair of earbuds
- **Cabling:** stripped craft wire, run loose and snipped mid-air
- **Base:** 50mm round or a CD offcut, with coins for ballast
- **Texture:** sprue offcuts, sand, a torn faction decal or two

// STEPS

1. Ballast the base first. Coins and putty, then let it cure hard before anything else touches it.
2. Mount the mast dead center and check it stands on its own with a model leaned against it.
3. Cut a panel out of the mast and set the salvaged circuit board behind the gap so the guts show.
4. Cap the top with the sensor head, then run two or three wires out and snip them mid-air so it reads as cut, not finished.
5. Rubble the base with sprue and sand to tie the mast in, then hit the whole thing with a heavy wash so the dead reads as dead.
6. Last: one small faction decal, half peeled. Somebody owned this once.

VERDICT: WORTH IT. ONE EVENING, NEAR-ZERO COST, AND THREE OF THEM BUILD A WHOLE SKIRMISH BOARD. BUILT NOT BORN.

Plays straight into the centerline objectives in SKIRMISH & IRON LINE. Make the cover honest: waist-up blocking, base wide enough to hug.

// THE RECORD

One of the week's games went into a flooded London water relay to pull a maintenance chief off a contamination job. The squad called him a hostage. Everyone who works that building would have called him the pipe boss, and the difference is the whole reason the fight had a clock on it.

Relay rats are the people who keep the taps running. They work damp corridors below the waterline and they adopted the insult themselves, the way crews do. The pipe boss is their crew chief: the one who knows every valve, every override, every workaround, and the names of the families downstream. That last part matters. A pipe boss is not an asset because of what they carry. They are an asset because of what they can do to the water if you make them.

The weapon in the corridor is the purge override. It was designed as an emergency dump, a way to flush a relay's reserves into the flood channels if the supply gets contaminated. In practice whoever holds the override holds the borough, because they can choose between a clean tap and a dry one. A maintenance chief sitting on a contamination job is sitting on a live override. That is why a borough council pays a private crew to walk him out, and pays in proof, not in promises.

And the water itself runs the schedule. In a flooded zone you do not plan around patrol patterns. You plan around the tide. Tide table ops are the norm down there: the river decides when a corridor is passable and when it is a drowning hazard, so the operational tempo belongs to the water, not the threat brief. Every operator in that city checks the tide before they check the enemy.

Here is the turn for your table. When you run a flooded-relay map, do not treat the water as scenery. Give it a clock. Pick a round, tell nobody which one, and at that round the tide comes in: the low corridors flood and become impassable or cost a Flesh Wound to cross under load. Now the silent dock work that won the real game has a deadline, and the pipe boss earns his keep: he is the one model who knows which corridor floods first. Make the players decide whether to trust him before the water decides for them.

THE RIVER SETS THE TEMPO. THE THREAT BRIEF JUST THINKS IT DOES.

// THE COMMAND TABLE

1

HOLD WHAT DOES NOT NEED A GUN

DRY FIRE was won by a splice that parked on objectives instead of trading shots. When the dice go cold, points sitting on a contested marker do not jam. Read the scenario before the fight and find the objective that pays out on position alone. Stand on it. Let the other side spend the night clearing chambers.

2

A NATURAL ONE IS A DRY FIRE, NOT A DEATH

New players panic at the jam. Teach the rule plainly: a natural one is a Dry Fire, one action to clear, and that is all. The cost is tempo, not the model. The mistake is spending two more operators trying to save the one who jammed instead of clearing and moving. The chamber clears. The panic does not have to.

3

YOUR OPPONENT HOLDS THE BREACH TOKEN

Every Flesh Wound you deal hands the other player a Breach Token to spend before one of your rolls. Wounding is not free pressure, it arms them. So when you are ahead on bodies, finish a wounded operator rather than chipping a fresh one. Fewer open windows on your side is worth more than spread damage on theirs.

4

WATCH THE PRESSURE CLOCK, NOT THE TURN COUNT

The Climax fires when the Pressure Clock hits three: first operator down, both splices within 3 inches of a marker, or a failed Contact Ceiling check. You can rush that or stall it. If your scenario reward favors a late game, do not be the one who puts the first model down and starts the clock for free.

5

POSITION THE CLIMAX BEFORE IT ROLLS

In DRY FIRE the Climax rolled an exfil window with nobody carrying in the crossfire, so it did nothing. That is a free lesson. Several Climax results only help a model that is already in the right spot. If you can see the clock about to trip, get a carrier or a shooter into the place the table is most likely to reward before you roll on it.

6

BANK TEMPO FOR THE SHOT THAT MATTERS

In the solo loop, Tempo is the reserve that turns a miss into a hit. LAST BOX was killed on the final die only because Grouse held a token back instead of spending it early to feel safe. Do not burn your reserve on a throwaway roll. Hold it for the kill shot or the cross you cannot afford to fail.

7

SPREAD THE ROLE THAT LOSES THE GAME

ONE PIP put its only Initiative on the opening card and a natural one ended the commander before the deck cleared. Whatever single capability would end your run if it died first, Initiative, the only medic, the one driver, do not expose it on turn one. Build the team so no single bad die takes the whole plan with it.

// TWO CHAIRS

Grouse runs solo Big Game Hunts out of the Eurasian steppe grids. This week she took a third-generation boar that had already walked off two contractor teams, and she finished it on her last health box with the one Tempo token she had been saving all game. We caught her between contracts. She does not romanticize it.

// KOSE: People are calling that boar kill brave. You keep saying it was not.

It was not. Brave is what you call it when you did not do the prep. I read that animal for two rolls before I moved. I had the vital organ, the plate seam, and the behavioral trigger mapped before it knew I was there. The last box thing makes a good story but it was never the plan to get there.

// KOSE: So the kill happened before the shooting.

The hunt is the Read. That is the whole game. Once you know where the organ is and what sets the thing off, the dice are just paperwork. I lost priority on the first turn and it did not matter, because I had banked enough Tempo to fire first anyway. Prep buys you the turn order back.

// KOSE: That boar had an Adaptive Hide. Your first crit just vanished.

Twice. The round's first hit feeds the hide, every time. So you stop throwing your good shot first. I learned to lead with a junk shot, let the hide eat that, and then put the real one through the seam. People waste a natural six on the hide and then cry about variance. That is not variance. That is reading the card wrong.

// KOSE: You held a Tempo token nearly the whole game. That takes nerve.

It takes the opposite of nerve. Nerve spends it early so you feel safe. I sat on it because the only roll that wins the hunt is the kill shot, and I wanted insurance on that one and nothing else. Final turn, kill shot came up short by one, I rerolled with the token, and that was the animal. If I had spent it on turn one to feel better, I am boar food.

// KOSE: What do new solo players get wrong?

They rush the Read because shooting is more fun than measuring. Then they spend the whole hunt reacting. Slow down at the start. The two minutes you spend mapping the thing is the two minutes that keep you alive. The steppe does not forgive a fast plan.

// KOSE: Last one. The crawler surfaced right in your exit. How did you walk past it?

Quiet. It fixes on vibration, so I did not give it any. Crossed on a low Tactics roll, no rush, no noise, and it never oriented. Most people die on the way out because they relax once the target is down. The hunt is not over until the vehicle is live and you are in it.

// SIGNAL TRAFFIC

Is it cheating to reroll a model's first jam of the game? My group is split. // HOUSE
RULE HANNAH // FLOODED LONDON

It is not cheating, it is a different game, and a worse one for this issue. The jam is load-bearing. A natural one is a Dry Fire on purpose, so the cost of a hot gun is the chance it bites you, and half the decisions on the table come from that risk. Reroll the first jam and you have quietly told everyone that aggression is free. If your group wants a softer night, fine, but agree it before deployment and know what you traded away. My vote: keep the jam, learn to clear it, build a plan that survives one.

My skirmish games always end on the turn cap with nobody having taken the objective. Are we playing too cautious or is the cap too short? // PETROV-9 //
GORODSKIE EKHO

It is almost never the cap. The skirmish scenarios check objectives on set rounds and score position, not kills, so a game that ends scoreless is a game where both splices sat in cover waiting for a clean shot that the dice never delivered. Look at DRY FIRE this week: eight turns, six jams, and it still ended five to nothing because one side stood on the markers anyway. Stop waiting for the kill. Contest the objective on the round it checks and make the other splice come dig you out.

Cheapest way to get table-quality cover that reads as a relay yard without buying a terrain kit? // SCRAPWIFE // SALT-LINE YARDS

Read Quill's piece this issue and then raid your recycling. A relay yard is dead infrastructure: tall narrow things that used to talk and stopped. Dead routers, deodorant caps, snipped wire, a coin in the base so it does not tip. Three masts on a centerline gives you a whole skirmish board for the price of an evening and a wash. The trick is honesty in the cover. Waist-up blocking, base wide enough to actually hug. Pretty is optional. Plays right is not.

Two of my four operators die every Raid Racers run before the jump even lands. Skill issue or variance? // TWO-OF-FOUR // JAVA SCATTER

Variance is real in Raid Racers, but two losses every run is a pattern, and patterns are positioning. GRIP loss comes from physical failure under load, so the operators who die early are the ones pushing hard rolls while already hurt. Slow the wounded ones down. And look at ROOFLINE this week: the win was at the core, not the climb, so do not throw your whole crew up the convoy at once. Stagger them. Let one set the line at a lower risk and bring the grab up behind. Four jumpers diving at once is four chances to fumble into a fall.

// THE DROP

OPERATOR TACTICS // SKIRMISH

THREE DEAD RELAYS

SETUP: Three relay masts on the centerline, evenly spaced, the Crossfire layout. Two splices, opposing edges 6 inches deep. **TWIST:** Cold start. Every operator's first Shoot of the game is at minus 1 to the die. A natural one is still a Dry Fire. Guns warm up after that. **WIN:** Control objectives at the round 4, 6 and 8 checks. Most VP wins. Position scores whether or not your gun fires. **TURN CAP:** 8 rounds, or the Climax ends it early.

OPERATOR TACTICS // RPG

THE TIDE IS THE CLOCK

SETUP: A flooded relay map. The squad walks out a pipe boss who is sitting on a live purge override. Low corridors are passable at the start. **TWIST:** The GM secretly picks a round. At that round the tide comes in: low corridors flood, impassable or a Flesh Wound to cross under load. The pipe boss knows which floods first, if the squad trusts him. **WIN:** Extract the pipe boss and the contamination logs before the relay goes fully under. **TURN CAP:** The tide. Nobody at the table knows the number.

OPERATOR TACTICS // BIG GAME HUNTS

FED ON THE FIRST SHOT

SETUP: Solo kill order on a veteran specimen with an Adaptive Hide. You get The Read before you move. Map what you can. **TWIST:** The hide eats the first hit of every round, no exceptions. Lead with junk, kill with the seam. Bank Tempo for the shot that actually ends it. **WIN:** Specimen down and you reach the vehicle alive. The exit counts. The crawler fixes on vibration. **TURN CAP:** 4 rounds before the weather or a second threat closes the grid.

THE DIE DOES NOT CARE. THE PLAN HAS TO.