

Campaigns of Ozz Review

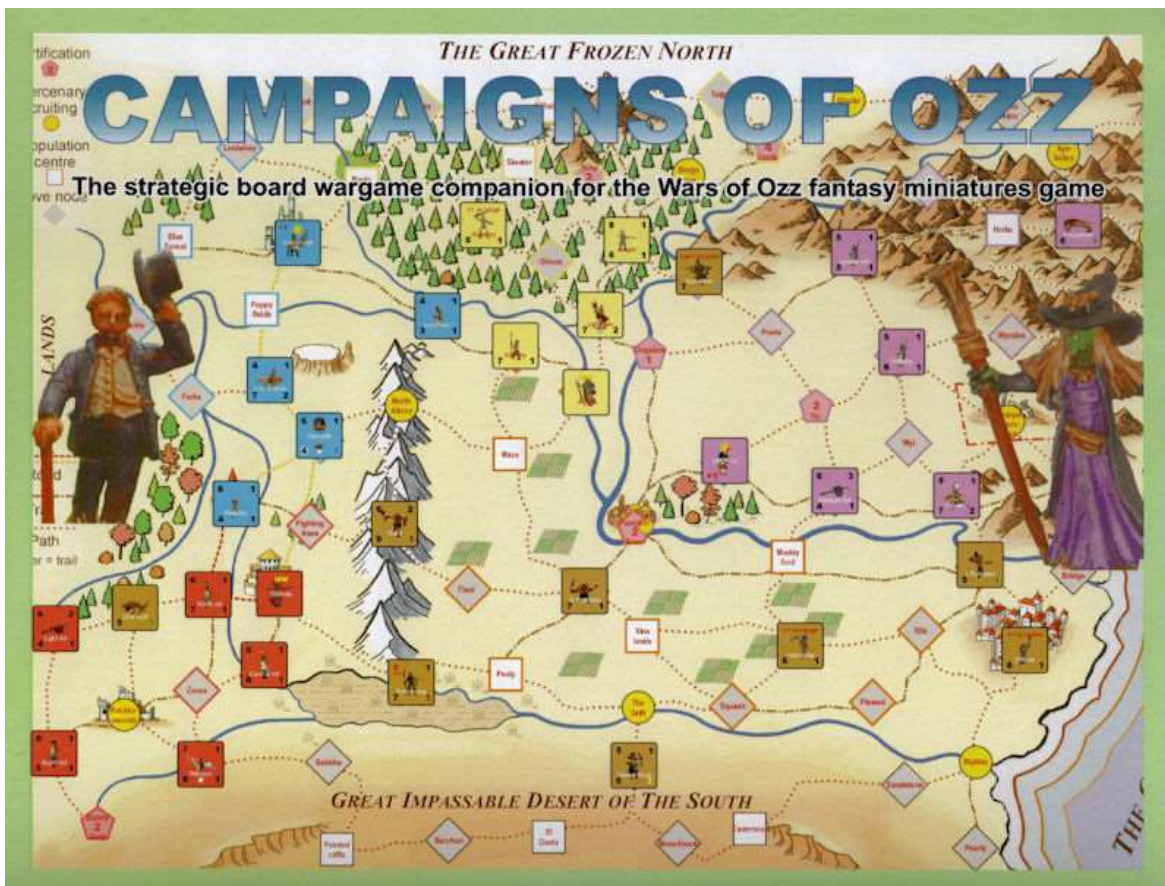
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This is a review of a game you can't buy anymore, unfortunately. *Campaigns of Ozz* was published by Fastplay Wargames in 2021. It was designed by Peter Schutze, who has quite a few good games to his credit. As you might guess from the title, it is a game about warfare in the land of Ozz, based on the novels by Frank Baum. (I imagine that the extra "z" was added for legal reasons.) The game is a companion and scenario generator for the *Wars of Ozz* miniatures game. The rules and figures for that game are available at <https://warsofozzminiatures.com/> and <http://www.warsofozz.com/>. It also has an active Facebook group.

The Land of Ozz is contested by four nations, each ruled by a wizard or witch: The Munchkins (Zoraster, the Wizard of Ozz), Quadlings (Elana, the good witch of the west), Winkies (Evora, evil witch of the east), and Gillikins (Arella, evil witch of the north). Thus, the game can be played by up to four players, although not all the nations are involved in every scenario, and in most of them the evil and good nations pair off against each other. There is also a minor, non-player power, the Land of Harvest, which is populated by King Jack and his Pumpkinheads.



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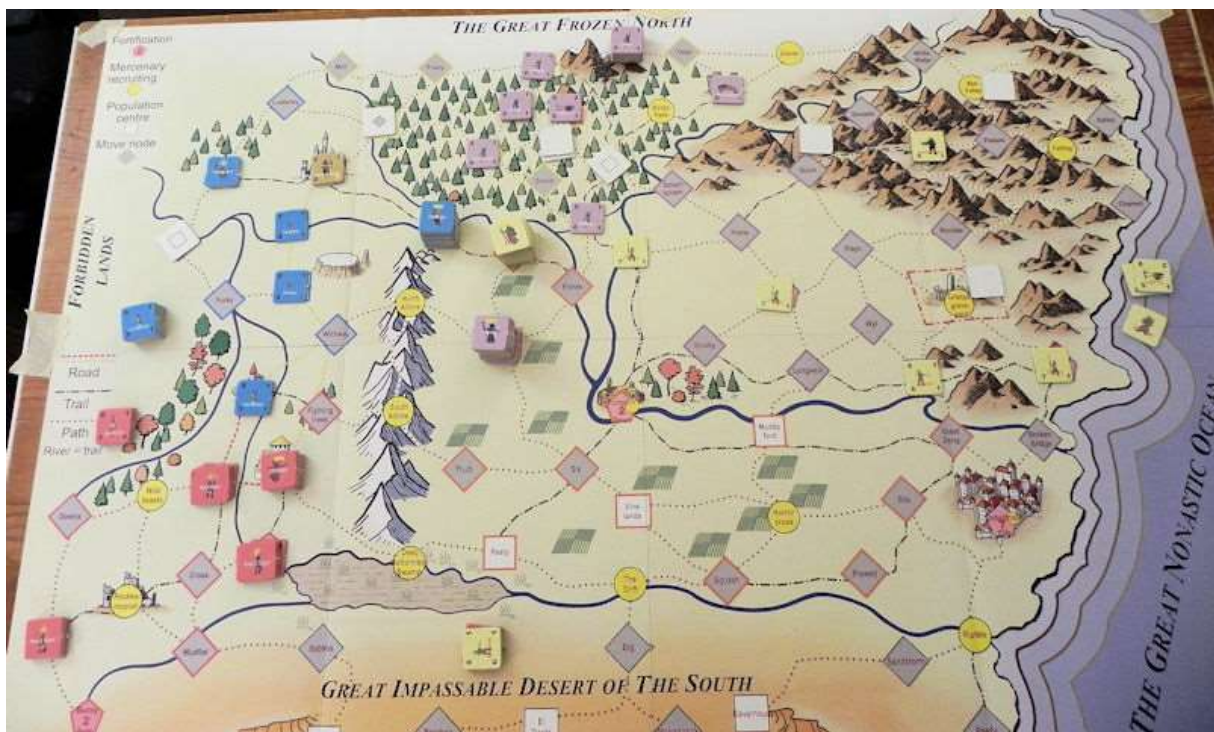
Capsule Summary

Campaigns of Ozz is a board wargame for up to four players. Units represent regiments. Technology is roughly late 17th to early 18th Century. There is a strong emphasis on the role of leaders. It uses a point-to-point strategic map. Players alternate moving units and conducting combat with one stack at a time. Combat takes place on a battleboard, using a roll-to-hit system. There is a mild amount of magic and quite a variety of fantasy troops, in addition to infantry, artillery, and cavalry. Solitaire play is not difficult.

Components

The game comes in a white bookshelf-type box with a printed outer sleeve. In side you will find:

- 280 1-inch die cut single-sided counters representing units, leaders (called Heroes), and markers.
- 34x22 inch unmounted map in four pieces.
- 24-page rulebook
- Letter-size battleboard that feels laminated
- Letter-size reference chart and turn record track
- Ten-sided die



Strategic map

The map is a colorful point-to-point depiction of Ozz. The points are divided into movement nodes, Population Centers, Fortified Centers, and Mercenary Recruitment Grounds. In each nation, one of the Fortified Centers is the Castle, or capital (for example, Emerald City). The points are linked by roads, trails, rivers, and paths, each of which has a carrying capacity for

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determining attrition. The points are color-coded to match the counters of the nations, although the Winkie and Gillikan colors are reversed.

The unit counters have solid pastel backgrounds with names and icons of the units. They have four ratings arranged around the corners. Clockwise from top left, these are fire strength, range, (tactical) movement allowance, and melee strength. Some units have noted special abilities. The movement allowance for some units is color coded to indicate its home terrain or that it is a flying unit. There are a large number of mercenary units with their own color background, which they share with the Pumpkinheads.



Sample counters: Munchkins (blue), Winkies (yellow), Quadlings (rose), Gillikins (purple), Mercenaries (gold), and markers

There are two types of Heroes (leaders). Each nation has one ruler (named above) and four generals. The Hero counters have a picture of the person, the name, and an indicator of any special ability the hero has.

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There are two sets of markers, one red and one black, for use on the battleboard. These are used to assign movement orders and to cast spells.

There are a number of terrain markers, used to change the printed terrain status of points on the map, per scenario instructions. There are also markers to indicate razed Fortified Centers.

The die cut counters have side nibs. I found that I needed to use a knife to cleanly remove them from the frame.

The rulebook uses color and is well organized. It includes examples of play and scenario instructions.

Sequence of Play

1. **Initiative Determination:** Players each roll a die, adding DRMs for having their ruler and generals on the map. Play proceeds in descending order.
2. **Action Phases:** In initiative order, players alternate moving one stack on the strategic map. All stacks containing a Hero move before any stacks without a Hero. Each stack can move a maximum of two points. After entering each point, it checks for attrition. If the stack is occupied by units of another nation (even allies!), combat ensues. The stack may always move two points, even if it experienced combat in the first one (exception: siege resolution).
3. **Siege Resolution:** Stacks that are smaller than the intrinsic strength of an unfriendly Fortified Center must stop when they enter it. They engage in combat in this phase.
4. **Recruitment:** Heroes in their own nation can try to recruit units from their force pool. Heroes on Mercenary Recruitment Grounds can try to recruit the mercenaries that are available there.
5. **Ruler Recovery:** Rulers who were eliminated in combat are placed back on the board.
6. **Victory Determination:** Check to see if victory conditions are met.

Attrition

Every time a stack moves on the strategic map, it is subject to attrition. The links between the points have different carrying capacities, with (yellow brick) roads being the best (capacity 10), paths the worst (4), and tracks and rivers in between (both 7). After each move, you roll a die, add that to the carrying capacity, and compare that to the number of units in the stack. If the adjusted die roll is less than the number of units, you have to eliminate the difference. Units moving in their own nation or in their own terrain count as half a unit, and undead units don't count at all.

Combat Resolution

There are three ways to resolve combat:

1. Simple die-rolling
2. Battleboard
3. *Wars of Ozz* miniatures game

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In the simple method, you roll the die and use that as a percentage applied to the number of units you have. That's the number of enemy units eliminated. For example, if you have 8 units and you roll a "5," 50 percent of 8 is 4. The enemy loses 4 units. The enemy player rolls to see how many units you lose. This goes on until someone retreats or runs out of units. Note that the strengths of the units involved do not matter, just the number.

The third method involves setting up a tabletop scenario using the *Wars of Ozz* rules. This is *CoO* in its role as a scenario generator for *WoO*.



Arella's Gillikans are attacking King Jack's Pumpkinheads. Note that the latter have no ranged fire ability. Both sides have "Advance" orders. Arella has cast Fireball on a Greater Pumpkin unit, which means it must be eliminated first. She has also cast Raise Dead, which gives her a skeleton unit that must be the first casualty on her side. She has left her longer-range artillery out of harm's way.

The battleboard method is the most interesting from a boardgamer's perspective. The battleboard is a grid of five rows and three columns. The columns represent the center and the two flanks of the battlefield. The players set up their units on the rows at opposite ends of the

board. Heroes may form groups of up to five units. Any units not in groups move independently. The sequence of play is:

1. **Assign movement orders:** All groups are assigned one of “Advance,” “Stand,” or “Back.” This determines what they may do in the turn. There are markers used to show these orders.
2. **Deploy spell counters:** Rulers, being the wizard or a witch, can cast spells. There are thirteen spells; each ruler has three or four at his or her command. Mercenary witches and one of the Quadling’s Heroes also can cast one randomly determined spell. You cast spells by deploying counters on the target (friendly or enemy). Spells generally apply small bonuses or penalties on the target. If a caster wants to cast that same spell on a different target, he or she must remove the counter from its current one. A few spells may be cast only once per battle.
3. **Movement and Combat:** Players alternate moving groups and participating in combat (if they choose). All groups commanded by Heroes move before any independent units. The latter move one at a time. Most units can move only one space per turn, although cavalry can move two. Units with ranged fire ability can then attack the enemy in a space within range. Those units fire back simultaneously. If a unit rolls less than or equal to its fire strength, an enemy unit is eliminated. Melee combat is similar, except the units have to be in the same space, and the melee strength is used.
4. **Retreat:** Players simultaneously decide whether to retreat. If neither does, the battle continues.

Sieges

Sieges are fought like regular battles, except that the intrinsic strength of the Fortified Center is treated as an immobile stack of the owning nation’s regular infantry units.

Recruitment

A Hero in a Population or Fortified Center in his or her own country recruits by rolling a die and receiving half that many units, drawn at random from the force pool. Certain specialist or exotic units may be recruited only at specified locations. Generals who are eliminated in combat go into the force pool and must be recruited like ordinary units.

A Hero in a Mercenary Recruitment Ground will receive one unit of the available type on a roll of 1-8. On a 9, a friendly unit is eliminated – which would be the Hero if not escorted. On a roll of 10, three irate mercenaries engage the would-be recruiter in battle.

Scenarios

There are four battleboard scenarios, which mainly serve to help the players learn how the system works. There are six strategic scenarios pitting different combinations of the four nations against one another. Players can win an instant victory by razing the enemy’s Castle. Otherwise, they get points for razing other Fortified Centers, occupying enemy Population Centers, and having units on the map at the end of the game.

How it all works

While the rules provide a solid framework for the game, there are a number of omissions and ambiguities. When I started to play the game, I kept running into questions about how one actually implements certain rules and whether certain actions were allowed. There weren't any fatal flaws, but I did have to make some reasonable interpretations about how the game works. I wrote a separate document called "Campaigns of Ozz House Rules," in which I laid out my interpretations and also inserted optional rules that I thought improved the texture of the game.

The strategic game involves careful maneuvering and sequencing your moves with an eye towards the enemy's responses and options. Because it is possible to retreat from the battleboard before the enemy gets in range of your units, it is difficult to bring an inferior force to ground. You have to arrange matters so that the enemy either has nowhere to retreat or is willing to stand despite a likely loss. While I generally don't like games that are described as "chess-like," that label is applicable here. As far as attrition goes, you can usually get away with moving stacks that are a little too large for a link's carrying capacity – but that seems to backfire at just the wrong time!

Battles can be quite bloody. Combat strengths in the 6-7 range are not uncommon. That means that a single attack can eliminate half or more of its number in enemy units. Evenly matched forces can whittle each other down to nothing. Thus, even winning a battle can leave a stack seriously depleted. The Winkies are at a particular disadvantage, because their standard infantry units are melee-only. It takes careful sequencing of movement on the battleboard to get into attack position without being wiped out by ranged fire. Heroes are crucial. A Hero with a stack of five combat units can attack together, while a leaderless collection will attack one at a time, facing return fire from all the units in a space.

Because of the lethality of combat, it's important to keep a Hero in your home country where he can recruit replacements. These, of course, must then transit to the front. A player on the offensive will find it harder and harder to keep his armies up to strength, while the one defending in his own nation can recruit right where he stands. I have not seen much opportunity to recruit mercenaries. Most of the Mercenary Recruitment Grounds are in out-of-the-way locations. Dispatching one of your precious Heroes and a small escort to such locations doesn't seem worthwhile, just to pick up another unit.

Conclusion

This is a fun, low-complexity game. The exotic location is part of that. It's certainly different from the Battle of the Bulge or Waterloo. Once you have covered the gaps in the rules, it plays pretty well. The interactive sequence of play keeps both sides involved. It's a shame that it is no longer in print.