

The Way of War – Tyranids

With the release of the new Tyranid codex, I thought I'd bring you, the good readers of KT, a one off special tactica concerning the threat of the hive fleets and how to deal with them. This will coincide almost perfectly with the release of the September edition of White Dwarf, which also concerns anti-Tyranid tactics. However, the WD article is more than likely geared towards Space Marines and Imperial Guard, and consequently probably won't be of a lot of help other than "Shoot them". Anyway, without further ado, this month's Way of War proudly presents... Tyranids!

What's New, Tyranid?

To start off, I'm going to take a few paragraphs to explain some of the major changes that have happened to the Tyranids with the arrival of the new codex. Not all of the changes are bad – in fact, some of them are very good for Tau indeed. Here we go:

- 1) "Shoot the Big Ones" is gone – in 4th edition, all armies are affected by it equally, so Tyranids don't need it any more.
- 2) The Broodlord – possibly a throwback to the old days of the Genestealer Patriarch, makes it's debut as a HQ choice. More on this guy later.
- 3) Creatures under the effects of synapse are now immune to instant death. Whilst this doesn't make much different to the Hive Tyrant and the Carnifex, it does mean you can't spontaneously kill a warrior if you have nothing else for your broadsides to do.
- 4) It is no longer possible to have two winged Tyrants in a Tyranid army – This comes as a great relief! However...
- 5) Genestealers now have *Fleet*.
- 6) Ravens get Deep strike, as do Lictors, replacing the Hidden Deployment rule (making Advanced Sensors on battlesuits useless)
- 7) Without Number is now a mainstream gaunt rule, rather than just a feature of Mycetic Assault Armies.
- 8) Warp Field now gives an Invulnerable save!
- 9) Tyranids no longer have "Special Characters", although a Carnifex can now be build to be "Old One Eye".

These are the more significant changes of a long list (for example, for the first time since 3rd ed, Biovores can claim table quarters). In any case, several old problems facing Tau players have been swept away, and replaced with other ones.

The Swarm

Tyranid armies, of course, come in swarms. As a Tau player, you should expect to be facing off against a large number of assorted Gaunts, Gargoyles and Genestealers all kept in check by Warriors, and ultimately, a Hive Tyrant. The main purpose of a Swarm army is to close the gap between armies without caring how many models get killed on the way, in the belief that there will be enough left come assault to kill the opponent. Unfortunately, with Tau it is normally the case that if more than 5 models reach your lines, you have a good chance of being broken in assault sooner or later.

There are a few different ways you can get around the swarm problem, most tried and tested:

- 1) Take a lot of weapons with high rate of fire and shoot as much as you can. This works reasonably well, but a few missed shots (all too likely given the ballistic skill of the Tau) and a flood of beasts can come swarming into your battle line.
- 2) Mount everything you can in a Devilfish, and take battlesuits for everything else. This, in theory at least, works wonders – most Tyranids can't even hope to dent the armour of a transport, and you can leisurely shoot at things knowing that when the Tyranids do get close, you can jump into a transport and zip away to safety. In practice, the additional cost of a Devilfish could leave your army even more greatly outnumbered by Tyranids, and you have to be just as careful during the game, if not more so, to avoid being pinned in against the board edge and Monstrous Creatures.
- 3) Normally, a mix of a strong firebase and a good mobile element should help you a lot against a Tyranid army.

Now, a few big points to note about a swarm army - although Railguns can be good, they will not get that much use against a swarm. Against all Tyranids, I strongly advise that you forget about Broadside Battlesuits and go for Hammerhead Gunships instead. The template blast of the tank-Railgun is far more use against Tyranids. Also, Fusion Blasters are completely out of the question – you are getting far too close to the Tyranids to be firing a single shot weapon that cannot instant kill a warrior any more. Similarly, the Flamer (whilst a fair choice on paper) is not a good choice because the template is only 8" long.

Tau have a distinct advantage over other armies because their basic troops are cheap and can start shooting the enemy 6" before the core troops of other armies. This allows you to thin the numbers of a swarm before they get close enough to do anything extremely nasty.

Weapons which cause pinning (the carbine) are next to useless against a swarm army, as the Tyranids are fearless as long as they are within Synapse range, and even then a lot of the bigger Tyranids have leadership 10.

The keystone in a swarm army's plans is the speed of it's troops – nearly all Tyranid ground troops have the Fleet special rule, meaning they can potentially assault you from 18" away! This means you have to be extra careful using weapons like burst cannons, and on a small board you will mostly likely get jammed in a corner at some point. For this reason, often it is a good idea to split your army into two forces, about 24-30" apart. That way, if one half of your army gets assaulted by the main bulk of the army, your other half will be able to return fire and then make a hasty redeployment at the other end of the board.

[Author's note: Whilst writing this, an untested idea comes to mind – would a squad of pathfinders with rail rifles make the perfect Big Tyranid hunting unit? In theory, this checks out – They have a transport to get them out of the way of smaller Tyranids, they have rail rifles to take out bigger ones...]

The “Big” Army

It is now possible (in games of 1500pts or more) to take Carnifexes costing 115pts or less as ELITES choices. This is truly scary. For those of you who have read WD August edition in Britain, it is entirely possible to create a 1500pt army consisting of 6 Carnifexes and 2 Hive Tyrants (accompanied by 6 ripper bases to make up the troops selections). It is against this kind of army that I would advocate the use of Broadsides rather than Hammerheads, and Plasma Rifles for the Crisis Suits. Fire Warriors won't help much outside mass firepower against this kind of army.

Fortunately, this kind of army is very slow, with all models except the obligatory flying Hive Tyrant stomping along at no more than 6” a turn. You should be able to whittle down the not very large numbers without too much problem, unless you have really bad luck.

Variant Tyranid Tactics

- 1) Genestealer Rush – The Broodlord can take a retinue of Genestealers, and they can Infiltrate. This can be disastrous for your army if it is not managed correctly. Firstly, it is important to remember that more units other than the Genestealer squads exist on the table, although the squad with the Broodlord will represent a considerable investment of points (since more than likely they will have extended carapace, giving them a 4+ armour save. If you can move your units out of 12” charge range, do so (If joined by a Broodlord, Genestealers cannot use Fleet). Otherwise, move the doomed squad as close as possible and rapid fire – the resultant carnage may well win back the points invested in the unit that is about to die (especially since the Genestealers will cost about 20 points each – you only need to kill 6 to make back the points for 12 fire warriors!)
- 2) Diversionary Tactics – The use of Deep Strikers (Ravens and Lictors) to stall your army until the main force gets to you. This can be deadly, but not unmanageable. Pack your squads together to make sure nothing can deep strike in the middle of it to sort out the problem of Ravens. For Lictors, merely spread out your troops in forests you are near – the Lictor must be placed in a terrain feature: if it cannot be placed, it is destroyed. Remember, in the new rules a Lictor can assault on the turn it deep strikes, so if your opponent is using one (you are allowed to look at his army list at any time remember) you should take the necessary precautions in order to ensure the survival of your troops.

Tyranid Overview

HQ

Hive Tyrant: Big, Mean and able to rip through troops and tanks alike. Sometimes comes with wings, which makes it hard to deal with in a calm manner. No matter what the Tyrant is equipped with, it is able to tear through your whole army with ease. By far the easiest way to get rid of one is to shoot it, preferably with your heavier weaponry (Railguns, Rail Rifles, Kroot Guns (Strength 7!) Ion Cannons, Plasma Rifles) but also remember that you can try and weigh it down with weight of fire from Fire Warriors (They hit on 4's wound on 5's most of the time against Tyrants, so a

squad of 12 will, on average, cause about 1-2 wounding hits from a single volley of 12 shots.) They are able to make smaller Tyranids not run away, so if you kill the Hive Tyrant, there's a chance the smaller beasts will run for it.

Tyrant Guard: Annoying, since they protect the Hive Tyrant from all the big things you are throwing at it – 2 wounds and toughness 6 means they are effectively another 4 wounds for the Hive Tyrant. Ouch. Use the same tactics for killing them as for the Tyrant. A Unit of Hive Tyrant and Guard May be too much for the earlier stages of the game, so only shoot them when you have to; avoid them the rest of the time.

Broodlord: New, Big and mean. Has the ability to slaughter your troops easily, but this comes at a cost of about 80-90 points. Can Infiltrate, which is a bit harsh for Tau. Can also come with a Genestealer retinue. Also Harsh. Good news: is Toughness 5 with a 4+ save normally – fodder for Missile Pods and Railgun Submunitions. These are the recommended way to deal with a Broodlord, but the Ion Cannon and Plasma Rifle work well too, especially if the Broodlord took extended carapace.

Warriors: Are very customisable, now hard to kill, since each wound must be taken separately, and (of course) able to shred your battle line. Unlike in the last incarnation of the Tyranid codex, the best way to deal with Warriors now is through weight of fire or missile pods, rather than going for the instant kill (now impossible). Tyranid Warriors are decent shots if so upgraded, But even the longest ranged weapon Warriors have in any number is 24" in range, and that's a template with AP 5. You should be able to outshoot them no problem.

Lictors: Probably will remain a rare choice for Tyranid Commanders due to their high cost and low payback value, but nevertheless one may be included as a distraction whilst the rest of the swarm runs closer. By making sure all of the terrain pieces near your troops are either more than 6" away or occupied, you eliminate the threat of a Lictor popping up where you don't want it. Otherwise, Pulse Rifle Fire will take care of it with ease – heavier fire won't be as effective, given the cover save a Lictor always gets. I wouldn't advocate taking a flamer unless your opponent plays you with a Lictor regularly.

Genestealers: Genestealers are how they have always been – deadly, but somewhat fragile. They can now be given the Scouts special rule, as well as extended carapace, but doing anything to them bumps up the points cost to astronomical levels. The unit size means they are often a perfect candidate for the attentions of a Hammerhead Submunitions blast, or Missile Pod fire.

Gaunts (Including Hormagaunts): Again, are as normal, with the exception of the Without Number Rule, which basically makes cheap Gaunts more expensive in return for allowing them to come back onto the table when they've been destroyed. You keep getting victory points, so it's a handy way to get a hundred more points before the game ends. All Gaunts are easily overwhelmed by any kind of shooting. Watch out for Hormagaunts; they assault 12". Gaunts have a low leadership, and their high speed often means they will either run out of synapse range early on, or they will be kept back so the synapse beasts don't fall behind. Play on either of these mistakes, since they both slow the army down a lot.

Rippers: Being swarms, they have a lot of wounds and can tie up units in combat to stall your army whilst the main line approaches. Kill them early (a Submunitions round should do the trick; it causes double wounds)

Ravens: Can Deep Strike, shoot reasonably with weapons with a large number of shots (although no AP to speak of) and They hold up well in assaults. They have poor armour though, and serve as little more than a distraction. They are not fearless or synaptic, so feel free to try and make them flee or get pinned if you really want.

Gargoyles: Think Flying Gaunts, and you have Gargoyles exactly. They cost quite a lot as far as Tyranids are concerned, so don't expect to see them much. When you do see them, kill them before they get to your battle line and let the other Tyranids have free reign of the board. Any kind of Fire will work.

Spore Mine Clusters: New to the Tyranids, the Spore Mine Clusters act like normal spore mines, but with none of the points of a Biovore attached. Treat them the same – they may be used to hamper your movement somewhat. There are three kinds of mines for you to look out for:

- 1) Toxin Spores are AP 4, and always wound on a 4+ - these are the worst against Fire Warriors
- 2) Frag Spores are S 4 AP 5, and are the cheapest spore mine available to Tyranids. I wouldn't expect to see them, but you never know.
- 3) Bio Acid Spores are S 3 AP 3, and so can go through the armour of your battlesuits. Dangerous, but the low strength and high point cost (15 per mine) makes these a risky choice.

The best way to deal with spore mines is to shoot them with something that would have no effect on the rest of the Tyranid army that is at least 6" away from the mine. However, random mine movement means you can sometimes safely ignore spore mines. It's up to you.

Heavy Support

Zoanthropes: Are psychic nasties with a 2+ save, 6+ invulnerable save and (usually) Warp Blast, an attack that can take out anything, either in a S 5 AP 3 blast or a S 10 AP 2 single shot. Either weight of fire or plasma rifles will help you most against a Zoanthrope. In the new rules, however, it is unlikely you will see them for a while – most people will be too busy with the assault elements of the army. The Zoanthrope cannot claim table quarters, so if you really see no major threat you can ignore it.

Biovore: The Biovore (now complete with a 6+ armour save and the ability to claim table quarters) will often be found hiding behind a rock spewing mines onto the table. By far the easiest way to get rid of a Biovore is infiltrating or deep striking stealth teams, although drone squadrons are better. Biovores do not suffer from synapse (or lack thereof) but do only have leadership 5 – If you kill one Biovore, it is likely the others will start loping for the safety of the table edge. In the new rules, Biovores are deployed as a single unit.

Carnifex: The Carnifex is a monstrous unit, normally boasting T6, W3 and a 3+ Save, but can go up to T7, W4 and 2+ save! Also, in the new rules it can regenerate the wounds you cause on it, can get an astonishing amount of attacks in close combat (up

to 10 strength 10 attacks!), ignores armour saves and is almost impossible to kill when trying to deal with an army that is with it. No fear though – Tau are the one race fortunate enough to be able to wound a Carnifex with basic weaponry. If the opponent is using a Carnifex without extended carapace, your best bet by far is the Ion Cannon – mostly wounding on 4's, ignoring armour saves. Otherwise (if carapace is taken) mass fire and/or plasma rifles and rail rifles will be needed. The Carnifex is slow, so don't worry about it getting to you – if it does, there is a good chance that in the long run the game is already over. Watch out for lists with 6 Carnifexes – they will need specialist equipment (lots of Railguns) to dispatch safely. When dealing with this army, Broadsides with shield generators or else Hammerheads with Ion cannons are recommended (The best thing about a Hammerhead is that it can only be hit on a 6 in combat.)

Well, that's about it – remember, targeting priority as normal, with Genestealers first if they infiltrated, or the most threatening looking model at the present time. Watch out for diversions, and try to stay mobile. I will leave you with a small list of Unit choices you should consider:

HQ: Commander (Shas'O) with Plasma Rifle and Missile Pod

Elites: Crisis Teams with Missile Pods, Stealth Teams

Troops: Fire Warriors

Fast Attack: Possibly Pathfinders, otherwise perhaps a Drone Squadron in case of Biovores

Heavy Support: Hammerheads with Railguns for a swarm, Ion Cannons for a lot of large creatures. Broadsides only if confronted by lots of big creatures.

Once again, I can't stress how important it is that I get feedback from you guys – your input is important, as it tells me what kind of things you want me to cover, and what improvements I can make to my writing style. Drop me a line in a PM or start a thread in Ar'Tol discussions if you want to get in touch with me, or email omegathegreen@hotmail.com.

Until next time, have fun squishing bugs!