# Warning Order

Blitzkrieg Commander

Warmaster has been one of the best miniatures games to come along over the last few years. Mass combat along with a good, but simple command and control system worked well. Now, a new set of rules for World War II has taken this concept to the next level.

Blitzkrieg Commander is a set of miniatures rules based upon the Warmaster system. As you shall see, several of the concepts have been slightly modified, but if you play Warmaster you can quickly pick up on this set of rules. In Warmaster each unit is three stands, but in BC (Blitzkrieg Commander) each unit is one stand or vehicle. This takes a little bit of getting used to, but is no big problem.

The rulebook is a little larger than the standard 8 x11 size and is done very well. There are quite a few color pictures spread throughout the rules, which certainly helps sell the idea to gamers. The rules only take up a small part of the book, with the rest being a great set of army lists covering everything from Finland to the Japanese in Manchuria! Each unit has a points value, stats, and max./min. limits, which is a good, artificial way to prevent gamers from creating armies of all Tiger tanks.
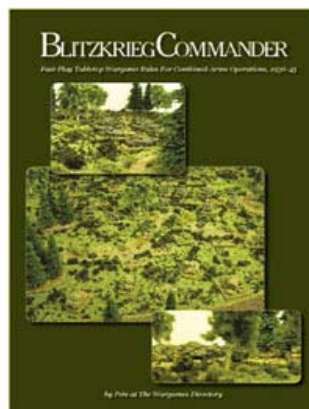
I especially liked the scenarios and the campaign system. Although only a small section of the book, they have some great ideas.

Basically, each side has a number of command stands that try to issue orders each turn. On average, you need an 8 or less on two dice to be successful in issuing an order. A successful order lets a group of units move or fire. Then, you can issue a second order, but there's modifiers for range, second order, etc…, so a unit could move or fire multiple times in a turn. If the command roll fails, then you move to another command unit or until your overall commander fails.

Naturally, this will involve luck, so if you blow a few command rolls your army could be sitting around while your opponent outmaneuvers and pounds you into the dirt. However, I think it's a great system to easily simulate command and control on the tabletop. The most important thing is that it works.

Again, combat is very similar to Warmaster, with each unit rolling a number of D6s, followed by saving throws. If you score a certain number of hits you can knock a unit out.

There are rules for engineering, mines, bridge crossings, artillery, and airstrikes. I especially like the optional rule for recon units as they can play an integral part of the battle.

Overall, the rules are well worth the money and a chance to try operational combat with a new system that will surprise many with it's elegance.

For a battle report with these rules and an interview with the author, go to page 10.

Inside this issue:

Special points of interest:

- *Blitzkrieg Commander Review & playtest*
- *Interview with Blitzkrieg Commander author Pete Jones.*
- *Several board game reviews*
- *Battle for Empire scenario replay*
- *TSATF scenario replay.*

Dervish Attack!

Battles for Empire Scenario Replay

This is a fictional scenario set in early 1884, where the Mahdi has proclaimed a jihad to expel the Egyptians from the Sudan. This was our second game using the Battles For Empire rules and we would be using a lot of figs, so there was general excitement to trying this scenario.

The scenario assumes that an Egyptian force stationed at a local village and fort would march out on a punitive expedition against the local tribes. However, halfway down a pass their scouts came upon a large Mahdist force waiting in ambush. Not wanting to be caught out in the open, the Egyptian commander decides the better part of valor is to fall back to the village and the fort as fast as possible! This is where the scenario begins.

Order of Battle

Egyptians

2 units of Egyptian infantry

2 units of slavers/local natives

1 unit of Egyptian gendarmes

1 unit of Sudanese infantry

2 units of Egyptian cavalry

1 artillery battery with 2 Krupp guns

3 officers

Mahdists

4 units of cavalry

2 rifle armed units

10 Dervish infantry units

6 units of Fuzzy-Wuzzies

4 officers

Two infantry units were left as a garrison at the fort and the village when the game begins. The remainder of the Egyptian force is in column heading back to the village while the Mahdist forces started at the end of the table.

The first few turns saw the Egyptians trying to get back to the village and fort with the Mahdists in close pursuit. The nature of the movement system ensured that the natives would spread out.
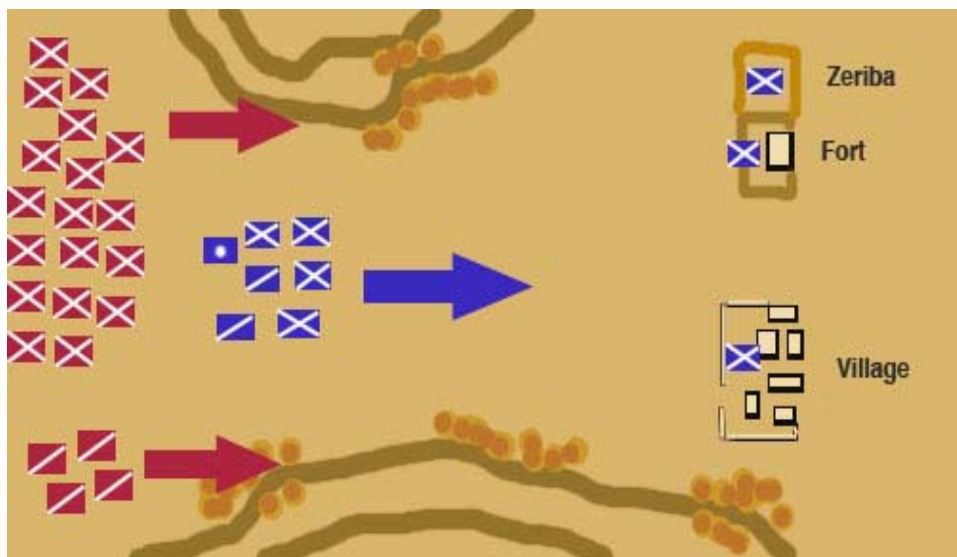
Defense of the Village

Most of the Egyptian infantry got back to the village about one turn before the first Dervish unit tried to close into hand to hand combat. The Egyptian cavalry wasn't so lucky and had to turn to face their pursuers. They drove of the first two units of Dervish cavalry, but then one of their units was hit in the flank. After three turns

of hand to hand combat and countercharges, the Egyptian cavalry was destroyed. However, they had destroyed two Dervish cavalry units, seriously damaged two others, and had given the Egyptian infantry time to reinforce the side walls.

The Egyptians fired several volleys into the Dervish and Fuzzy Wuzzy masses that crowded the approaches

to the village. The Mahdist players pinned the unit in the fort and the zeriba, which kept it from reinforcing the village.

By the sixth turn the Egyptians were still holding the village and all attempts by the Mahdists to attack the village had been repulsed. The Egyptians were spread thin, but were still holding. A few more turns of steady volleys and the game could be won.

Dervish Attack! (cont.)

However, the true weight of the attack was only now developing. The Fuzzy Wuzzies began to maneuver around the side of the village and tried to carry the wall and the rear most buildings, but were pushed back in hand to hand fighting.

Two Dervish units reached the walls, but were again pushed back by the Egyptian defenders, while the Krupp guns poured a murderous fire into the mass of attackers. Three Mahdist units either disintegrated or routed away, but more came up to take their place.

By turn 8 the Mahdists still had not gained entrance into the village and were taking appalling casualties from the volleys of the Egyptian defenders. Then came the break the Mahdist players were looking for and the real reason why gamers love to play the natives. When things go your way, there's nothing quite like slaughtering hi-tech opponents!

A Dervish unit reached the Krupp gun battery and the defensive fire caused no casualties! The Dervish unit overran the battery and opened up a hole into which the remainder of the Dervish units maneuvered to get into.

Turn 10 saw desperate fighting as several more units hit the walls at the same time. A bad movement roll by one Egyptian unit made it fall back into the village and the Dervishes poured in. By turn 11 the Egyptians were fighting back to back in the center of the village and surrounded on three sides. The end was not long in coming. Two failed counterattacks left most of the defenders exposed and they were overwhelmed.

We assumed that the remaining unit in the fort would fight for a few turns, but outnumbered 12:1 they would eventually surrender, the officers would be executed and the rest would join the Mahdi.
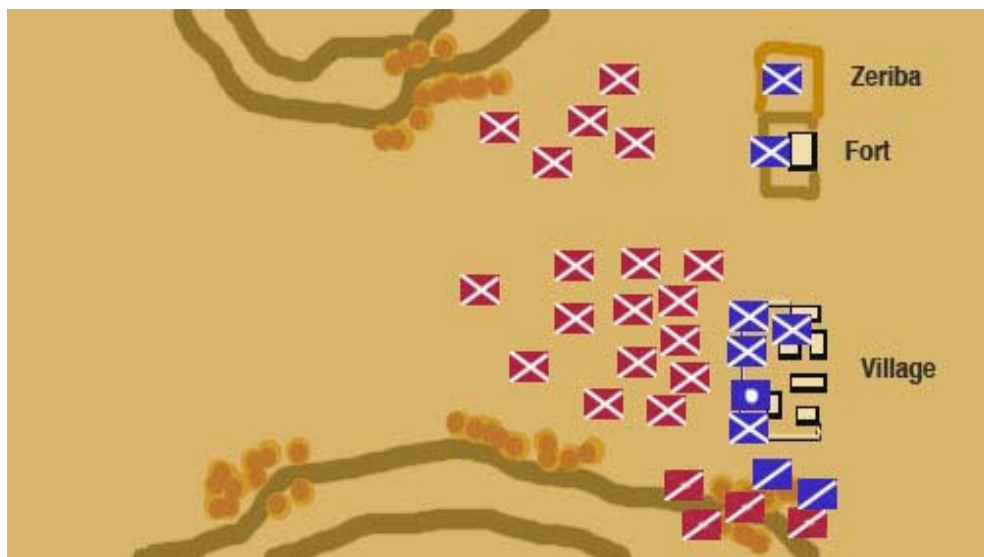
Final thoughts

What I like about this game system is that you really get a sense of native masses moving forward in a coordinated, but not organized mass. The movement charts mean that units move at different speeds, so it looks visually impressive.

I also like playing with the non-British forces. I think it adds a lot of flavor to colonial gaming by including the native allies and askaris. In our game the slavers were awful troops and it finally came up to them to save the day and they could not.

We use 15mm, but have 24 figure units on 25mm bases. Yes, this is a lot of painting, but it looks great on the tabletop. The cavalry units are 16 figs each and there are 4 crew for each gun stand.

I have created a fortified city and we may do a siege and a ladder assault the next time. I'm also beginning to do British units and hope to start a fictional campaign at some point in the future.

Again, if you're looking for a set of operational level colonial rules that give the feel of massed combat, BFE is for you.

Fortress Berlin

Against The Odds is a relatively new game company, focusing on desperate battles throughout military history. Their format is similar to the old Strategy & Tactics, where there is a magazine with a game in each issue. The Battle for Berlin in 1945 has always fascinated me and I have read several books on the subject, so when this game became available in the deluxe format (boxed with a counter tray) I ordered it.

The first thing you notice when opening the game is the stunning map of the city. The artwork is in a grayish blue, with the urban areas in a darker gray. Every bridge, block, park, etc…, is accurately depicted on the map. After reading several accounts of the actual battle, it was great to see the actual landmarks and you can see why the Soviets had such a hard time seizing the city.

There are two counter sheets and overall they are well done. Once you figure out the unit designations the setup goes much faster. I think the Soviets blend in a little too much with each other and in some street fighting you can get confused about who's units are who's. Units are rated for firepower, protection, movement, and morale. Each unit has a maneuver side and a combat side, with most units being brigades and divisions on the Soviet side and battalions on the German side.
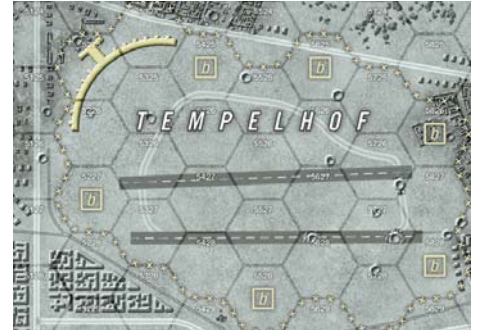
The magazine is excellent, with half of the issue dealing with the overall battle. The rules are not too hard to digest, with the game charts in the center of the magazine. My only complaint is that there weren't enough examples of play throughout the rules. There are rules and charts to run

the game solitaire, with the player taking the German side. There are also two, three, and four player variants which sound like they would be a lot of fun to try. There will also be a variant on Operation Eclipse, the Allied airborne assault on Berlin that was planned, but never happened. It will appear in an issue of Paper Wars.

So, how does the game play? Set up is long, with specific units from a variety of formations all over the city for the Germans. The German player will need to take some time setting up his Volkstrum forces and trying to come up with a strategy to cover every avenue of approach. The game opens on the first two turns with most of the German 56th corps racing to get inside of the city, while the Russians start to probe the outer defenses. The five divisions of this corps are your primary fighting force and must rush from sector to threatened sector, fighting off the Russian hordes.

Combat takes some getting used to, but it works. Basically, you decide whether it is a bombardment, mixed bombardment, direct fire, or close assault. You add and subtract various strengths, then cross index that with the unit's and the hex's protection factor. This gets you a letter that corresponds on a lower table, where you roll two dice and get a result. As I stated, it takes getting used to. Combat is pretty bloody (as in the actual bat-

tle) and units disappear rather quickly.

By turn 4 most of the Russian forces

are on the board and trying to crack the strongpoint perimeter that surrounds the city. Slowly and surely, day by day, the strongpoints fall, despite German coun-

terattacks. Finally, there is a breakthrough and the Russian tide floods into the city.

The battle then revolves around the major German combat units trying to hold the bridges and inner city buildings which almost form an island in the middle of the city. Halfway through the game both sides have suffered huge casualties and the Russians are infiltrating through the urban areas. At some point, unless the German player(s) are very good, there will be a battle for the inner ring, with fighting focused on the Reichstag, the Chancellory, and the defense ministries. Each side gets victory points for eliminating enemy units, plus the Germans get extra points for how long Hitler survives and the Reichstag holds out.

Overall, this is a desperate battle. The full game could take 8-12 hours, depending on speed of play. Although the combat system is kind of clunky, it does seem to generate accurate results. The game faithfully recreates the actual battle. All of the famous units are there, from the Nordland SS to the Soviet Third Shock Army, the order of battle is pretty accurate. The giant flak towers, using the U-bahn for movement under the city, the Hitler Youth holding the Havel bridges, etc…, are all there to be gamed.

Highly recommended for anyone with an interest to the end of World War 2.

Paper Wars #55 has an exciting variant for the ATO Fortress Berlin game called On to Berlin! The magazine has extra rules, about 80 additional counters, and there is a fictional account of the battle.

The scenario assumes that Hitler was killed by a Russian airstrike while returning from a conference. The German High Command is split and the Allies see their chance to end the war in one bold stroke. The plan is to drop five airborne divisions on Berlin and seize the government before German forces can be redeployed.

Unlike Fortress Berlin, most of the German forces are unprepared for the attack and the main line of perimeter fortifications are unmanned. The Allied player gets plenty of airstrikes and from personal experience, use some on the flak towers on the first turn or your drops will

be scattered all over the place!

Three of the airborne divisions drop on the first turn, while the remaining two are assumed to be seizing objectives off board and they will enter later as reinforcements. The key is to seize an airfield quickly so that the British 52nd Airlanding Division can be flown in to support the attack. The Germans spend most of the first few turns reorganizing to meet the threats and to start receiving the main combat units from the 56th Panzer Corps.

For the Allied player, you must seize the airfields, hold them against counterattacks, and start making inroads into the city as quickly as possible, before the defense gets organized. To say that this is a tall order would be an understatement. The number of bridges and crossing points into the city are generally covered and the German artillery starts pounding your advancing units, so getting

into the heart of the city will not be easy.

Once the main German combat units come into the city, advances are measured in single hexes gained and there is plenty of heavy fighting near the ministry buildings. My first playtest went down to the wire with a narrow Allied victory and you could replay this game twenty times and get twenty different battles. Both sides have a huge number of options regarding units, defensive positions, counterattacks, etc… .

Overall, this is a great variant and it helps that it was professionally done. Both this and Fortress Berlin are worth the cost of the games.

Wings of War

There is a huge movement in wargaming currently, with a number of high quality, card driven games appearing. Wings of War is no exception. The game simulates WW1 air combat and has quality components, but is it fun to play?

The answer would have to be yes. In the basic set you get the rules, about twenty aircraft cards, four sets of maneuvers, and five aircraft flight control cards. I do have some problems with the mix of planes, only four maneuver decks, but the game can be played with five players? Anyway, the cards are well done and the rules can be read with

play beginning in about five minutes.

Each player chooses three maneuver cards, then lays them out on his control card. Each side then reveals their maneuvers, moves their planes, and conducts combat. Quick, simple, and effective. For damage you draw a number of cards which give a number of hits, ranging from 0 to 5. When a plane equals their damage level it is shot down.

There are optional rules to use some of the special features on the damage cards such as jamming, smoking, etc…, and it adds just a tad bit of complexity.

Overall, I think that this is a good game and I stress the word game. It is not a simulation of actual WW1 air combat and there is no altitude used in the game. However, it is fun and can be used to introduce new gamers to the subject or to the wargaming hobby.

The company appears to have plans for additional supplements and there are already several sites on the web that offer extra cards, rules, and aircraft. Overall, for around $30 it's pretty good value.

Fighting Withdrawal

As we've mentioned before, The Sword and the Flame is one of our favorite periods. It's strange that we don't expand our forces much or get into other areas of colonial warfare, but we do love to play this game!

This scenario has seen a joint British and Indian force get wiped out about twenty miles north of the board. The remnants are streaming back and plan to evacuate the pass and fall back to friendly territory. There are several Indian units garrisoning a village that has been used as a forward supply base that will have to be evacuated as well.

The order of battle is as follows:

Indian Garrison

2 units of infantry

1 machine gun

2 officers

British Force

2 units of infantry

2 units of cavalry

1 artillery piece

2 officers

Pathans

5 units with rifles

4 units with spears and swords

2 units of cavalry

The British force began at one end of the table and needed to meet up with the Indian garrison, then both forces needed

to withdraw down the pass at the end of the board and to safety. The Pathans were split into two groups and decided to try to delay the British force while seizing the village.

The Indians set up a good defense as seen in the above picture and were confident that they could hold the Pathans.
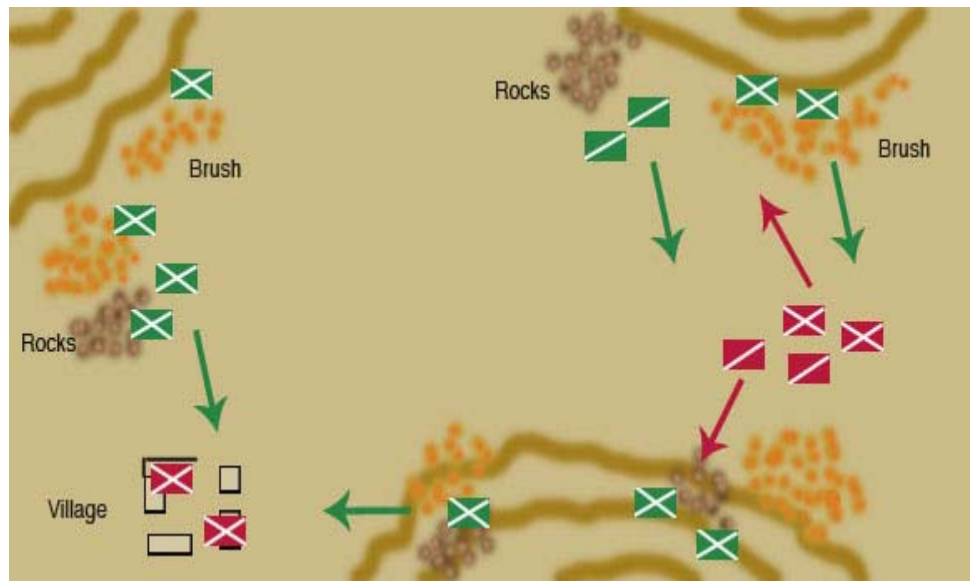
The First Attacks

The first few turns were spent by the Pathans getting into position to launch their attacks. The British had some bad die rolls for movement, so they're force was only about halfway to where it should have been. The Pathans couldn't have hoped for any better and by turn 4 began to probe the village defenses.

The Indian garrison commander decided

to use a unit to move forward and launch a spoiling attack. He got more than he bargained for when about four units of Pathans started advancing his way. The first shot felled the Indian sergeant

and the rest barely made it back to the village walls in time.

The Pathans were now ready to launch their main attacks and try to seize the village. The delaying force moved into position as well.

Fighting Withdrawal (cont.)

Now the main event began. Two units attacked the Brtiish force while a third set up on some hills to provide flanking fire. The Pathan cavalry tried to charge but failed twice. The British responded by putting one unit into open order and the second in open order as a reserve behind it.

The two British cavalry units countercharged and defeated one of the Pathan horse units and crushed an infantry unit. Meanwhile, the two British infantry units kept up accurate and deadly fire to their front. The Pathans did get a few charges that made contact, but they were defeated in hand to hand combat and driven off.

The Pathan attacks did serve their purpose in that the British force was now strung out, disorganized, had casualties to attend to, and was several turns from reaching the village.

This gave the Pathans their chance to seize the village with the main force. A sharp firefight broke out and then one of the new TSATF event cards was played, resulting in the Indian machine gun jamming!

After several attempts to reach the village walls the Pathans finally got into hand to hand combat. They pushed through the village entrance and started a melee with the troops holding the right side of the village. Both sides suffered serious casualties, but the Indians were hanging on.

Then, a new hidden Pathan unit burst out of the hills and charged for the large building in the village. Good musketry rolls for the Indians blunted this attack, but by now they were fighting back to back in the village.

Fortunately, an Indian sergeant killed several by himself and the Pathans broke, fleeing the village. The two Indian units were down to below 50% strength and just barely held, so the game was called as a British victory.
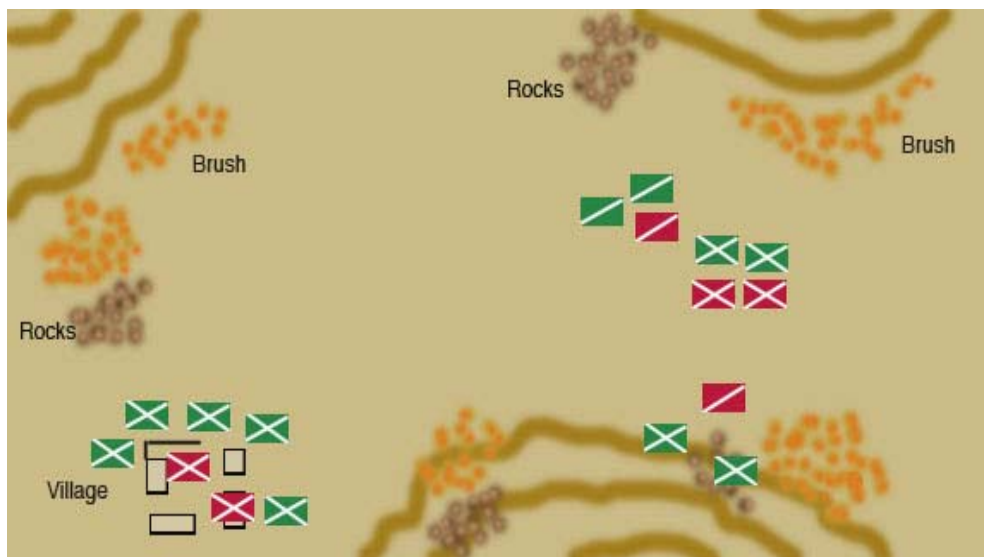
Final Thoughts

I've played TSATF for about 15 years and have only had one really bad game. This one, as usual, was pretty fun.

The Pathans had a good plan and it could have succeeded. Certainly, the event cards that plagued the British this game (there were others besides the machine

gun jamming) gave the Pathans a good chance to win.

Unfortunately for the Pathans they had to charge the British infantry units and failed several times, leaving themselves exposed to the British rifle fire, which did some serious damage.

All in all, it was a well played and close fought game. We really need to expand our terrain and our forces for this era, but as I've said before, we suffer from "Gamer's ADD" and can't focus on anything for more than two weeks at a time. We will return to the Northwest Frontier again!

Drive on Stalingrad by Decision Games

I love East Front operational level combat and I had read good things about this game. True, the first version from SPI years ago was something of a mess, resulting in a lot of work for not much satisfaction. However, the word was that this game, while a bit plain looking, was pretty good.

When you first open the box, the first thing that strikes you is that the maps are from the 70's and 80's. The counters aren't that much more impressive and the rules are done in the old "case" style. I swore that I had gone back in time to the glory days of Avalon Hill and SPI!

While reading the rules the first thing you notice is that there are no zones of control, so obviously this will be a pretty fluid game. Also, most of the Soviet units have an untried state, meaning that neither player knows how good they are until they are in combat. Other than that

you can set the game up and figure out the rules as you go along.

It's during set up that you first notice that the Germans have a tough road ahead. Stacks of Soviet divisions form a huge front along hundreds of miles of southern Russia, leading to Stalingrad. The Germans need to score six victory points and most of them are far, far, away. You also look at the turn chart and see stacks of Russian reinforcements and you know that this is going to be tough.

The game begins with the Germans ripping open a big hole in the northern

front and then the race is on. The Russians must decide whether to hold the frontier or run like hell to the next river line of defense. In the end, the Germans are trying to seize the last few victory point hexes and the Russians are trying to just hang on. Despite being an older looking game, it is very exciting and challenging for both players.

Clash of Giants by GMT Games
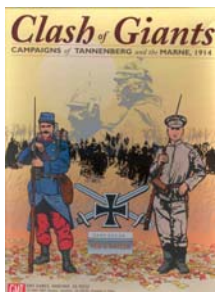
I've never been a big fan of WW1 games and the only one I've ever owned was World War One from the old SPI folio series. When I got this for Christmas, I was intrigued and decided to play some of the scenarios.

The game covers the Tannenburg campaign on the Eastern front and the Marne campaign on the Western front. There are two well done maps and about 250 counters. The game system is pretty easy to digest, with a lot of special rules about the different armies on each front.

The most important thing that you see in the game is that each army rolls to see

how much movement it gets during each turn. This is a good, if somewhat artificial representation of WW1 command and control. Simple, but it works.

I first played the Marne battle scenario, which concentrates on the French counterattack in the early part of the war.

There is also a full campaign version which shows the French retreat from the initial German onslaught.

The Germans have to play for time and counterattack where they can. The French, meanwhile, need to coordinate several armies for an offensive and can't quite get everything to go how they

want it to. A very close game that will go down to the final few turns.

The other map is used for the Tannenburg campaign, which was very interesting. Here, few counters are on a huge map, so this is an exercise in strategic planning. My playtest went down to the last turn and it was very challenging, especially when you only have a handful of pieces left to cover an entire area!

Overall, I was pleasantly surprised by this game and the game system. All games are easily played in under 3-4 hours and are very challenging.

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Just a few of the historical games that are confirmed so far:

FRIDAY'S HISTORICAL LISTINGS

Event ID# 14CC004

"This Town Ain't Big Enough" Academy 4/15 - 6:30p.m

Event ID# 15DC008

"The River Plate" Academy 4/15 - 8:00p.m

Event ID# 11CC027

Armati II Tournament Academy   4/15 - 6:30 p.m

Event ID# 11DC028

Armati II Tournament Academy 4/15 - 9:30 p.m

Event ID# 15CB030

Air War over Russia 44 Academy 4/15 - 7:00 p.m.

Event ID# 15KB033

Beachhead Academy 4/15 - 6:00 p.m

Event ID# 15AB046

Breakout Academy 4/15 - 4:00 p.m

Event ID# 12CA047

Daimyo Influence   Academy 4/15 - 7:00 p.m

Event ID# 13BB050

Dresden, 1813   Academy 4/15 - 6:00 p.m

Event ID# 15CC055

Flames of War Tournament Academy 4/15 - 7:00 p.m

SATURDAY'S HISTORICAL LISTINGS

Event ID# 23HA001

"The Run from Algeciras" Academy 4/16 - 1:00p.m

Event ID# 25JB002

"Hold the Junction" Academy 4/16 - 4:00p.m

Event ID# 24GC005

"Stampede" Academy 4/16 - 10:00a.m

Event ID# 24JC006

"It's an Outrage, Sheriff You Gotta Do Something!" Academy 4/16 - 4:00p.m

Event ID# 25LC009

"DKM Bismark on the Loose!" Academy 4/16 - 8:00p.m

Event ID# 25FC011

"Hijacked" Academy 4/16 - 9:00a.m

Event ID# 24HC021

"The Battle of Brawner's Farm" Academy 4/16 - 12:00 p.m

Event ID# 25IA023

WWII Battle Royale Academy 4/16 - 3:00 p.m

Event ID# 25GA024

Destination Berlin Academy 4/16 - 10:00 a.m.

Event ID# 23KA026

Ships Master and Commander Atrium 4/16 - 7:00 p.m.

Event ID# 21GC029

Armati II Tournament Academy 4/16 - 10:00 a.m.

Event ID# 25KB031

Migs Over Korea Academy 4/16 - 7:00 p.m

Event ID# 25IB034

Bulge 44 Academy 4/16 - 6:00 p.m.

Event ID# 22IA048 Throne of Blood   Academy 4/16 - 2:00 p.m

Blitzkrieg Commander Playtest

One of our members, Jim Cornell, made some exclusive terrain boards for our BKC playtest, so we were excited to try this new system out. All of us except for Dave B. had played Warmaster before, so game explanation didn't take up too much time. After explaining the various command, shooting, artillery, and recon systems, we were ready to go.

The scenario's premise was the basic meeting engagement. It is set in late September of 1944 and a British force has broken through the main German lines and is racing ahead to seize a key village. The Germans have scraped together an armored kampfgruppe and are moving to block the British advance.

The British force was broken up into three groups. The first was a mech infantry battalion of three companies plus anti-tank support. It would try to seize the village and a farm on the outskirts. The second group was an armored battalion of four squadrons of Shermans plus Fireflys that would try to keep the German armor busy. The final group was the recon, artillery, and overall command.

The British plan was to seize the village, dig in, and use the armor to provide flank support in the wide open spaces on the right of the village.

The Germans had a scratch force of two panzergrenadier companies, an anti-tank company of Hetzers, several armor companies of Tiger IIs, Panthers, and Mk. IVHs, plus recon and artillery. The German plan was to quickly seize the village and have the armor cut in from their left to the village and destroy any Allied armor in the way. The anti-tank company along with other assets would hold the right against any attack on that flank.

With both side's forces set to go, all units were placed on the board and the Germans won the Initiative die roll and opted to go first. After a few final questions about units and rules, we were ready to try Blitzkrieg Commander for the first time.
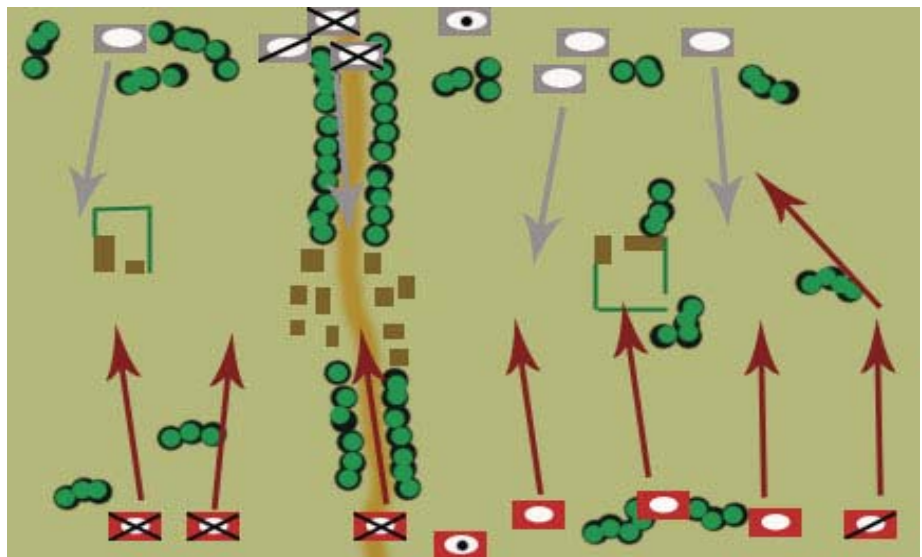
The Battle Begins

The Germans had some successes and some failures on the first turn. The panzergrenadiers moved quickly and seized the outskirts of the village, but the supporting anti-tank units failed their command rolls. The rest of the Germans failed their command rolls as well, leaving the mech infantry exposed in the village.

The British responded by seizing the other end of the village and both sides prepared for close combat. The British armor moved to establish blocking positions on the right, while the recon moved out far ahead of the main force.

Turn two saw the devastating power of artillery as the German guns caught a British mech infantry company in the open and pretty much wiped it out. The Germans moved some armor, but most failed again due to bad die rolls.

Finally, on turn three the British armored engaged some of the further most German units, scoring a few hits and driving them back. The British brought up MGs and mortars into the village, setting up a defense against the expected German assault.

So far, the German armor had played a small role in the developing battle.

Blitzkrieg Commander Playtest (cont.)

The German armor finally passed some of it's command rolls and began to advance. Unfortunately, they also failed right in front of a mass of Shermans. The British responded aggressively, knocking out two German armor units and setting up a firm base of fire support. The Fireflys maneuvered to get in better shots while protecting themselves by using the farm area as flank cover.

In the village the first firefights erupted as the Germans try to press the advantage they had in the outskirts. Both sides were now calling in artillery fire and mortars on the village, but most of it kept scattering around the board, causing damage to everyone in the area!

The Germans were still having problems with their command rolls and could not coordinate an effective counterattack with their armor. They were scoring some hits, but the Shermans were definitely coming out ahead in this slugest.

Back in the village the first German panzergrenadier platoon charged into the center of the village and in some deadly hand to hand combat, seizes the village center. All that is needed is for the German armor to support the attack and victory belongs to the Germans!

The British respond by knocking out more German armor as the mass of Shermans delivers volley after volley into the German positions. In the village the second British mech infantry platoon counterattacks with mortar and artillery support, driving the German defenders back from the village center.

The Germans still have sizeable reserves, but can't get them to move. A few well placed armor units could ensure victory, but the bad die rolls continue on.

The British, meanwhile, prepare for the final push to end the game.

Finale and Conclusions

A virtual storm of fire engulfs the German positions inside the village. With the German armor threat on the right flank nullified, a detachment of Shermans joins the infantry in attacking the village. The first German panzergrenadier platoon is wiped out and the second is taking serious hits. Most of their halftracks are now on fire and things are looking grim for the Germans. A final turn with more bad command rolls and the Germans are forced to withdraw.

Despite our doing a few things wrong, we had a great time! The game "felt right", in that you couldn't count on moving and sometimes a few units moved twice or three times, making both sides respond to new threats. Besides Command Decision 3, this is the closest I've seen to recreating operational level armored combat.

It also worked well with multiple players and I would say that it's ideal for group play. Once you get used to the system, each player can run things on his section of the tabletop without referring to the rules or charts.

Overall, we were impressed and several members are now going to start creating armies for the Russian Front. We look forward to playing this again.

Interview with Pete Jones, author of Blitzkrieg Commander

One of the most innovative rules sets to come along for WW2 gaming is Blitzkrieg Commander. Based on the popular Warmaster system, BKC as it's affectionately called, is able to do what most game systems can't, namely use a command and control system that's simple and effective. Gamers all over are dusting off their old micro-armor or getting into the relatively new 10mm scale and trying these rules out. Pete Jones, the author of Blitzkrieg Commander gave this interview where he discusses game design, the hobby, and the future of the BKC system.

BLITZKRIEGCOMMANDER
Fast-Play Tabletop Wargame Rules For Combined-Arms Operations, 1936-45

1. How did you get started in wargaming and what are your favorite periods?

My first interest in gaming began in my early teens at the start of the 1980s - a mate at school had a micro Modern British army and encouraged me to get some Russians. That didn't last too long (think the Challenger rules put me off!), so I started collecting 1/72 scale WW2 Germans to play against his WW2 Brits. That was much more fun! Trouble was, girls and music started to interest me a lot more as my teens progressed and that was it for gaming until I returned 10 years later.

My favorite period is World War Two - there is just so much to learn about it and so much innovation at the time. I also play Fantasy and Sci-Fi in the smaller scales (ie: 10mm and 6mm) - I treat these two as a distraction from historicals once in a while. I've ventured into other periods (Dark Ages, Medieval, ACW, WW1 and Post-WW2), but nothing has interested me as much as WW2. I'm probably one of the few gamers who has never played a Napoleonic game - just never appealed to me.

2. Do you prefer tactical/skirmish level games or operational level gaming?

Although I've swayed between the two, definitely operational-level for me, espe-

cially for WW2. I prefer small miniatures too, with 10mm being the most suitable for my needs at the current time.

3. What's your philosophy on realism vs. playability?

Some people tend to confuse realism with minute detail and micro-management, thinking that the more detail that is crammed into a game, the more realistic it is. This is especially true for rule sets of the 1970s and 1980s, which looking back, were bloody awful! There has been a big shift away from this over the past decade, with playability coming to the fore.

I think realism is about capturing the feel of a period and also encouraging players to use tactics similar to those used by the armies at the time. This is very difficult to do, which is why earlier rule authors focused on the technical details, as they are much easier to research and easier to define in game-terms. Of course ultimately, no game can approach anything like reality and no-one in their right mind would want it to - I know I certainly wouldn't want to be shot at or be responsible for sending people to their deaths…

4. We've seen a major shift the last few years in the hobby with a move towards simple, fast, and fun games that seem to have realism as a low priority. Do you think this is a good or bad trend?

I don't feel that realism has taken a backseat over simplicity, speed and enjoyment. Sure, certain elements have to be simplified if games are to be played in a reasonable amount of time and players

don't end the game feeling like they've just taken an exam in mathematics! As long as you feel like you are playing a WW2 game - whether it be leading a squad against a pill-box, or commanding a regiment in a river-assault - that's what counts.

It's also down to individual perspective. Several people reading the same account will more than likely pick-up on different things. This is just the way we are in all walks of life, not just gaming, but it can lead to some bitter arguments about what is realistic and what isn't!

5. What do you think are some of the positive things in the current state of the hobby and what are some of things that need to be fixed?

The web has been the best thing for the hobby over the past few years, bringing gamers across the globe together and allowing us all to share ideas and experiences. On the downside of the hobby - miniatures from different manufacturers that are supposed to be the same scale, aren't... that's such a bugbear.

The beauty of Blitzkrieg Commander is that you can use any scale miniatures with the rules. You can also play it at 1:1 or 1:5 scales for different games.

6. What advice would you give to would be rules designers who are looking to publish?

It's a lot of work if you self-publish! The upside of that is you have total control over what you are doing - if you can handle that, it's the best way to go. Streamline your ideas, learn that's it's more important deciding what to leave out of a rule set than what to include in it. At the same time, give the gamer who will buy your rules a good deal, not some half-finished piece of work that requires you to buy add-ons just so he can play his favorite army. Oh and make sure the eye-candy has a use other than just looking pretty!

Pete Jones interview (cont.)

7. Has the hobby changed for you in any way since your rules were published? Do you experience highs and lows in dealing with questions on the Yahoo Groups forum?

I've gotten to know a lot more people. Dealing with queries regarding the rules is fun - people have been very positive, which is encouraging.

8. Blitzkrieg Commander has had many positive reviews on TMP and elsewhere. Do you think that this vindicates your views towards the Warmaster system or is it just that gamers like WW2 rules?

I'd be tempted to say a bit of both: Warmaster is a good system, World War Two a popular period.

9. Are there any future plans regarding the Blitzkrieg Commander system?

Well, a second print-run will be due soon, but rather than just do a straight re-print, I want to fix any errors and make some slight changes, particularly to the army lists. I will also add some more optional rules in the back. However, for those who already have the book, no need to rush out and buy the new one (unless you really want to!) as all the changes will be available as a free download from the web site.

I've started working on a complimentary set to cover the post-WW2 era, although this may take some time as there is so much work involved! Also looking into covering the beginning of the 20th Century, but this may just come down to doing some army lists that people can download from the web site.

10. What new projects will you be working on in the future?

Some years ago I wrote a computer program to create scenarios for WW2 Eastern Front games that generated random orders of battle using forces that were under-strength, something I feel a lot of games don't take into account. I would like to develop this idea into something more, maybe making it customizable and cover any period in history. It's a lot of work, which is why I keep putting it off!

If you are interested in this rules system, then I would suggest going to the Blitzkrieg Commander web site at:

www.blitzkrieg-commander.com or visit the Yahoo egroup for more information. The web site has army lists, some great battle reports with inspiring pictures, and additional info on the game. Pete does a great job of supporting the rules set by answering questions on the Yahoo group. Pete is also interested in feedback, rules corrections, and problems with the army lists. If you have a good argument then he'll make changes. I wanted the British lists changed for more Fireflys and he agreed, so he changed it!

Command plays an vital role in BKC. Each command unit can issue a number of orders to units and in some cases more than once per turn. Trying to coordinate large formations can prove to be difficult, much as in real life.

Terrain and engineering become very important in this kind of operational scale game. The use of minefields, fortifications, and river assaults can all be gamed easily with the BKC system.

Final Thoughts

First, thanks to Pete for participating in the interview. As always, it's good for gamers to know where an author is coming from or why they did certain things in the rules. Pete's idea of putting well done battle reports on his site is an idea that should be mandatory for all new rules authors.

There have been many attempts by gamers to recreate operational level WW2 actions, namely those involving about a brigade per side or even more. Most fail horribly because of the command system, either there isn't one or it is so complex that normal gamers can't get into it.

BKC solves this by using the Warmaster command system, which is not only simple, easy to follow, and new gamers can get it right of, but it works!

The good thing about the game system is that it "felt right" during our playtests. It was exhilarating and frustrating at the same time when you could or could not get units to move. There was never a "everyone moves now" phase and you had to plan a turn ahead in case your command rolls failed. The Germans in our game had several command failures that doomed their attack, probably which happened in real life thousands of times.

Overall, for the price of the rules you can't go wrong. Even if you never end up trying the game, you will at least get some good ideas about a wide variety of WW2 subjects.

Matt Irsik

I have received a number of emails asking about who authors the articles in this publication. The simple answer is that if you don't see an author's name then it was by me. Yes, that means that most of the articles are written by myself and depending upon how many contributions I get, this can range from all of them in an issue to only a few.

This publication is a labor of love and I feel that it's good to share reviews and battle reports of games with gamers around the world. I like to talk with other gamers, share info and projects, and generally I hope that this publication can help the hobby grow. Would it be better to get a broader range of views? Yes, it would, but I can't control the timing or quantity of the submissions that I do get, so I try to stay on a regular schedule. As many of my fellow club members know, I have a lot to talk about!

The best part for you, the reader, is that this publication is free. If you like what you see, then you'll be back. If not, then you really haven't invested anything other than a minute or two downloading the issue. As always, I look forward to hearing from those who read this publication..
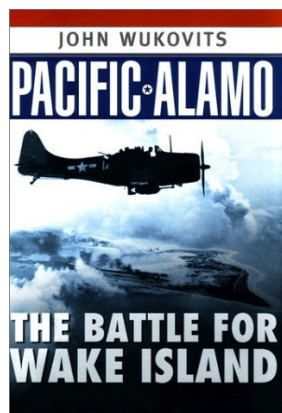
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Pacific Alamo: The Battle For Wake Island by John Wukovits

The battle for Wake Island has always been part of one of the great "What if's?" in military history. In Pacific Alamo, author John Wukovits tries to detail the heroic stand by the Marines and to dispel some of the myths surrounding the battle.

The first part of the book is getting to know the men, the island, and the general situation leading up to the beginning of the war. The reader learns about the construction projects, defense plans, who the main characters are and why they were at Wake.

It is interesting to note here that a Japanese attack was expected and that war was a foregone conclusion by October. The military had huge construction contracts to improve the island garrison, but they were unable to be completed in time.

The central section of the book concerns the battle itself. You are witness to the first air attacks and the disastrous first invasion attempt by the Japanese. Every small action on the island is given treatment and the author does a good job of portraying the desperate defense.

Finally, after massive air attacks by carrier groups and a huge invasion force that is landed on the island, the garrison is forced to surrender. This part of the book is also interesting as you learn that the Marines could have fought on and might have succeeded in defeating the second invasion.

It also explores the great "What If?" by describing how the Saratoga battle group was ordered to turn back with air and ground reinforcements destined for Wake. The first carrier battle could have happened only a few weeks after the opening of hostilities instead of at Coral Sea.

The final section of the book describes their ordeal in prison camps in both China and Japan. Several hundred men died during their three and a half years in captivity. The book concludes with the ending of the war, their return to society, and what happened to many of the soldiers after the war.

Overall, I found this book fascinating and you will never look at the movie the same way again, since it is woefully wrong in many details. The battles are detailed and there is a sense of urgency and desperation about them.

I would highly recommend this to anyone interested in the Pacific Theater or Marine Corps history. Hopefully, someday there will be a movie about this made along the lines of Saving Private Ryan.