



# Warning Order

With the release of the new Old Glory line of 15mm miniatures and the Venexia line for the Renaissance, I thought it would be a good time to revisit the period. This feature will talk about the period itself, rules, how to simulate the battles of the time, books, and figures that are available for the period.

The biggest discussion amongst gamers and historians is when did the Renaissance period of warfare begin and when did it end? For purposes of this article I'm going to contend that it started at Fornovo in 1495, when the French and Swiss brought home the brutal truth of the new style of warfare to the Italians and their allies. A good ending would be when the last Scottish rebellion was put down after the end of the English Civil War around 1651. At this point the pike, lance, and sword gave way to the arquebus, pistol, and artillery.

The Thirty Years War and the English Civil War each deserve their own feature as the armies, tactics, uniforms, etc..., are



too involved to get into here. Instead, we will focus on the heart of the Renaissance era, namely from 1495 to around 1550, where the pike and mounted gendarmes were at their zenith.

The biggest problem for commanders in this era was how to effectively use infantry, cavalry, and artillery. In many ways, it became a giant game of "rock, paper, scissors" as you never knew how your troops would perform or what strategy your opponents would use. Let's look at the three basic combat arms.

## Infantry

During the early part of the Renaissance it was the Swiss who prevailed on the battlefield. Their relentless pike blocks swept all before them and they were

much sought after, especially by the French. The German landsknechts were a close second and were usually found in the employment of the Imperialist forces fighting France.

Small units of cross-bowmen were still on the battlefield, but by 1515 they were being replaced in most armies by units with the arquebus. Besides units of skirmishers, almost all German, Swiss, and Spanish pike units had arquebusiers attached to them that would screen their advance.

## Cavalry

The main cavalry force of the day was the mounted gendarme, usually in full armor with lance. There were many variations of this, including some with horse armor, 3/4 armor, etc., but most armies of this period had several heavily armored cavalry units designed for shock action. Other units, such as "archers", were considered armored cavalry, but were not as effective as the gendarmes in a charge.

There were also a number of light cavalry units, from Italian Stradiots to

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## Special points of interest:

- Interview with the author of *Arc of Fire*
- WW1 TSATF battle report
- BKC Normandy battle report
- Several reviews of figures, board games, and more...
- A look back at great games and rules.

# Interview With Scott Fisher

*Our gaming group has been playing Arc of Fire since it first came out several years ago. To this day it still remains our favorite set of WW2 skirmish games and it has a loyal following on The Miniatures Page. Any time that a gamer asks for opinions on WW2 skirmish rules, there's no doubt that someone will suggest Arc of Fire. I thought that it would be a good idea to talk to one of the authors, Scot Fisher, about how Arc of Fire came about and the future of the game system.*

Editor

## 1) How did you get into wargaming and what periods do you game?

First, I want to say thanks for the opportunity to respond to your questions – the process has been a lot of fun and has given me the opportunity to think about some things that I don't have much time to consider normally.

I started playing board games, the first one I ever got was AH's Panzer Leader. I played often with my Dad. Later I purchased others like Victory in the Pacific and eventually moved to Squad Leader. I think I was about 9 or 10 when I started gaming. As I grew older and time was not as available, I switched to miniatures. I like many periods though have been most interested in WWII. In the past, I played a lot of platoon-level WWII games and I finally settled on Chris Pringle's "TAC:WWII"; rules as my favorite. I also really enjoy playing Desperado (Wild West) skirmishes - we've had a tradition of holding Desperado games for the neighborhood kids for some years and it is really a blast! In younger years, I played a LOT of Wooden Ships and Iron Men (from AH) and later played a great computer assisted game in the age of fighting sail called "Clear for Action". My most recent passions have been 15mm Napoleonic Peninsular Campaign and WWII aircraft. The later has really taken me by storm and I am in the process of writing (for 2007 release) a set of WWII air rules. Basi-

cally, if it is a historical game and someone else provides the figures and the rules, I'll be happy to play!

## 2) What was the thinking behind the development for Arc of Fire?

Chris Pringle and I decided to create ARC of FIRE in my basement one night after realizing we were completely brain dead from 4 hours of Battleground-WWII. We started playing with the idea of making a skirmish version of Chris' TAC:WWII platoon-level game. In the end, we built a completely new game

that borrowed some ideas from the previous games. Total development of AoF took over two and a half years. I can't remember exactly when, but I had a draft of the rules done pretty quickly, then we edited that draft over about a two year period. We playtested using the scenarios from Skirmish Campaigns (another passion which Nate Forney and I created) which worked really well since we had already played most of the scenarios using Battleground and other rules (like Beer and Pretzels Skirmish). Having played the scenarios many times before, I could focus on tuning the game mechanics as opposed to worrying about the scenario. In the end, we had about 6 groups playtesting various versions of AoF until the final version was complete early this year (2002).

## 3) What had you seen were problems in other WW2 games that you wanted AOF to correct?

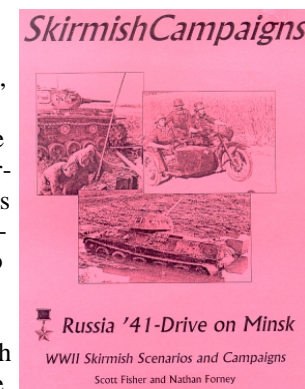
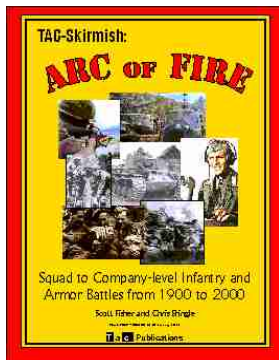
Upon reflection, I think the primary thing I wanted to accomplish with AoF was to reduce complexity while allowing lots of lead on the table. I felt that skirmish-level miniatures games had become TOO complex, like the board games of the early '80s with 10 die-roll modifiers for each to-hit roll. I decided that I wanted to reduce the complexity of the game systems but still have a reinforced Platoon (with tanks!) on the board. At the same time, I like the

gritty action and detail. For example, I like playing games where the single guy who has the guts can sneak-up on a tank and try to take it out. I also like the simplicity of skirmish-level games because I've always hated record-keeping. Usually in the skirmish games I play, a guy is either dead, wounded or fine- no fuss, no muss. Time of play was also an important design constraint- I wanted to have most games last no more than 3-4 hours so we could play in the evenings after work.

One of the primary components I wanted to stress was the quality of the soldier and not the mechanics of the weapon. We could talk for hours about the historical cases where it was, in the words of

Chuck Yeager, "...the man, not the machine". One of my favorite examples is the Brewster Buffalo WWII fighter aircraft. British flyers in the

Far East were readily destroyed flying them against skilled Japanese pilots (not all flying Zeros mind you...) while these stubby aircraft dominated the skies over Finland when flown by skilled Finish pilots against Soviet pilots in similar performing machines. The same is true in the ground combat that AoF tries to represent – a very good crew in a Sherman can do wonders against even facing a Panther if the



## Interview With Scott Fisher (cont.)

Panther crew is poor (and finds themselves in confused mode much of the game...).

In the end, **rules are like art**; one set works for some people and not for others. We spend lots of time looking, but there really are no PERFECT rule sets that will please everyone.

### 4) Where do you stand on the playability vs. complexity issue in gaming?

What you are really talking about is realism vs. playability. There is really no point in making a game "complex" unless the reason for doing so is to better reflect reality. With this in mind, I am not sure you have to trade off between the two all the time (of course, this was my thinking for AoF).

The easy way out for a game designer is to design a realistic AND complex game, just add more modifiers – this is what many authors did with board games in the late 70s and 80s. The HARD and CHALLENGING thing is to create a game that is realistic AND simple to play. I believe game designer's skill should be judged on how simple they can make a game that provides realistic results. How many to-hit modifiers does your favorite game have???

Due to the fact that we can all see, feel and touch "numbers" some gamers seem to be obsessed with them. Conversely, things like morale, training, unit cohesion and élan are things that are hard to quantify -- though I think it is the later group of things that more greatly influence combat. Besides, when you really look into all those armor penetration statistics, you'll find something different than most people believe. The reality behind most armor penetration statistics assume that for a

given range a certain round will penetrate a certain amount of armor (and here is the good part) 51% of the time. Not ALL the time, 51% of the time. This means that almost as often as not, the round will bounce, break-up or whatever. My suggestion is that all those statistics don't give clear results, they just give trends. Trends can be modeled with a d10 or even a d6 with very few modifiers. Speaking of modifiers, I believe that a clever game designer should be able to model reality with only a few of them – more on this when I talk later about our new WWII Air Game. In other words, don't be too hard on games that don't seem to perfectly model armor penetration...these simpler games might just be the most accurate.

To summarize my thinking on this issue, I would like to quote from the designer's notes from AoF:

*"...assumption: generally, we believe that "luck" is a major if not THE major player on the battlefield.*

*The more research we do, the more we believe this assertion. Some players may be interested in the intimate details of armor thickness and penetration; we believe that these laboratory results are seldom seen on the modern battlefield. The interaction of a tree, shovel, cable, tool or some other object could easily invalidate the results of all that careful calculation. In short, if a variable does not have at least a 10% chance to change a combat/morale result, it was not considered in these rules (hence our choice in selecting a d10 as the basic die for use). We simply assume that it would not be worth considering less significant variables as they are numerous and potentially not definable in the context of a playable system. Further, for every lesser variable we might identify, there are probably several we have inadvertently not included."*

### 5) What are your views on the pros and cons of an activation system like in AOF to an IGOUGO type format?

Skirmish-level ground combat is very unpredictable and chaotic. I think for

skirmish-level randomization of unit actions is key. We're really taking about using cards to determine when a unit moves, fires, etc. Every game someone gets smoked due to the cards not turning up the way they wanted, but hey, we're trying to model combat not courtroom procedure. I have a belief that combat is a confused mess, even for trained professionals. Game systems should model that mess by producing unpredictable results. This said, in AoF, a player can minimize his exposure to this random activation by planning his attack or defense carefully. Instead of hoping your card comes up first, one can have one unit move ahead while another watches.

### 6) What figure scale do you think best simulates WW2 skirmishes and why?

I don't think there is a best scale. The best scale is one of those things that is in the eye of the beholder. My co-author on AoF was Chris Pringle, Chris loves 6mm figures. I like 6mm for WWI and WWII but not for Napoleonics – for me the whole key to Napoleonics is the uniforms and I can't see them with 6mm figures. I actually game in both 15mm and 25mm. I started with 15mm because it was less expensive and I knew I wanted to do a lot of armor games. More importantly,

at the time I started gaming, 15mm was easier for me to get (I lived close to Chuck Cook, the former owner of Quality

Castings). Lately though, the 20mm wave has hit the US- of this I am really glad as EVERYTHING is available in 20mm, usually people have several manufacturers to choose from. After a while, I really got sick of painting 15mm infantry and noticed some of the beautiful 25mm WWII stuff on the





## Interview With Scott Fisher (cont.)

market. I bought some, painted it and got hooked on the bigger scale. Some part of me just likes the bigger figures. Now, I use 15mm to play bigger scenarios with lots of vehicles and 25mm to fight smaller infantry actions.

### **7) AOF seems to be pretty popular, judging from the number of responses on TMP threads about WW2 rules. Why do you think it still has a strong core of fans?**

AoF has been printed and re-printed over the years and is still doing very well. I think the real success of AoF can be attributed to its design philosophy – basically that we will model things that really matter, give the feel of combat and do it in a basic game system that is easy to modify. Going into the creation of AoF, we realized that every group of gamers would want to edit the rules to suit their vision of what WWII tactical combat really was



like. We build AoF specifically to accommodate that type of thinking. For example, is there a unit that is REALLY good? Well, give it three activation cards instead of the normal two; really BAD, give it one card instead of two. Another aspect of the game we thought was important was to make the combat system easy but reflective of reality. If you have played AoF a few times, you can pretty much memorize the combat table- though don't be fooled into thinking the underlying system is simple. In my book there is no better test of a game system in WWII than France '40. This campaign is unique in that there are superior French tanks (on paper anyway)

that have significant flaws, very well trained Germans with high morale etc. We playtested AoF extensively with the Skirmish Campaigns France '40 books we knew so well as we thought that by doing this we could really shake out things like AoF's TAC ratings and separate Morale values etc. In the end, I think AoF is still popular because the basic systems are simple and flexible (to game group taste) but in the end achieve a result that leaves players thinking their game experience was realistic. One funny example of this feeling was an experience I had test-playing some scenarios from my Skirmish Campaigns-Normandy '44 Monty's EPSOM book- at the end of the final mini-campaign (after three games) they both were in virtual shell-shock at the effectiveness of mortars in Normandy. This experience is exactly what we wanted to achieve with AoF; give players a small taste of what is must have been like.

### **8) What is it about WW2 gaming that makes it probably the most popular period to be argued about after Ancients and Napoleonic?**

I suspect it is due to the fact that growing-up we were surrounded by WWII veterans and reminders of the war. Many of our fathers and grandfathers were in the war and so there is a natural curiosity about what they did. These days are rapidly coming to a close unfortunately. In 2004 I took my family to Normandy for the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings – we had a great time and met many veterans. I wanted to meet as many as I could and hear their stories first hand. When each veteran dies, so do many of his stories – I have been amazed at how many unpublished, but GREAT, stories I have been able to hear first hand from these guys. While in Normandy I stood on the driveway at Chateau St.Come and listened to a British Para describe the battle there (especially exciting for me since I was in the process of writing a Skirmish Campaigns book focused on the Chateau and the Paras there!), this

kind of stuff is just not in books. In the end, WWII was the defining event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, finishing what was started in WWI; I am not surprised that gaming it is so popular.

### **9) What are the future plans for AOF?**

Since 2002 I have been adding to my collection of optional rules and a few (thankfully, very few) edits. Last year we toyed with the idea of changing the morale system but ended up concluding that the one AoF already has is more efficient and just as realistic as the proposed new version. At some point I will publish a 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition to AoF with these edits and options, though I will say that there will be no major edits to the game systems. I have come to the conclusion that I will be happy to "update" the rules but am not planning to significantly change them.

### **10) What other projects are you working on and what are your future gaming plans?**

For the last year, besides working on Skirmish Campaigns, I have been writing a set of WWII Air Rules called "Watch Your Six!" (WY6). The development of WY6 has been very challenging as I took the challenge to create a set of realistic air rules that could be played by beginners to miniature wargaming. As it turns out, I had to use all of my very smart friends (like Chris Pringle, CB Stevens, Mark Fastoso, Ed Stewart) to create the basic rules, and this still took a year and a half. In particular, my old catalyst Chris Pringle and I argued about the combat system incessantly; both of us producing com-



## Interview with Scott Fisher (cont.)

plex statistical analyses to prove our points. At this point, the game is pretty well scoped out and I am very happy with it. WY6 uses 2xd6 for the most part but uses other dice and

some tricks to accomplish statistically accurate results. Of course, I still believe that in combat it is the "man not the machine" so pilot skill is critical to success. In WY6 players will quickly find out that if one is inexperienced one should avoid enemy aces at all costs! I am planning to release the rules in 2007 along with two associated scenario books (Guadalcanal and Battle of Britain), plus there are two other scenario books in the works. I hope to have a series of scenario books to go with the rules, of course they will be a consistent format ala Skirmish Campaigns. A final note, Skirmish Campaigns ([www.skirmishcampaigns.com](http://www.skirmishcampaigns.com)) has been the primary work of my hobby and will continue, recently there were some rumors that we were not going to continue the work, these are NOT true. The Skirmish Campaigns books are going stronger than ever, in fact I have three new ones ready to be published as we speak! The Skirmish Campaigns idea has now expanded to include Skirmish Elite books and now we are distributing Mark Fastoso's excellent Colonial Campaigns books as well. Interestingly I have noticed that everyone seems to be putting out WWII scenario books all of a sudden, I think this is great. The more the better. The veterans of WWII should be recognized for their sacrifice and bravery and no one group of publications can do them justice.

Thanks for the opportunity to do this interview, I have greatly appreciated it!

-Scott Fisher



*Chris Pringle, another driving force behind Arc of Fire, had this to say about the new WW2 air combat rules that are due out soon.*

I have to say that working with Scott recently to develop his WY6 air combat rules was one of the most intellectually exciting experiences I have had. It was like a battle in itself: Scott would send me his latest take on some aspect of the rules; I would then do some research and mathematical analysis to demolish it, and fire back my own idea for how to do it; then Scott would break mine apart in turn, and build something even better on top. I guess what we had going was a creative tension between the realism I kept pushing for, and the playability which is Scott's guiding light, and he has ended up achieving both. There were several moments of pure revelation that gave me a real high when we discovered beautifully simple and innovative mechanisms that captured the reality and helped make the game fun to play.

I'm not really a math geek, I just wanted to enlarge on some of what Scott said, to show that a lot of careful research and applied math has gone into both AOF and WY6, but at the same time a lot of hard work has gone into hiding it "under the hood" to produce elegantly playable games that give realistic results.

Chris Pringle

*Scott also sent me some interview questions that he and Nate Forney had that relate to the publishing of the Skirmish Campaigns books that I thought should be shared.*

**Within your product range you've tackled some fairly obscure topics (Norway, Finland, etc.) compared to the more well-known campaigns of WWII was the research more difficult for these booklets?**

**S:** Definitely. The more obscure

campaigns have limited information in English, though if you really scrounge you can find good stuff. For example, we had people in Norway and Finland help us for those two books via the internet. It is amazing how many people are out there on the web who are REALLY into their country's fight in WWII. The group in Finland helped us with weapons, terrain and playtesting! Finding information on the internet and people able to help has become much easier than before with the massive explosion in the number of webpages on WWII.

**N:** The Poland book was the most difficult from the standpoint of source material.

**Typically, how much time is spent on research for a booklet?**

**S:** It depends how much information is available and can range from four months to over a year. For example, the Normandy-First Hours book took me over a year to research due to the fact that there were so many sources available. I felt like I needed to read just about everything in print regarding the battles in our scenarios. Historical accuracy is very important to us -- we feel a bit of a responsibility to the soldiers who actually fought in the battles we're modeling to get it right. Thankfully we've not had any complaints about our research or historical accuracy. Interestingly I was able during the year of research for First Hours to travel to Normandy and see the battlefields - that really helps a TON when considering the terrain and problems faced by the combatants.

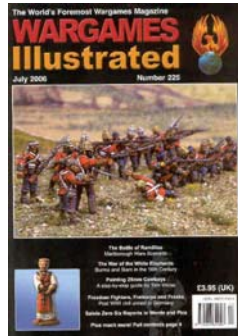
**N:** At least months.

*Again, thanks to Scott for the great interview and in depth answers. Hopefully Arc of Fire will have continued success and if you're interested in WW2 skirmish gaming I would stongly suggest buying a copy of the rules.*

## Magazine Reviews

I recently received the June issue of Miniature Wargames, the June and July issue of Wargames Illustrated, and HMG #6. Miniature Wargames continues to have good historical articles, but the pictures have reached the point where they're so bad, the magazine is becoming a guide for how not to paint! People look to hobby magazines for inspiration and there isn't any here.

Wargames Illustrated continues to baffle me. They seem to have gotten the message that they were turning into "Skirmish Monthly" and have some beautiful army shots, including some spectacular ACW pics in the June and



July issues. But then, there's a several page article on Victorian era divers fighting prehistoric creatures! Then this is followed by a two issue guide on how to paint resin vehicles. Do they use a Panther or Bren Carrier? No, they use a sci-fi vehicle! I thought that this was supposed to be a historical gaming magazine? Overall, much improved since the first of the year.

Finally, the last of the first six issues of HMG. There are good articles here and the photos aren't great, but better than Miniature Wargames. HMG is in a tough spot. It's better than The Courier and is published on time, but there's no warmth

or staying power like MWAN use to have. If I had to describe it, I would say it's like Wargames Illustrated, but without the passion.

There have been several discussions recently about whether we still need wargames magazines or not and I am undecided. I think that the inspiration, especially beautiful full color army pictures are much needed and catalog type ads are always nice. How to articles and painting guides for uniforms, flags, vehicles, etc..., can give a magazine staying power and longevity. However, the history articles leave a lot to be desired. Please don't give me a history lesson on Operation Market Garden as there's 3,000+ books already out there. I want to know how you gamed it.

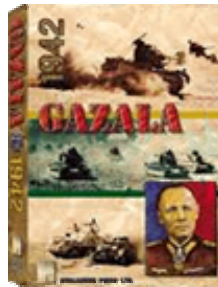
## Gazala 1942

Another in the Avalanche Press \$20 game series, this game covers the Axis offensive in North Africa in 1942. The map is very well done and I like the old fashioned edges, plus the counters are very good as well. The rules aren't the best, but they get the job done and most gamers can figure out what to do as it's not a very complex game.

The game uses a unique activation system and I especially like the armor

combat which makes combat very interesting.

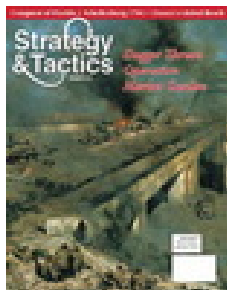
The game itself, however, has some problems in my mind and it's due to the subject and the activation system. The Germans pretty much need to activate the Afrika Korps every turn, which means that at least half of the other formations are



going to sit still. Ditto for the British. So you're playing a game where 3/4 of the units sit still every turn and the action focuses on a small section of the map, making you think that they should have just made a game about that section of the map! Yes, the battle of Gazala was about the Afrika Korps drive into the British middle, but why have the rest of the area if it sits still the whole game? Overall, I would rate it as average.

## S&T # 233 Dagger Thrust

Like a moth to the flame, anytime that there is a Market Garden game I buy it. This recent issue of Strategy & Tactics features a double game with the first being the British drive to Antwerp and Market Garden and the second game being a "what if" Patton had been given the sup-



plies that were used instead for the British operation. The 22 x 34 map is split into these two areas and each has their own counters. The game is on the higher end of the scale with units being mainly divisions and the rules are pretty easy.

As far as game play goes, it's pretty average. There are better Market Garden games out there such as Monty's

Gamble, but there are no other games that tackle a Patton drive into Germany during the early fall of '44. Again, unfortunately, while the game topic is interesting, the game itself is nothing to get too excited about. I would use it as a good introduction into wargames as it can be played quickly with few, if any problems. S&T continues to be hit and miss, with the quality of the components varying wildly from game to game.

## Game Review



# Memoirs of a Miniatures and Board Wargamer Pt. II

When I left off last issue, we were in the early 80's and I was fortunate enough to get a job in a local hobby shop. I'm not sure if it was a good thing for my finances, as I bought too much! It did give me lifelong friendships and the ability to work with two things I still love to this day; wargames and plastic models.

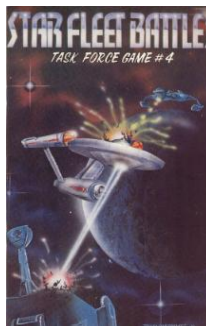
At this time I had only a passing interest in miniatures, probably because there weren't too many manufacturers out there and no one was around to drive it. That is something that stayed with me, however, is that you can really get a period going if you have someone who has a passion for it. It can become contagious in a group and soon you can have entire armies where before there was no interest at all.

The big thing at this time was boardgames, led by Squad Leader and I spent a lot of time with friends playing that gem. Then there was the Warsaw pact vs. NATO genre, which produced a virtual warehouse of gaming material. A lot of my nights were spent playing Fulda Gap, Red Star/White Star, NATO Division Commander, 5th Corps, 7th Fleet, etc...

Now that the statute of limitations is up, I can safely mention that, yes, I played a lot of role-playing games in the early 80's! We had a group of Air Force guys (there's a base right near me) and game store regulars who would get together almost every weekend and we gamed our brains out. Not only did we play D&D, but Top Secret, Merc, Gamma World, and more.

Then came the game that to this day, I have never seen such an impact, and that was the release of Starfleet Battles. Each supplement was eagerly awaited and when the miniatures came out, huge forces were amassed for battles.

There must have been at least 30 people at the local store playing it and my regular group would play sometimes 3 or 4 times a week. We did campaigns, tournaments, and spent a lot of time on the phone talking about tactics,



the next battle, and what would be coming out next.

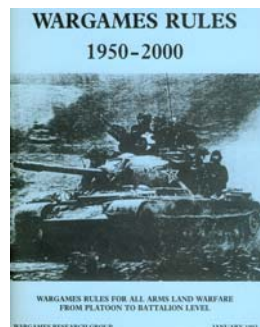
That came to an end however, where after a few years the Captain's Edition came out that made Squad Leader look like checkers and the interest went right out the door. This taught me another thing about gaming and that was nothing lasts forever. Gamers are always looking for the next big thing and that you have to be in for the "long haul", especially when it comes to miniatures.

So, where was miniatures gaming while I was doing all of this? We did have two members who were big into ACW and so Johnny Reb had quite the following. We did amass sizeable 15mm armies and played many historical battles, usually on Sunday afternoons after the NFL games were over. The other big thing in those days was modern micro-armor. GHQ was cheap back then and you could create entire Soviet tank regiments, plus there were several rules sets and a lot of interest.

Our battles were fought on huge tables with entire brigades and would take 8-10 hours for a game. It was a blast and there were no complaints about the time it took, unlike today's gaming. We had a member in the National Guard who got us terrain maps of an area around Frankfurt, so we did a several month micro-armor campaign, that to this day is still one of my fondest memories.

The gamers of today have no idea about what gaming used to be and what they missed out on. Sure, figures are sculpted better today, there's more variety and periods than I ever dreamed about, but is the gaming that much better? My answer would have to be probably not. There are many reasons for this and I'll try to expound on my theory.

Before the age of cell phones, the internet, 24 hr. cable TV, DVDs, etc...,



we did have a lot more free time. Now I agree that all of these things are great improvements to life and I use them every day as part of my job of running a university computer lab. But they've also had the negative effect of making gaming something that gets scheduled between 6:15pm and 8:55pm on a Friday night.

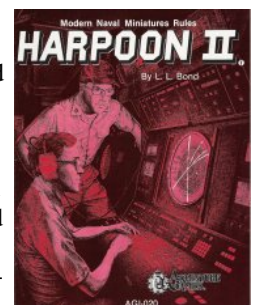
We use to pour our heart and soul into the hobby. Whether it was drawing and copying game maps for everyone, talking on the phone about campaign moves, discussions over real world tactics, or just playing huge boardgames in an all night session. It was fun, it created great friendships, and everyone would get up off their death bed if necessary to make it to the next game.

Contrast that to today where everyone has a point value for an army, you start 24" across from each other, blast away, then finish in two hours so that you can get back home in time to play the newest version of HALO 3 and make sure that you get in a bid on something on Ebay.

Anyway, back to the early 80's. Besides NATO vs. Warsaw pact on land, we also did some battles at sea. After a few tries with three different rules systems, we decided on Harpoon II and this started a 15 year long love affair with modern naval warfare that only recently ended when it was deemed that the US Navy is now the pre-eminent naval force in history and could defeat the combined navies of the world, so why game it anymore. We did dozens of actions, some involving ships, subs, and planes that went on all night.

So, gaming was good and there was a lot of it. Roleplaying, sci-fi, boardgames, and miniatures. Then there was that one moment that changed everything for me and set me to work on my true passion: the Sudan. This was when the first issue of Miniature Wargames came into my hands. It was issue #5 and on the cover was some of Peter Gilder's British Camel Corps at an oasis and I was hooked.

(cont. next issue)



## Blitzkrieg Commander: Counterattack

## Battle Report

Since I had been slowly and surely adding on to my 1/300th terrain collection, the group decided to do a big Blitzkrieg Commander game. I had been reading a lot about the SS Panzer units in Normandy and decided to try a scenario loosely based upon some of those battles.



The Germans in this sector had left a small force and transferred most of their armor to another sector, thinking that a major Allied attack would take place there. Instead, the Allies chose this sector and a Polish armored battalion had overran a critical hill while a Canadian mech infantry force had seized a village close by. The big problem was that the Allied forces were strung out and connected only by a road that ran through a rail yard and held by a scratch British battlegroup.

The Germans had by now reappeared and were going to restore the situation by a sharp counterattack before the Allies could dig themselves in further. The Germans had a King Tiger, a Tiger, several Panthers, plus a dozen or so

PZ IVs and Stug IIIs, backed by panzergrenadiers that were broken up into three main battlegroups.

Because of cloud cover, the Allies needed to roll a 5 or 6 on consecutive turns to see if there was a break in the weather that would allow air support to come in. The Polish armor battalion consisted of 9 Shermans plus three Fireflies. The Canadians had an infantry battalion with two companies of Cromwells and a Firefly in support that were established around the village. The British force that was holding the vital rail yard and the road junction consisted of an infantry company, a company of Churchills, some anti-tank units, and was backed by three batteries of Sextons. After the set up and planning sessions, the battle began.



## The Battle Begins

The Germans moved on the board in two locations and another group was already set up on the other side of the river. Clearly the main thrust was towards the village, with a pinning attack on the Polish and the center of the board. Long range gunnery opened up between the supporting German armor near the bridge



armor battalion launched an aggressive

and the Cromwells who were supporting the defense of the village.

On the far right the German armor came in first, followed by the panzergrenadiers and AA units. Then, in a bold move, the Polish armor battalion launched an aggressive

counterattack towards the Germans! Both sides began frantically maneuvering for the cover of a farm near by and the hedge lined field. The German armor split into two groups to deal with this unexpected threat, while the Poles also split into two forces, hoping to catch the German armor in a crossfire.

The British in the center sent the Churchills and AT units to support the village and Canadian flank.



## Blitzkrieg Commander: Counterattack (cont.)

## Battle Report

The Canadians and their Cromwell support were holding their own so far, knocking out a Stug III and a King Tiger, which stalled the German pinning attack across the bridge. However, pressure was building on the outskirts of the village as a powerful German armored force was sweeping towards both ends. The Churchills from the center moved to block the Panthers that were flanking the village.

Meanwhile, on the right flank the Poles were engaged in multiple gunnery duels and coming out the worst for it. Some well timed artillery barrages knocked out the AA and some halftracks while suppressing some of the Panthers. The MK. IVs had reached the flank first and opened fire on the Shermans. Over

the next few turns the German armor went on a rampage, including on one turn getting five consecutive orders (the odds for that are simply astounding!). By mid-game most of the Polish armor was in flames, with the Panthers moving on the farm.

Back to the other side the Cromwells were dying, slowly and surely, being overwhelmed by the German firepower. The Churchills had knocked out some German armor, but the German lead elements were now in the vil-

lage with more moving around the opposite end.

The remaining Polish Shermans were hunkered down in the farm and the fields, firing at the Panthers and getting more fire in return. By the seventh turn and despite more artillery support the Poles were destroyed and the Germans were on the move again.

By now the village position was in serious shape. Most of the Cromwells and the Firefly were knocked out and the infantry were under a lot of pressure. The German heavy armor had been knocked out, but there were still plenty of Panthers and MK IVs milling about.



## Finale & Summary

With the Polish armor gone and the Churchills plus the AT support gone from the center, the middle of the board was wide open for the Germans to sweep in, so the game was called as a total German victory.

Certainly, the Polish counterattack was a risky maneuver. If it had been success-



ful, the German would have had to divert resources from the attack on the village. When the Polish attack failed, the Germans were free to run about as they pleased, which ended the game.

The other thing that influenced the game is that most of the Allied com-

manders got off one order a turn, while the Germans usually were able to get two per commander and then there was the one instance where the German armor got five in one turn!

The Germans launched a well coordinated attack on the village, which with the pinning attacks on the center and right, ensured that there wouldn't be any Allied reinforcements sent that way.

## Old Glory 15mm Renaissance

There have been rumors of a 15mm Renaissance range coming out from Old Glory since the days of the 100 figure bags they use to sell. It was always, "Next Historicon, for sure!" I had given up hope after about 6-7 years of rumors and then out of nowhere, here they come!

The catalog listings are quite comprehensive and cover just about every troop type that fought in the Italian Wars from 1495-1550. There was some initial confusion in that some of the bags weren't ready for release and the Spanish arquebusiers, which I badly needed, weren't ready. Hopefully, this will be rectified soon.



As you can see from the accompanying photograph I am attempting to build a 128 figure Spanish tercio for use with the rules, Warfare in the Age of Discovery. I ordered in the Spanish Command, Armored Spanish Pikemen, and Unarmored Spanish Pikemen.

Each bag contains 50 foot figures, except for the command bag, which has some mounted figs included as well. The pikes are supplied separately and will probably have to be cut to represent the 15-16 ft. long versions that the troops historically used. The command bag was very well done, with drummers,

## Figure Review

foot command, flagbearers, and several mounted officers and flagbearers.

The foot figs were better than average and stand about 16mm tall, so that they will fit in with Essex and Venexia, but may be small compared to Testudo. Now, there's not a lot of variation that you can do with troops carrying 15 foot pikes into battle, but there are separate armor and padding styles on some of the figures. After they were based and painted, I found that they did a good job of representing an advancing pike block.

Overall, if they would just come out with the Spanish arquebus I would be a happy man. For around \$15 a bag, this is a pretty good deal and the 50 figs per package seems about the right amount to make several units for any game system.

## Baueda Accessories

As I am always on the lookout for items to add to my Renaissance collection, I came across the resin items sold by Baueda. Baueda is a company that primarily sells 15mm scenics that are meant to be used with DBA armies. They offer a wide variety



of forts, camps, tents, etc..., that make great additions to anyone's army.

I ordered the King's Pavilion for around \$10 and was a little disappointed when it came in. There is nothing wrong with the quality as it is

## Product Review

beautifully cast in resin and should paint up nicely, making it a great add on to my renaissance camp. Rather, I was surprised at the price. I could see \$5 or even \$6, but it seems for \$10 it was overpriced. For those of you who are looking at the picture and saying, "What are you talking about, that thing is huge and should be \$10." No, it's actually pretty small (only a few inches long), but it does look nice.

## The One Tree Miniatures

In my eternal quest to find suitable figures for Bashi-Bazouks in 15mm for my early Sudan armies, I came across this relatively new company. The One Tree Miniatures has released a comprehensive line of Ottomans for the Napoleonic era that are mainly suited for the campaigns in North Africa and the Middle East.



The figures are the large 15s, probably 18mm and fit in well with Eureka and some Old Glory. There is a wide variety of janissaries, militia, command packs, cavalry, and artillery so that you can pretty much create all of the unusual forces that fought the French.

## Figure Review

The infantry packs I received had 8 figures in them with about three variations in each pack. The figures are cleanly sculpted and detailed with accurate uniforms. Overall, these will make great Bashi-Bazouks and I look forward to more items from this company.



## Point2Point Podcast

Jason White and Scott Moll are the creators and voices behind this board wargaming podcast. Each episode, usually an hour or a little longer in length, talks about wargames, with game reviews, interviews, discussions about game theory and design, plus the infamous Gamers Rule at the end of the podcast.

Although the first few episodes had some technical problems, the content was still really good. These problems have slowly been resolved and the recent episodes have been much improved.

If you're a miniatures gamer who dabbles in board games, or a board gamer who occasionally dabbles in miniatures games, you could be in for quite a shock. Gamers like Jason and Scott (and there's a



lot of them, particularly at Consimworld and Boardgame Geek) take their wargaming seriously. How seriously you ask?

Well, when I buy a boardgame, say for example I just bought *Gazala 1942*, I read the rules, play it a time or two, then every year or two down the road I might break it out and try it again. No, these guys read the rules, play it once, then start developing strategies for playing it a second time. This can be followed by more games and in the case of some games, such as *Paths of Glory*, playing it several times a day for a few days at a convention!

You quickly see that the board wargamers and miniature wargamers,

## Podcast Review

with a few exceptions, are from different planets. I do enjoy the give and take of their discussions, particularly on what makes a good game and the issue of longevity for certain games.

One of the best sections of the podcast is the Gamers Rule, where they describe a problem with gaming, such as quitting early when one side is clearly losing and not finishing the game. Many of these rules could be equally applied to miniature gaming as I have seen examples of everything that they've talked about in our own games!

To sum it up, this podcast is a definite must if you're into board wargaming. You may not like all the topics or features, but there's always something that you can use.

## Stuka Pilot

When you think of the great combat aviators of all time or talking with the guys at your gaming club, does the name Hans Ulrich Rudel ever come up? If not it should. Not only did Rudel survive four years on the Eastern Front, he flew over 2500 combat missions. Rudel destroyed 500+ tanks, 700 trucks, 150+ guns, shot down 9 aircraft,



and sank several Russian ships. He was shot down over 30 times, wounded several times, and lost a leg. Stalin even put a bounty on his head! All of this while flying a JU-87 Stuka!

The book goes over his military career with hundreds of pictures of his aircraft, squadron mem-

## Book Review

bers, and views of the Eastern front. The biographical information was alright, but I thought that more could have been included as you only get to know him through the combat missions and the post war period. I didn't admire his post war politics, but his combat record and sense of duty is overwhelming. I highly recommend this to anyone who is interested in military aviation or the Russian front during WW2.

## 10mm Arab Buildings

I am still working on my 10mm Egyptian army for Ancient Warmaster and I started to think about terrain, especially buildings. To my surprise, other than the Hovels range and some very limited JR Miniatures items, there's virtually nothing for North Africa in 10mm. I came across an offering on the Old Glory Shipyard/Merrimack Miniatures web site that showed a collection of 7 10mm building



for about \$35.

I was very excited and promptly ordered them. After opening the package up I could see that they weren't bad, had interesting designs, and would look good once they were finished. One big problem, though, they weren't 10mm!

Yes, that's correct, they were closer to

## Product Review

15mm buildings, which is what I will now use them for. I can't complain about the finished product as they painted up easily and look great, but these are not 10mm. In fact, you could fit at least one and a half 10mm figures stacked one on another in the doorway. So, if you're doing a 15mm North African/Arabic village, these buildings are ideal. For 10mm, however, it's back to the drawing board.



## Renaissance Revisited (cont.)

mounted crossbowmen. These units provided a very limited recon and skirmish ability as the cavalry tactics of later periods had not been put into practice yet.

Although many books speak “thousands of cavalry in blocks”, most attacks were a series of uncoordinated charges by small groups. Essentially, you might have had 1,000 German cavalry in heavy armor on a flank, but when they attacked it was a series of charges by groups of 50-150 cavalry, with each probably having their own objectives!

### Artillery

Artillery at this time was not the battle winning entity that it would become in a few centuries. The crews were civilian and not prone to defend the guns if attacked. The technology of the time produced guns of all calibers, with widely varying ranges and ballistics. Not to mention that they were liable to blow up at any minute! Although long bombardments were good for sieges, they had few battlefield successes.

### Command

While there were commanders who had good strategic, operational, and tactical skills, they were few and far between. Now this was not to say that there weren't many capable leaders or officers who led their troops ably on the battlefield, but the situation of the times was a confusing one.

Not only did commanders have to deal with mercenaries, unreliable and untrained troops, political situations, city states, alliances, ever changing strengths of the army, etc..., but there was virtually no supply system. Naturally, this led to campaigns that moved in fits and starts, then broke down completely. The combination of sieges, battles, backstabbing, and treaties made for a confusing situation more suited to a soap opera.

### Training and Quality

There was little to no formal training or drilling in this era, with experience on



the battlefield providing most of the necessary skills. Certainly the Swiss were the best trained force during this period with the Germans a close second. The Spanish would come next, but after that there is a serious

drop off. Many of the French units, Italians, Venetians, and especially the mercenary units were unpredictable. Naturally, this led to many wild swings of fortune on the battlefield as you really never knew what would happen once the fighting started.

### Rules For The Period

While not as popular as Napoleonic, WW2, or ACW, there are quite a few rules sets out for the Renaissance era. As with any period, there are the usual influences that must be taken into account, namely scale, figure size, complexity, and your view of the period. I'll go over some of the rules that I know about and briefly discuss some others.

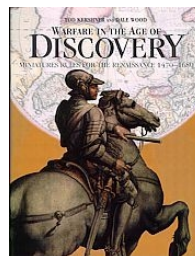
So, what should a good set of Renaissance rules have? Here is a short list that should be in every set of rules for this period. If it's not in there, don't get the rules.

- **The Swiss should be particularly nasty.** They were the pre-eminent ground force of the day, and although checked a few times, their remorseless advance across Italian battlefields should be able to be simulated on the tabletop.
- **The Germans and Spanish should be close, but not as good as the Swiss.** If the rules your thinking about choosing rate them the same as the Swiss, move on to something else.
- **Artillery is not a battle winner.** Civilian crews were prone to run away at the first sign of trouble. If you're set of rules has the gunners defending the guns every time, then you've chosen poorly. Artillery should be treated as another wild

card in the deck as you have no idea what it's going to do.

- **The arquebus is not a rifle!** If units armed with firearms are unleashing crushing volleys against anything in front of them, then the rules have a serious problem.
- **No “gigantic” units allowed!** While many books talk about things like, “A block of 3,000 German armored pike moved forward”, there really wasn't a unit of 3,000 that attacked the enemy. More than likely, it was in groups of 3-500 that totaled 3,000 that all charged individual units, remained in reserve, decided that today wasn't a good day to charge, etc... Most infantry units averaged about 500 men and most cavalry units anywhere from 50 to 200.

### Warfare in the Age of Discovery



From the same authors who gave us the well loved Seven Years War rules, Warfare in the Age of Reason, this set represents to me what is needed for the Renaissance period. The rules are 1:25, which

works out great for the small size of most units in this era, plus there is the aura of unpredictability in the combat and morale tables. You really have no idea what is going to happen, which accurately reflects the period! Some people have complained about the army lists, but the rules do a god job with the period and our group has had many great games using them.

### WRG 1420-1700

For many years this was the pre-eminent set of rules for the Renaissance. If you've ever tried the WRG Ancients rules, then these will be easy to pick up. A very clock-like play sequence along with the famous WRG prose that can even cause lawyers to cringe when going over some of the rules interpretations. Although this set of rules doesn't go along with today's quick, simple, kill

## Renaissance Revisited (cont.)

everything in sight mindset for gamers, it is a useful reference for army composition.

### Tercio

This set of rules is kind of a WRG clone and it had a lot of traction in the 80's. Again, this "old school" type of wargame has lost a lot of followers, but the army lists are worth reading.

### DBR

DBA has a legion of followers and so it was only fitting that DBM and DBR follow it. Basically the same as DBA, but with more units and of course, a few more rules. Again, deciphering the WRG prose can take some work. To me, DBA/DBR is more of chess match with figures and the secret is in finding the right combinations to win. Not everyone's cup of tea. There are some very good scenario books for the game, however.

### WAB/Warmaster Variants

Surprisingly, there isn't a Warhammer Ancients book out on the Renaissance yet, although there is the ECW book and some variants on the web. I think that a WAB book might be successful as there is more hand to hand combat than shooting. The ECW version, while fun, produced some weird situations with having so many firearms.

Warmaster continues to grow in popularity and no doubt the Renaissance will be out in a formal version someday. While the Warmaster command system already has plenty of unpredictability in it, I'm not sure if it will simulate the period as there will be a need for a lot of special rules.

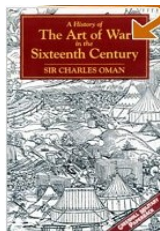
### Other Rules

Besides the ones that I've had firsthand experience with above, there are many, many more. There is *Tactica II*, the *Band of Brothers* module for *Piquet*, *Terry Gore* has a set of rules out, and I'm sure that there's more that I'm missing. If you would like to mention a set or provide a review, feel free to send it in.

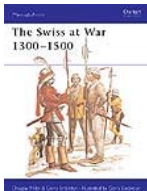
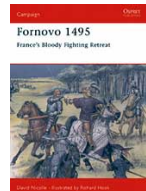
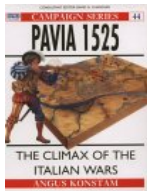
My suggestion is to read a few books on the subject, then try to find a set of rules that you think best suits the period.

### Books

If you're looking for a lot of books with great pictures and illustrations for this period, you will be disappointed. However, a few have some good information about battles in the Renaissance era.



One of the best books that you can possibly get is Oman's *Art of War in the Sixteenth Century*. This book goes through every campaign and major battle of the Italian Wars, plus the battles during the Eastern Renaissance as well. It also has interesting material on the French Wars of Religion and the Dutch vs. Spain conflict at the end of the period.



Osprey has several *Men at Arms* books on the Swiss, Germans, Venice, etc., but surprisingly most of them cover the late medieval period leading up to the Renaissance. The illustrations, however, give you a pretty good idea of the uniforms of the period. There are several books in the *Campaigns* series, including *Fornovo*, *Pavia*, and *Malta*, which are all well worth owing.

There are of course, many other books on this subject, but most of them are pretty esoteric and suited more for the professional historian or researcher than for the wargamer.

### Figures

For this period there is no lack of choice in figure ranges or scale. The most popular scales for this period are still 25mm and 15mm, although a good 10mm range and a Warmaster Renaissance supplement might change that in the future.

### 25mm

There are huge ranges in this scale, including Wargames Foundry, Redoubt, and Old Glory. Since many of the armor

and what could be called uniforms were pretty interchangeable at this time, most figures can be used for a variety of sides.



*Redoubt Eastern Renaissance*

The only negative thing about this scale is that painting units like French gendarmes could be a year long project!

Also, since very few figures would have the same dress, this period does not lend itself well to mass producing armies like in ACW or Napoleonic.

### 15mm

In 15mm there are also a large number of ranges from different manufacturers, including Essex, Old Glory, Venexia, Testudo, Minifigs, and there's probably a few other I have forgotten. You should be able to build virtually any army from 1495 to the start of the thirty Years War in this scale.



*Wargames Foundry 25mm*

### 10mm and 6mm

Baccus have a great 6mm ECW range that could be used for some of the late Renaissance and I'm sure that period will be done at some time. 10mm is growing and I expect



*Venexia*

many new ranges in the immediate future.

So there you have it. An interesting and unusual period that has armored infantry, cavalry with lances, artillery, beautiful and extravagant uniforms, plus a wide variety of armies to choose from. Finding a set of rules and a figure scale will probably be your toughest choices, but of all of the periods that our group plays, nothing looks as good as this one on the tabletop.



# TSATF: World War One Assault

# Battle Report

One of our members is a big WW1 fan and has amassed a large and beautiful collection of figures for the Mediterranean and Middle East theaters for WW1. After looking over a dozen sets of rules for a game, we decided to use The Sword and the Flame with modifications from an old issue of The Courier.

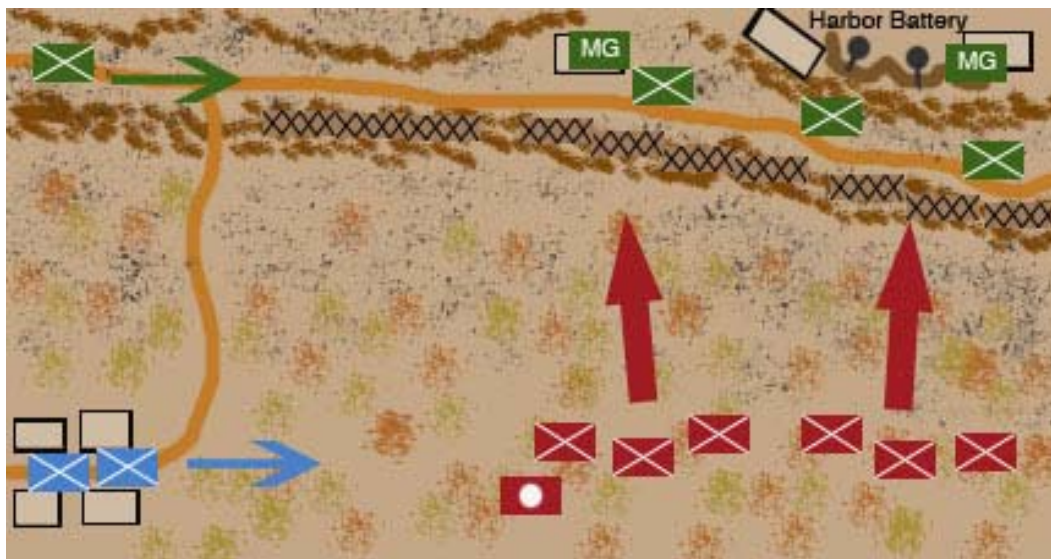
Although this is not an actual replay of the Gallipoli battles, it was based on the situation at the harbor and used forces available in that campaign. The premise is that Allied mine clearing vessels are trying to clear the harbor in preparation to land troops. The Turks have a two gun shore battery on a ridge

that are trying to sink these ships before they can clear the mines. A small landing force consisting of several units of British,

Australian, and Indian troops, backed by artillery, are going to assault the ridge and knock out the shore battery.

Defending the ridge and the guns are several units of Turkish infantry

backed by some MG teams in fortified houses. The positions are behind a line of barbed wire and rocky ground. There are also two units of German naval infantry from some stranded German ships.



## The Battle Begins

The Allied force began to form up and then moved to the right flank, obviously trying to mass at a certain point and breakthrough. The Turkish reinforcements on the road made good time and would definitely be involved in the battle. The German sailors and marines, however, had very poor movement rolls and it would be doubtful if they



reached the main defense line in time.

The Turkish MGs came to life as the Allied force came closer, then it was joined by the Turkish troops along the wire emplacements, causing a few Allied casualties. The Turkish firing was pretty bad considering that they had the Al-

lied troops in the open. The Allies began to return fire, causing some Turkish casualties and holding their own in the initial stages of the attack.

The fire of the shore battery was abstracted a bit as well, but the destruction of the minesweepers could adversely affect the scenario, so it was important to take out the guns as soon as possible. Fortunately, their shooting was as bad as the rest of the Turkish army!



## TSATF: World War One Assault (cont.)

## Battle Report

By this time the Australians were getting close to the ridge and opened up on the Turkish defenders. The Australians then charged the rocky ground in front of the main road, which set off a huge melee. The Indians, meanwhile, had reached the wire in the center and were clearing a gap under Turkish MG fire. The amazing thing is that the Turkish fire was pretty bad, but the Allied return fire was devastating! By turn 6 the Allies were at the wire and forcing their way through.



The Germans on the extreme flank

decided to launch an attack on the Allied artillery as with their movement rolls, they had no hope to reach the ridge road. Their attack went in and was bloodily repulsed by the British artillery and the troops guarding that flank.

The Indians were now through the wire and engaged in a fierce firefight on the road. The Australians tried to rush the main defense line on the road, but were pushed back. They rallied and came back, trying to link up with the Indians to break through the Turkish defenders.

The first Turkish MG team was silenced on some good shooting by the

Indians, who by now were getting the upper hand. The Turks launched a counterattack with a fresh unit from the reserves, but it was met and defeated along the road by the Australians, who by now were approaching 50% losses. The next few turns would tell if the Allied attack would succeed or not.

Finally, the shore battery scored a hit on the minesweepers, so it was now or never to take out the guns!

The Australians and Indians rolled forward, taking the road and moving towards the final few defensive positions. The Germans were simply getting butchered, even though they had knocked out a British artillery crew, so that flank would not be able to provide any assistance to the hard pressed defenders.



## Finale & Summary

There was some desperate fighting around the houses and the guns, but the Allied troops were in amongst the defenders and now it was only a matter of time. With it being near the end of our gaming time, the game was called as an Allied victory.

First, this was an interesting battle in an unusual period for us. The different troops type added a certain "colonial"

flavor to the game and it was colorful. The main problem is that we're not sure if TSATF is the right set of rules for this era. There were several bizarre instances as the rules are more designed for a natives vs. imperial power, so when both sides deployed MGs and artillery, it seemed a bit weird. We're going to keep looking and experimenting with other sets to see if maybe something else fits better.

Certainly, the Allied game plan was good and the Turkish die rolls at the start of the game definitely attributed to their success. The Turks finally got some good rolls, but unfortunately, it was after the Allied forces were into the defenses and there were no more reserves left!



I usually save my rants for the back page, but this time I felt it was necessary to give a couple of pages to vent about a few things that are going on in the hobby. My reason for this is that the “hobby” aspect of wargaming seems to be taking a backseat to quick entertainment that is disguised as wargaming. Let’s talk about some recent items:

## 1) No, you can’t play Waterloo with ten 25mm figures!

There have been a number of threads lately on The Miniatures Page (the best source for gaming info on the planet) where people see beautiful Napoleonic games in magazines or on sites, but don’t want to paint the 500 or so miniatures to do it properly. They then ask if there’s a watered down version of Waterloo where they can just paint a handful of figs. Guess what? Doing something right takes time and the ADD generation of gamers today just can’t be bothered about painting large armies. Here’s a suggestion; turn off your Playstation, quit watching the same anime episodes over and over, and sit down for an hour a night and paint some figs.

## 2) A fad is a fad, nothing more....

Has anyone else noticed the alarming number of threads on gaming forums featuring scenarios about “What if Hitler had survived?”, “How do I game Van Helsing?”, “Why don’t people buy more zombie rules?”, and Why won’t all gamers sell off everything they own and get into Victorian science fiction?”

These are niche periods at best and some, like VSF or Pirates, are fads. Despite all the hype, ranting, self promoting, etc..., these periods will never be as popular as WW2 or Ancients, no matter how hard some gamers want it to be. Most of the gamers who are into these periods defend them with a religious zeal that makes the Inquisition look like an afternoon tea party!

Now I’ve seen some pretty impressive games for some of these obscure periods and I salute those people who do it well. My beef isn’t with them as most of them do other periods and aren’t threatening anyone who questions the period with death. Rather, I take issue with many

gamers who spend a lot of time trying to convince others that their period is mainstream and others, like ACW, are a fad!

## 3) Could we inject at least some realism into rules?

In the last few years I have seen in rules, reviews, or played in games with the following: Modern jet combat where altitude isn’t important or used. Rules with no command and control or so little, it is usually ignored. Armies taking over 50% casualties and hanging around for battle. Tanks lined up end to end, side by side, with so many special rules that you need a cheat sheet just for them.

All of these things are a result of the current state of the hobby, namely, “I only have two hours for a game tonight and I feel like WW2. So let’s throw some stuff out there and kill things!” There’s also the famous reply to many threads on this, “I achieve the same result in less time than more complex rules.” That may be so, but did you learn anything about the period? Probably not. Were you using real tactics or just special rules for your army to help you to win?

Probably the latter. Why not just put tank silhouettes on round pieces and play checkers with them, which is about the equivalent of what you’re doing anyway.

If you’re running a scenario where a Chinese task force is approaching Taiwan and is intercepted by Taiwanese subs and jets, you can probably use Shipwreck and finish the game in under two hours. Will you have learned anything about the period or tactics? No. If you play the scenario using Harpoon 4, I guarantee that you will gain a deeper understanding of weapons, sensors, tactics, and what happens in modern naval combat. Will it take longer to play? Yes. Is there more of a learning curve? Yes. But wouldn’t you rather do that and get something out of the game rather than roll a bunch of D10s trying to sink things with weapons that you know nothing about? Judging by today’s gamers, I would have to say that



very, very few are interested in that kind of outcome.

## 4) Shouldn’t there be a FOW or WAB system for every period?

I hope the gaming gods smite whoever

next mentions a phrase like this. Yes, both invigorated periods that had entered a period of stagnation, they are high quality productions, and a lot of effort goes into promoting and expanding them. The companies and designers who are behind the effort should be applauded.

However, for me that’s where it ends. While WAB is an acceptable set of rules for ancients, it does have it’s limitations when you get beyond that period. We played WECW for a few years and there was always something that wasn’t quite right and it didn’t feel like a horse and musket type game, rather it felt like Romans vs. Gauls with cannons thrown in. I’ve seen the ACW and Colonial mods in magazines and after reading through them you get the impression that these are for the WAB fanboys or people who are too lazy to get rules specifically designed for those periods. It’s kind of like the gamers who get on the Age of Reason group and since they love the game system so much, they can’t understand why it’s not suitable for Napoleonic warfare. That’s because it’s designed for linear warfare, which is an entirely different thing. So they proceed anyway with making modifications and report back that it’s not working! Duh!

Likewise for Flames of War. It breathed life back into WW2 and gave the common gamer a chance to get into the period by offering a pre-packaged system for rules, supplements, and figs that was well accepted. I still haven’t seen this huge “crossover effect”, where WH40K and Warmachine gamers were going to get into Colonials, Ancients, Napoleonics, etc..., because of their exposure to FOW.

My argument is that FOW is WH40K, but without the spaceships. Each army book has a “gimmick of the



## Where is the Hobby Going? (cont.)

month” similar to WH40K and both are designed for the sole purpose of selling models. Why else would you have to put an entire 105mm artillery battery plus all of its support on the table for a WW2 game? Because they designed the rules so that you had to shell out \$100 to add it to your army!

### 5) What’s with the trend in skirmish gaming?

“Back in the day”, there wasn’t a lot of skirmish gaming, even though there were rules, articles and scenarios in magazines, and it was used as a good break at the club in between campaigns or playing the same subject. Currently, a large percentage of TMP threads, magazine articles, discussion on Yahoo groups, etc..., revolve around skirmish gaming. Why?

Well, it’s the dirty little subjects that no one wants to talk about; painting and time. Between work, eating out three times a day, watching Lost and Battlestar Galactica, surfing Ebay, then posting on TMP, when is a gamer supposed to paint figs? What, make time or expend effort to paint figs? No, it’s much easier to go searching for a set of rules that fits your gaming style, namely one that you only need four figs to have a game! I think that we had more figs on some of our D&D floor maps in the 70’s than some of the pictures of skirmish games I’ve seen.

Six people playing a Sword and Flame game with 100 figs is my definition of a skirmish game. Playing with two British soldiers against a mummy and three arabs should be classified as role playing.

### 6) Reality sucks, doesn’t it?

I just love the discussions about how to make Desert Storm scenarios “more fair”, F-22s less lethal in air to air combat, or why is it that thousands of natives charging across a barren landscape at a place called Omdurman get mowed down by rifle and machine gun fire by the thousands? This is invariably followed by suggestions involving making all of the U.S. Abrams tanks broken down for maintenance, leaving only trucks to fight the Iraqis with, the F-22s are out of hydraulic fluid and can’t dive, or there is too much heat haze that day, creating a

rolling mirage that prevents the British from firing further than 10 feet at the natives!



Here’s a hint: if you have to go to those kinds of lengths to game a period or battle, don’t bother. Some gamers want to

game certain periods or battles so bad that they can taste it. Unfortunately, they’re so obsessed with ordering in figs, rules, etc..., that they don’t think things through clearly. Can these periods or battles be gamed? Yes, but you really have to be creative with the scenario objectives. Hi-tech vs. low tech opponents or a huge disparity in training is a realistic fact in warfare. You need to assign what are called “negative objectives” for the game to work. Again, unfortunately, most gamers aren’t that creative and so you end up with a period so bastardized that it becomes a parody of itself.

### 7) Why does the terrain for most games still suck after all these years?

Time and time again you see images of games on sites, forums, etc..., that just plain looks bad. Badly painted buildings, no trees, or some aquarium terrain piece put out on the table as is. The gamers have spent \$1,000 on Warmachine, WH40K or FOW figs, then put them on terrain boards that could be called disappointing at the very least.

When you think of all the companies that produce ready painted buildings like Crescent Root Studio, Miniature Building Authority, and all the stuff on Ebay, not to mention the incredible selection of items from model train stores, there should be no excuse to not be able to put on a decent game.

Here’s a hint; next time spend some money on something other than the new Terminator Overlord Death Squad, which will set you back \$75. That money could buy a few ready painted buildings, some bags of trees, etc..., then spend a few hours working on the terrain. Guess

what? You’re game will not only look better, it will attract more attention, and surprise, it makes the game more tactically challenging than fighting over a green cloth with two rocks on it.

### 8) Please don’t tell me that there’s more 25mm Napoleonic figures coming out!

Yes, imagine that, another range of 25mm Napoleonic figures coming out. How many are there now? 15? 25? 40? With all the periods that need figures, buildings, terrain, why do new and existing manufacturers keep coming out with more 25mm Napoleonics? Don’t they know that every pose possible for the Napoleonic era has already been sculpted? Then surprise, surprise, these companies go out of business. I guess that they found out that the 2.5 million 25mm Napoleonic figures that have already been made were probably enough.

Now, many of you may come away with the idea that I’m bitter, which isn’t the case. I love the hobby of wargaming, I like painting, and I love reading military history. If I hated it, why would I spend several weeks a year putting out a free wargames magazine? My big concern is that the hobby is going in the wrong direction. Are the figs better? Definitely yes. Are the rules more attractive? Again, definitely yes. Is the selection of periods, terrain, and painting guides better? You bet. So if this is the “Golden Age of Gaming”, what’s the problem?

The big problem as I see it is that gamers are gaming for the sake of gaming and not really having fun with it. It’s become something to fit in between taking the children to soccer games on Saturday morning and having lunch with the wife/girlfriend at noon, leaving you 90 minutes to game. Then a set of rules are chosen to get a game through in that amount of time, regardless if there’s any realism attached to them, then figs are spray painted and put on the table. Everyone blazes away, then says what a great game it was and how they love being so heavily involved in the hobby!

I know that there’s no going back, but it would be nice to see a little more effort & passion being put into the hobby.



## Blast From The Past

This is hopefully the first of a continuing series where we will be looking at games, rules, magazines, or miniatures that have stood the test of time. In gaming, unlike say the art world, 5-10 years is a very long time, so fond memories might be something from 1998 as the gaming industry changes so quickly. I hope to highlight items that were good back then, can still be used today, and why they survived. Also, feel free to send me any ideas for future items for this section.



### Gamefix #6: Redline Korea

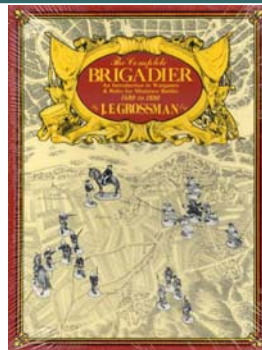
This was a short lived gaming magazine that was similar to Strategy & Tactics. Each issue had a feature article, some gaming news, tactics, and a complete game inside. For Gamefix, this meant a map about 14 x 9 inches, some rules, and around 100 counters. Most of the games were very ho-hum and I own the grand strategic WW2 game and the ECW game. Both were OK, but there's much better games out there. Redline Korea, though, is something entirely different.

The premise is a North Korean attack around the turn of the century and the UN forces fighting to save South Korea. It has an excellent air system for a little game, with the UN player having to allocate air units to interdiction, ground attack, and air superiority. The basic game is something of a walkover for the UN forces, which is probably how it should be. The best part of the game, however, is the many options that can be added to both sides for an extra cost in victory points. This ranges from Chinese intervention, surprise attacks, improved air defenses, Japan sending air units and paratroops, and so on. There are at least 25 options that can dramatically impact the game and since it's pretty generic, the game has remained current to this day.

Not only is this a good game, they are going to release a second version of it in the future with an up to date order of battle, new maps, and more advanced rules.

### The Complete Brigadier

I first learned of these rules while reading an issue of The Courier. There was a battle report of a fictional Mexican-Texan battle in the 1836 era. My interest was peaked again when in a later issue they did a playtest of two more battles using this system and I was hooked. I ordered a copy, opened it up, and was less than impressed.



Inside were two booklets, one on the rules themselves, one on scenarios, army lists, terrain, etc., some counter sheets to play with while you painted your armies, and some sample roster/order sheets. It was written in a sort of "folksy", Don Featherstone/Charles Grant way with black and white illustrations. At this point I wondered if I had made the right decision in ordering this set of rules.

Actually, yes I did. The command system is not only elegant, but it does the best job of showing how difficult it was to command a brigade in the horse and musket era. The game does use a diceless combat system, which can make things a little too predictable (we use a house rule with a D6 modifier for melee to take care of this), but it is very challenging. The game is designed for each player to command a brigade and works well for group games.

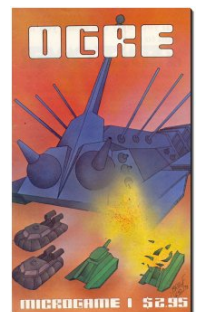
The good thing is that the rules can be used for any conflict from 1700-1900 and there is a list of about 200 wars that are suitable. I have yet to find a brigade level system that is as good or as flexible as this is. True, it's old school and today's gamers won't like it as the rules don't have color pictures and you're not throwing handfuls of D6s, but if you're going to do some Great Paraguayan War battles with obscure troop types, then this is the rule set for you. Hopefully, someday we'll see this set of rules freshened up and put out again. I think that it could still gain a pretty god sized audience, especially with all the figures that are out now for obscure eras and armies.

## Gaming Review

### Ogre

At the time, no one had heard of Steve Jackson Games or the term Miniatures, but that was soon to change. I came across an ad for Ogre when I was reading a science fiction magazine at a thrift store when I was about 15. The ad sounded cool, after all, what hot-blooded young male can resist giant cybernetic tanks slugging it out with nukes against infantry, tanks, and howitzers!

I went down to my local gaming store and plunked down the \$3, then went home and opened it up. Small map, about 120 thin counters, black and white rulebook, and a plastic pouch. OK, nothing to get excited about so far. Then I played my first game and fell in love with it. The game play was fast, furious, and you could teach someone in a few minutes. Within a week there was about six of us playing it at school. Well, others must have thought it was cool as a sequel, called GEV came out and the excitement continued. Now you had new vehicles, bridges, forests, towns, and some great scenarios.



This was followed by a book of scenarios, then a supplement called Shockwave, which added laser towers, cruise missiles, and more new vehicles. We played gigantic games with hundreds of units that would take 6-8 hours! It was a great game and is still beloved by many gamers.

Later, there was an attempt to do a miniatures game, with rules, boxed sets, and more, but it never felt like you were playing the board game. The entire franchise is currently in limbo and trying to figure out the rights would take an army of lawyers.

Still, Ogre, GEV, and Shockwave remain to this day as some of my favorite games and every so often I break them out and try a scenario. The simplicity, excitement, and great game play has stood the test of time.

## Pacific Victory

After playing Crusader Rex and Hammer of the Scots, I've been hooked on the Columbia block games. The games are nicely done, have a good degree of historical accuracy, can be completed in a few hours, and best of all, the block system does a great job creating the fog of war. So, I was pretty happy when I got Pacific Victory as a birthday gift.

Unlike some of the other block games, this one has no cards and uses large hexes instead of area movement which is featured in some of their other games. You get a nice Pacific theater map and 100 blocks, 50 blue and 50 orange, to represent the combat forces.

One of the interesting things about this



game is that it starts AFTER the Pearl harbor attack, although there is an optional rule for that. The game does represent the big problem for the Japanese in all Pacific WW2 games, namely, where do you attack? You basically have three options, India, Australia, or form a line of fortified islands in the Central Pacific and try to hold on.

By the sixth turn (turns are three months) the Japanese offensive has died out and the Allies are reaching the point where they've built up enough stuff for a major offensive. Then, it's a defensive game for the Japanese player as they try

## Game Review

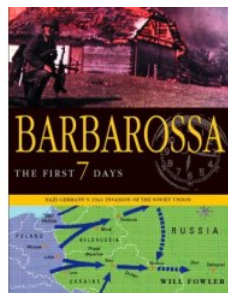
to hang on for a victory. As with most Pacific games, winning as the Japanese is not an easy thing to do. Time, geography, and industrial production is very much against you.

I still need to get a few more games under my belt before I get a good feel for the system (most campaigns only last 4 hours). My first impression is that it is Empire of the Sun without the complexity! The components are good, the rules are laid out well, and once you start playing it's pretty easy to pick up the system. Is it the best WW2 Pacific game out there? Probably not. My vote still goes for Empire of the Sun. But, if you like Hammer of the Scots, Crusader Rex, or are looking for a challenging WW2 strategic game, this is pretty good.

## Barbarossa: The First Seven Days

I picked this up at B&N on the sales rack and it looks to be a series as I saw a D-Day and a Bulge book alongside it. The book is supposed to be about the first 7 days of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June of 1941.

For the first half of the book it does a good job of showing the preparations for the war, the equipment on both



sides, plus the battle plans and politics involved. Then, the book takes you through the first week of the war, which makes for interesting reading. However, then the book goes off

through the first year, into the second, and the focus on the first part of the invasion gets lost.

Overall, it's probably worth the \$10 I paid for it, if just for the pictures and maps alone as it has several photos I have not seen before. If you're looking for a comprehensive book on the Eastern Front then you probably should look somewhere else.

## Armor Battles of the Waffen SS

No doubt many of you have seen this series from Stackpole books covering WW2 combat. I decided to pick up the Armor Battles of the Waffen SS as it had some chapters about the Berlin and late Eastern Front fighting.

I'm not sure how to describe the writing style of these books as it ranges from battle reports to eyewitness accounts to personal memoirs, often on the same

page! What it does do, however, is give you a clear idea of armored warfare on the Eastern Front, command and control, the problems of re-supply on the battlefield, etc....

This book does a good job of giving you firsthand accounts of armored combat at Kursk, the Bulge, and the fighting around Berlin. I came away with about three dozen ideas for gam-



ing scenarios and a much better appreciation of the close range fighting between the German and Soviet tanks.

A goo book if you can get past the robotic writing style and try to focus on the real life stories of the troops.

## Book Review



### **WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY**

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*I think that I've come to the conclusion that there's no way that either I, nor Warning Order, can be all things to all people. Wargaming, both miniatures and board, have broken into so many fragmented groups that putting out a general publication that tries to cater to all of them is impossible. There's too many rules, figures, magazines, and periods to cover everything in depth, so I'm going to just keep doing what we've been doing for awhile now. This basically is talking about stuff that our group games, the figures that we use, and the rules and games that we are currently playing. I will still post reviews about the latest products, but only if it's something that our group is going to try sometime. Hopefully, the people who have been reading Warning Order for a few years now, will continue to download issues and support us.*

*I will say that I am going to be building a colonial specific site that will be under the WFHGS site. This new site, called The Colonial Gateway, will feature a gallery, reviews, battle reports, and information about the period. I am also working on a massive colonial campaign game based upon an old series in The Courier magazine. It will feature a large map, counters, 54 event cards, and is designed so that all the players are on the same side. The map and cards are done, with work beginning on the rules and counters, so maybe it will be out by January 1st.*

## 1/300th Terrain Resources

Recently, I've been adding to and upgrading the terrain for our Blitzkrieg Commander games, which are in 1/285th or 1/300th scale. While there are many selections available out there, they're sometimes not so easy to find. In fact, I've blundered into a few of these sites by accident!

The first picture is of the large government building by JR Miniatures. This company produces a wide variety of buildings in this scale for Europe and the Middle East. Most packs cost around \$4 or \$5 and you generally get two of the same building in the pack, except like the one in the photograph where you get only one per package. For the money, they're hard to beat. Although not as well sculpted as other lines, they are great for this scale as you are looking for that



"mass" effect.

The second photograph below features some of the railway facilities and track from Wargamer in Poland (<http://www.wargames-terrain.wargamer.pl/index.php?category=6&>). I saw some of their offerings on Ebay and went to the site. They have beautiful village buildings, factories, railroad pieces, and more. Prices range from \$6 to \$25 for the large locomotive shed. I've dealt with them several times using Paypal and have received the product inside of two weeks. The houses are simply beautiful and definitely capture the European look.

I have not had a chance to pick up any of the Timecast or GHQ buildings yet, but I plan to in the near future.



## Product Review

Timecast has a great site and the gallery photos are truly inspiring, showing the incredible scenery pieces that you can create in this scale.

Finally, one of the most interesting ways to create buildings is here:

[Http://www.iandrea.co.uk](http://www.iandrea.co.uk) and click on Ian's Wargames. He has a set of 1/300th paper buildings (for free) where he took photographs of the actual buildings and then Photoshopped them to assemble as mini-kits. I've finished a few of them and they really look good! With some touch up painting on the edges and seams, then add some trees and a base, they look as good as most of the commercial buildings.

The good thing about this scale is that you can quickly create a village and add as much detail as you wish. The only down side is that you need a lot of buildings for a large board!