



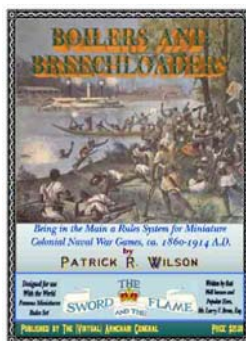
Warning Order

Nile Gunboat Battles

Several issues ago I reviewed the Boilers & Breechloaders rules from TVAG (The Virtual Armchair General), giving my thoughts about the presentation, layout, some things I thought that could be improved and more. I had gamed a few solitaire actions to test out the movement and firing systems, but had not had the time to play a large game with several players.

Although there were never any gunboat battles on the Nile during either of the Sudan campaigns, the possibility did exist as the Mahdi had several captured Egyptian ships. I was also inspired by the series of articles in The Courier during the Sudan series where they had a large gunboat battle at the end of the series.

I previously wrote about building my 15mm gunboat flotillas, so we won't go into that here, but I chose the 15mm scale as I have large forces for the early



Sudan period where our group uses the Battles For Empire rules. The one huge problem is that there is little to no information, so the design of the gunboats on both sides is pure speculation except for the few artist drawings of the period.

So, what did it take to make the game come together? First, the gunboats had to be built and that took awhile. I was originally going for three on each side for my first game, which I thought would be good for 4-6 players to have a fun outing. Although there are companies who produce some 15mm boats, my personal opinion is that for

the money it's simply not worth what you get. I've seen pictures of the Peter Pig version of the Safieh and while it looks good, the \$75+ price tag drove me away.

If you're going to do 25mm, then you are going to need a lot of space to do a gunboat battle and ships in that scale aren't cheap. Building in 25mm scale also can take a good deal of time, so this is something that needs to be considered.

Getting a flotilla of gunboats ready is certainly half the battle and the second half is getting everything from the rules prepared for a game. After going through the rules several times, it's my opinion that the rules aren't really designed for large scale gunboat battles. Rather, I think that they are designed for

ship to shore actions, boarding scenarios, or landing forces in support of ground actions. However, the rules will work for gunboat vs. gunboat actions, but for the 15mm scale I needed to do some modifications, such as ranges. (cont. on page 7).



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Road to Ruin 3: Drive on Kursk

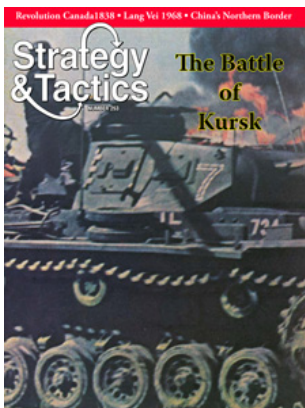
Game Review

If you've been reading this magazine for awhile, you probably have seen reviews on the two other games in this series, Drive on Stalin-grad and Drive on Moscow. Drive on Kursk is part three of what is called the Road to Ruin series by Decision Games. Since I'm an East Front fan I quickly picked this up, punched and clipped the counters, then eagerly got started.

The first two games in the series had a common theme, namely large stacks of panzers roaming at will through the Russian wastelands, crunching large numbers of Russian units! Both games had a timeline where the Germans needed to keep moving at all costs, making those games very tense and close affairs. This, however, was clearly going to be something different.

The components from all three games are similar, however Kursk, unlike the other two, only has one map. The maps of all three days are a throwback to the glory days of SPI in the 80s, with only a few colors, but the maps are functional and work well. The Kursk map has a series of Russian fortifications running throughout the map, so obviously this isn't going to be a smash and chase affair like the previous games.

The counters are similar to the first game, although I liked the iconic counters in the second game. The rules use the same system as the other games, so you can quickly get into this if you've played the others. The big changes deal with a new Combat Results Table, the extensive



fortifications, conditional reinforcements (this one has caused the most problems judging by comments on Consimworld), and keeping track of victory points.

The set up isn't too bad as many of the Russians are in large reserve stacks to the rear of the fortifications. The Germans are stretched thin, but have several stacks of powerful panzer formations. As with the other two

games there are a lot of Russian reinforcements waiting off board that are triggered by the extent of the German's success.

Here is where the Germans have some real decisions. Where to strike and with what? There's not enough troops for a broad attack and the combat results table is extremely bloody, so the precious panzers need to be protected by sacrificing other units. The problem is that the other supporting units are too slow to keep up with the armored attacks! This is what makes the game a great solitaire effort as the Russian player pretty much plugs holes and decides when to counterattack near the end of the game, so if playing solo you can concentrate on the German attack.

When the German attack comes, it is led by the panzer stacks, usually on turn 2. The Russians are trying to move up units to plug potential holes as they can begin to tell where the hammer is going to fall. The Germans pick a few points in the line and dive in, quickly killing the Russian forces in front of them. But here is where the real problem begins. Which direction should you attack towards? Do you ignore the Russian reinforcements coming in? Who will protect the flanks of the armored attacks?

The German player quickly finds that he simply doesn't have enough forces to do a broad effort and will have to pick one or two objectives, then go all out for

those. This is simpler in theory as the Russians will keep retreating to new lines of fortifications and more of them continue to arrive. This is basically a battle of attrition and if the German armored forces start to take a beating then it will be over with fairly quickly.

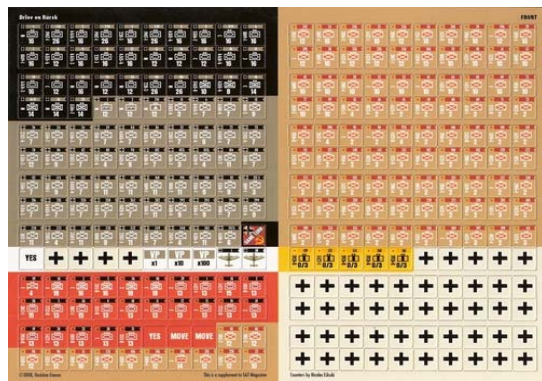
By the end of the game there is a pretty good sized stack of Russian units in the dead pile, but the German forces have suffered a lot of step losses as well. The last few turns will see a desperate lunge to take the big victory point objectives with the Russians counterattacking in certain areas to distract the Germans or threaten lines of communication. My two games I've played so far bear out that it is pretty tough on the Germans, but no impossible.



I would say, however, that this is my least favorite of the three games in the series. It's not that it isn't a good game, as it is. However, it is a struggle of attrition, endless banging your head against Russian fortifications, and against good Russian play it will be a tough slog for the German side.

There is an optional set up using Manstein's Gambit that puts a lot more forces on the board earlier for both sides and I plan on exploring that in the future.

Overall, this is a good game and I really like the series. Is it the best game on Kursk I've ever played? Probably. There's not much competition in this area and the few others I've tried usually focus on certain points of the battle. Again, for \$25 or so it is worth the money and you should try the entire series of games.



World at War #3: The Bulge

Game Review

World at War is a new effort from the creators of Strategy & Tactics. It is a series of magazine type games similar to S&T, but focusing entirely on the WW2 period. The first issue, Barbarossa, did very well and now goes for double its price on Ebay. I missed out on that one, but did buy the second issue which featured the Solomons campaign.

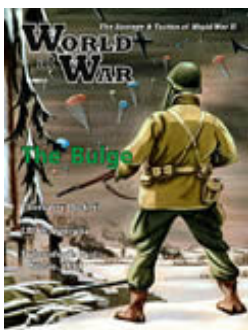
Now, with the third issue they have decided to do yet another Battle of the Bulge game.

First, the components are not bad for a magazine game. If you've bought any S&T issues over the past few years, then you pretty much know what to expect. The map is functional, but not spectacular, and covers the area of the initial German attack and the main objectives. The



counters use a series of icons with the combat value on them, which aren't too bad. Finally, the rules are in the center of the magazine and follow the usual S&T format. Overall, for around \$25 it's not too bad, especially since there are some good articles on the Bulge in the magazine.

Now there are a lot of Bulge games out there and I've played several, so I was interested in what the designers came up with here. There are several differences from the standard Bulge game which many gamers have seen. The biggest difference is that this game does not attempt to portray the entire campaign. In fact, it covers the initial German attack and the first Allied responses to it. The Germans either win in the first few days or that's it. There is some logic



to that in that in many Bulge games once the Germans have exhausted themselves the second half of the game is usually the Allies mopping the floor with what's left of the German forces.

The second unusual thing about the game is that the sequence of play has a pre-move combat phase, the movement phase, then a second combat phase. The combat table harkens back to the old SPI days with the standard Attacker Stalled, Defender Retreats, and the Bloodbath result. The Bloodbath or BB result can be devastating in this game, particularly early as it can open up huge holes for the Germans.

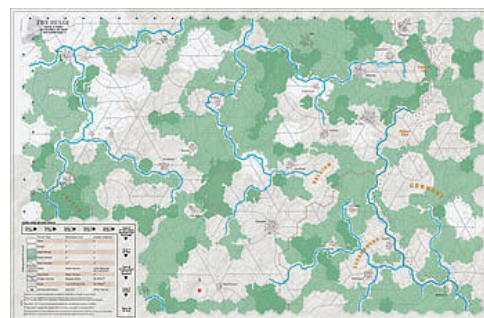
There are several special rules for Turn 1, with the Germans unable to use their artillery, no road movement, and others which assures the Germans of some strong initial attacks, but not being able to go anywhere, which is kind of what historically occurred. By the end of turn 2 it could be panic time for the Allies as the Germans only need to get to a road with a mech unit and they could win a sudden death victory.

Here's where I think the game has some issues. First, if a German mech unit exits along the top edge of the map it is an auto-victory or they can seize twelve points worth of towns/villages. If the Germans can get a few bloodbath results then the game can end pretty early as there aren't enough Allied units to guard all of the roads. If this proves impossible, then the Germans must take and hold a lot of the towns and villages, which isn't easy as the Allies build up after turn 4



and a ton of airpower shows up on turn 8, so either you win early as the Germans or you're postponing the inevitable as the Allies build up and start grinding you down turn by turn.

I do like the touches with the German commandos, the air supply, bridge interdiction, and the designers have done a good job with the terrain costs and defensive effects of the terrain. An Allied unit in a town behind a river is going to be a tough nut to crack, especially since DR results can be converted in towns to a step loss and you get to stay there. The game also plays pretty fast, as there are only 10 turns and not that many pieces to move, so both players won't get bored and the game moves along nicely.



So, is this the best game on the Battle of the Bulge? Umm...no. Is it the worst game on the battle? Umm...no, again. I think that this game is somewhere in the middle. It's the type of game where you're looking for something to game solo on a weekend or when you and a friend have an urge to play a Bulge game, but you don't want to break out something that will take 2-3 hours just to set up! I did like the sequence of play, the two sets of counters, and the game plays quickly. However, in my last playing the Germans got three bloodbath results in the first two turns and a hole the size of New Hampshire opened up and the game was over!

Overall, this is a good effort, especially for a magazine game. The magazine is very similar to S&T and the Bulge article was good as was the Solomons game in the second issue. It remains to be seen if this is a worth companion to S&T, so time will tell as more games and issues come out.

1st WFHGS Warmaster Ancients Tournament

We've really enjoyed the historical version of Warmaster and after several battles with Biblical armies several members of the group decided to branch out. This naturally led to some ideas about possibly having a tournament! So after a few months of on and off discussions a date was set for shortly after Christmas, people ordered figs, then started painting. It was close, but everyone got enough done for a 1,000 point army plus a few units that get awarded through the campaign system.

In the end we had four armies; Seleucids, Vikings, Romans, and Hittites. We decided to use the campaign system in the second book and each player received three randomly generated territories to add units to their starting forces.



It was also much easier to set out the terrain for the tables beforehand, then through a series of die rolls allow the players to pick which table they wanted to start on and then which side to deploy from. This saved quite a lot of time and allowed everyone to set up and get the tournament started quickly.

Once the tables were chosen the opposing players rolled again to decide who would set up first, the length of the game, and pick which side to start from. Although it sounds like a lot it went by in under a minute. To speed up the set up time again we had each player deploy their armies in groups of four units. By



using all of these things the games were set up in a remarkably short amount of time and play began quickly.

The first pair of games had the Seleucids against the Hittites and the Romans against the Vikings. Since I played the Seleucids most of the commentary will focus on those battles!

The Hittites got off to a good start as the Seleucids had a number of command problems (something that was to plague me all day!). The Hittites had taken four units of chariots and quickly attacked the Seleucid right flank. In the center the Hittites and the Seleucids both had problems moving up their main battle lines, but the archers and skirmishers began to snipe at each other from long range.

Finally, the Hittite chariots attacked in force, hitting the Seleucid cataphracts, but rolling very poorly in combat. The Seleucids counterattacked, knocking out the chariots and following up against the Hittite infantry. In the center the Seleucid pikes finally came to grips with the Hittites and began driving them back. On the final turn the Hittites broke, giving the victory to the Seleucids. In the other battle the Vikings and Romans, after a slow start, had a series of wild and bloody combats with the Vikings barely coming out on top in points.

The second round saw the Hittites vs. the Romans and the Seleucids vs. the Vikings. This time both sides were able to quickly close the gap in the center and combat got started right away. Some good rolls by the Viking archers decimated the Seleucid skirmishers and

archers. Again, this was to be a theme all day as the Seleucid pikes and cavalry performed well, but the supporting troops got taken out quickly in each game.

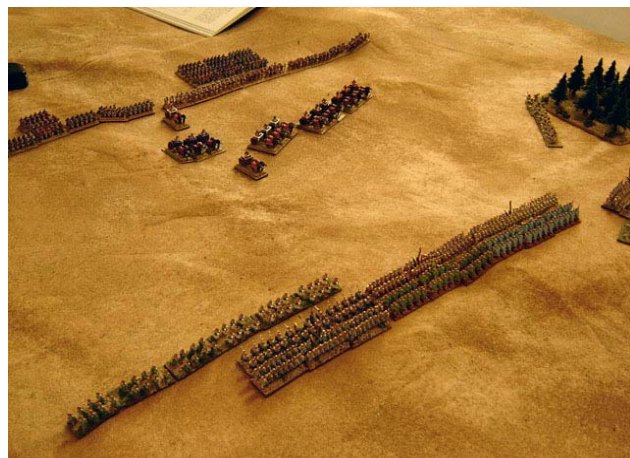
The Vikings hit the Seleucid cavalry hard, but with no cavalry of their own they were unable to follow up their advantage. The Seleucid pikes once again plowed into the center of the enemy and did a lot of damage, but some poorly timed command failures doomed the Seleucids. The Vikings kept coming and by the last turn there was a god sized pile of dead stands for both sides. The Sele-



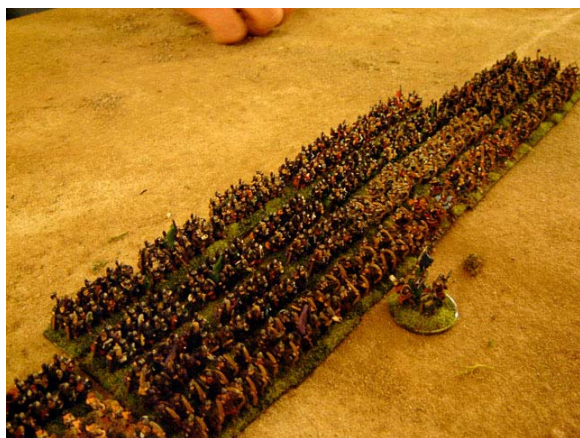
cids,, however, were unable to get going in the last few turns and the battle ended as a Viking victory on points.

In the other battle the Hittites fought well again, but the Roman legions kept coming and broke the Hittites on the final turn of the second round.

So after two rounds there was a three way tie for first, so the last round would decide things and everyone was aware



1st WFHGS Warmaster Ancients Tournament (cont.)



now ready to make a determined attack on the Roman line.

The Seleucid pike now charged in with the cataphracts and guard cavalry supporting on the right flank. The initial attacks were devastating, knocking out two legions and pushing the Romans back to the crest in the center of the board. The Romans, however, counterattacked, and despite a slow start, were able to

cave in the Seleucid left flank. Both sides were getting dangerously close to their break point with many units down to a single stand!

The Seleucids came on again, but by this time were down in numbers and the attacks fizzled out. After figuring out points it was determined that the Romans had won, but not by much. It had been the bloodiest battle of the day by far. The other battle was a Viking victory as the Hittites had come close to defeating the Vikings, but could not press their advantage at critical times in the game.

The final standings were:

1st Place: Vikings-Dave

2nd Place: Romans-Gary

Mayhem Award: Seleucids-Matt

We had played a three round campaign in six and a half hours, including set up and take down, which was pretty good! Afterwards there was a lot of talk about army list choices and how everyone would have done things differently if given the chance, which is one of the fun parts of the gaming hobby. The campaign did let everyone get in several games against opponents that you would not ordinarily be matched up against and



on terrain that for the most part was not of your choosing.

The important thing is that it was a huge success and everyone had a lot of fun. In fact, we're already talking about doing another campaign with 1500 points over two days! Also, Normans and Indians are being painted, so hopefully next time we'll have some new armies to go up against and perhaps some new players to expand the tournament.



Storm Over Stalingrad

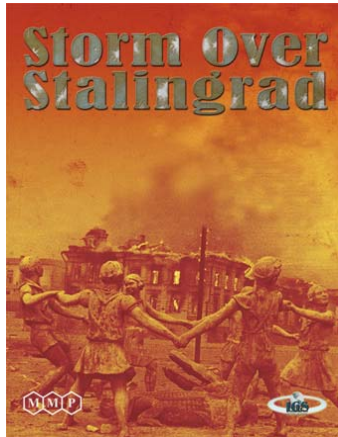
Game Review

Although I am a huge WW2 East Front fan, I have surprisingly few games on the battles in and around Stalingrad. Drive on Stalingrad and A Victory Lost are both more operational in nature and John Hill's Battle For Stalingrad from SPI, while it is a good game, takes a commitment of quite a few hours to play.

I've liked some of the recent area games, most notably Warriors of God and Monty's Gamble, plus the recent MMP games have been great in terms of components. After the first reports of this game came out I was interested, so sent off an order to Bunker Hill Games (which by the way has outstanding prices and service).

The recent trend with MMP is outstanding components and this game is no exception. The map consists of two sections, covering the approaches to the city and the city itself, broken into areas for movement and combat. There is a turn track, a place for the combat cards, and the area information is clearly displayed. The maps are well done and it gives the gamer a good representation of the area in which the battle took place.

The large counters are also well done, with standard NATO symbols and the German formations are color coded for ease of setup and play. There are plenty of markers for area control and more than enough units to fill the map, so gamers will have plenty of pieces to push around.



The rulebook is another outstanding effort and similar to A Victory Lost and Warriors of God. The rules are in color, with numerous examples of play and after one reading I was ready to start. The few questions I had were answered by reading the forums on Consimworld, but were nothing that would prevent play of the game as is.

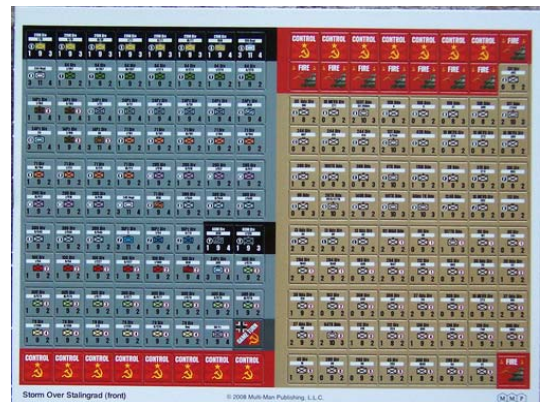
If you've played Monty's Gamble, then you will find some similarities in the combat and movement systems. Basically, the Germans have arrived at the gates of Stalingrad with several divisions backed by armor. The Russian defense is in good shape, but they must hold out while an endless stream of reinforcements crosses the Volga to take up positions in the city. Both players bid for the number of +3 areas that the Russians will control at the end of the game, with 3 being a good average, especially for first time players.

The German player can look at the defenses, then look at his forces and the standard opinion is that this is going to be easy. Unfortunately for the German side, that isn't the case. First, deciding what to attack where and when is critical to the success of both players. Attack too early and fail risks a counterattack that can push you out of desperately needed area. Move units into an enemy held area for an attack next turn risks counterattacks that could prove costly later in the turn. I found this aspect of the game very interesting in sequencing what to attack, with how much, and when in the turn to attack.

Play proceeds in impulses, with each player picking an area, then moving or firing with selected units, so there's quite a lot of interaction between players and virtually no down time. Add to that each side gets 5-7 combat

cards that can be used for air attacks, overruns, engineers, snipers, etc., and you really have a lot of chaos developing on the board!

Combat is done by adding up the strength of all of the attacking units, rolling two D6, then comparing it to the best defense strength of the defender plus the area defense strength. The result is the number of casualty points that the defender must spend. This can be in terms of units spent (flipped over to their "used" side where they are done for the turn), eliminated units, or retreating units. You can use a combination of the three to satisfy the combat result. Now this is where you can over analyze things! Sometimes there are a variety of options that can have a critical impact on your strategy later on in the turn.



Choosing which units should attack and which should move in to assault the next turn can be challenging. The final few turns can be pretty tense as the Germans launch a number of desperate attacks and the Russians try to form a series of defense lines to protect the last +3 areas they need for victory.

Although the set up is fixed, the number of starting strategies can be numerous. Each side will have a wide variety of options each turn and the combat cards add to the uncertainty. The good things about this game are that it is a simple game to teach others, there are a lot of options, the components are well done, and you can easily get in a game around 3 hours. I now have a new favorite East Front WW2 game!

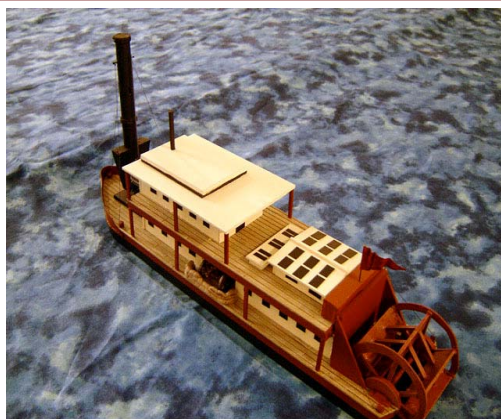


Nile Gunboat Battles (cont.)

I first went with halving all ranges for moving and firing, but that didn't work. By halving the ranges the forward guns couldn't reach the back of the boat with some weapons! It made it so that the boats were way out of scale to the ranges and while that works well with some periods (ancients, Napoleonic, etc.) it doesn't look right with 1:1 scale games. I finally resolved this by keeping the 25mm ranges, but halving the movement. A few experiments with some hastily set up one on one battles confirmed that this is the right approach and it worked well.

The second thing that would need to be changed is that in 15mm it is impossible to have the crew figures go everywhere that they are supposed to. The game is designed for 25mm figures and players are supposed to position them where they actually are, especially for boarding actions, assisting gun batteries, etc., but in 15mm there simply isn't sufficient room. The solution? Players write down where important crew members are on the laminated ship control sheets and I created some round wood disks that were painted in different colors to help with boarding actions. If there was a boarding action we would simply move everything to the side and fight it out using the disks to represent both sides. For example, if 20 Dervishes boarded a Egyptian gunboat I would use 20 yellow disks for the Dervishes, one blue disk for the first officer, three black disks for the black gang, and 10 red disks for any marines or soldiers trying to repel the boarders. Simple and effective.

The individual ship logs were created and laminated for use, the wind vane was made, and I designed a turn sequence



sheet that listed all of the available options for each player, which would save time from having to go through the rules every minute of the game. I went over the rules for the 6th or 7th time, then we were ready for our first try.

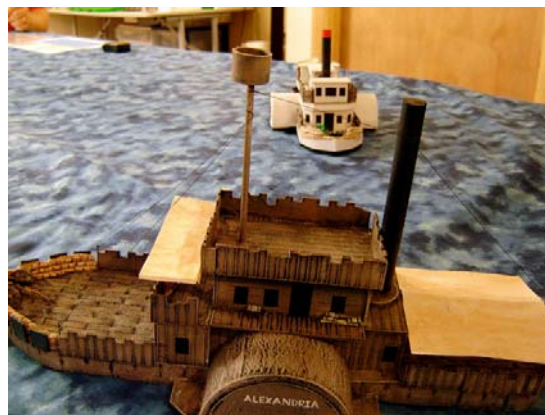
The game went surprisingly well for a first effort. Everyone had a lot of fun with the movement and firing systems, plus the card activation adds a bit of chaos along with the critical hits. The combat system with naval artillery worked really well and the shore bombardment table also did a good job of portraying the era accurately.

The one thing that threw us off were the machine guns, which we thought were too powerful. We were playing with some of the older Nordenfelts and Gardners, so I could only imagine what Gatlings and Maxims would do! We solved this by saying that unless a boat was carrying passengers in open spaces, that all targets were class IV, meaning that you needed low numbers and face cards to hit. That seemed to work well, but it again told me that the system was primarily designed for ship to shore actions. I think if we had not have done this modification that the battle would have turned into a floating machine gun battery duel!

The rules are very similar to Sword and the Flame, and in fact are designed to go with them hand in hand for boarding combat, firing at shore targets, etc., but they also share one other common thing. Namely,

that is that the rules don't cover everything and some things aren't clearly explained. For example, there appears to be no limit to damage control or the numbers of crew that can help with it. This means that in long games you could take a number of hits and fix all of them up! I could see that for WW1 or 2 naval actions, but when plywood boats are getting holed by 9 pounder guns it's going to take some port time to fix those holes!

Still, these are only minor annoyances and can be fixed with the addition of some home rules, which all of us have been doing with TSATF for eternity anyway! I definitely think that these are a fun set of rules and provide the kind of mayhem that any colonial gunboat battle should be. Although there was a lot of work that went into doing a game, in the end it was definitely worth it and I am already planning on building a flotilla of native dhows to try to swamp the British/



Egyptian gunboats with numbers!

If there is a second edition it might help to have a sample gunboat page filled out (using a historical gunboat) which would give gamers a good example to follow. Also, a reference sheet with all of the actions allowed in a turn would be nice (I'll send you the one I created!). I also think that this system could be used with ACW vessels and with smaller scale ships by merely providing generic floor plans and crew counters. That way you could do 1/300 or 1/600 gunboat battle and still move your crew around on floor plans off to the side of the game board. The possibilities here are limitless and I'm hoping that more can be done for this system as it's a lot of fun.

Encounter on the Nile

Battle Report

This was to be our first actual game of Boilers & Breechloaders, played on our annual Friday after Thanksgiving gamefest where we get together and play either a large game or two smaller games. I had built three Anglo-Egyptian gunboats and three Mahdist gunboats for the game, along with preparing some turn sheets and ship logs for all of the players.



This has been mentioned in previous issues, but there is little information about the gunboat fleets of both sides during the Sudan wars. The Anglo-Egyptian forces operated up to 30 steamers/gunboats during the early and late Sudan campaigns, while the Mahdists captured and used several Egyptian boats. Although they never fought each other, it is a great "what if" type of game.

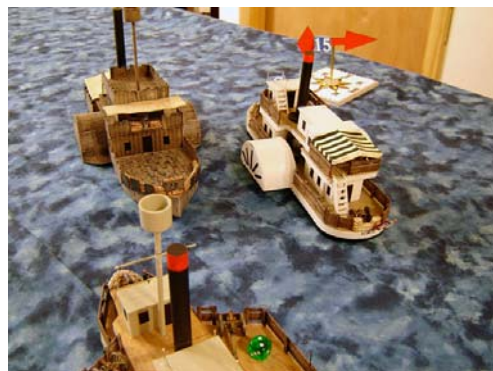
The Anglo-Egyptian force consisted of three gunboats, of which all were converted steamer. The Abbas (from the movie Khartoum), Sennar, and Alexandria were all armed with a variety of cannon and early Gardner and Nordenfelt

machine guns. All of the boats had crews of around 15 men and little in the way of actual armor. The Mahdist gunboats, Korti, Ariab, and Hafir were likewise converted steamers armed with whatever was available at the time. The Mahdists also had a shore battery consisting of two Krupp guns in an entrenchment outside of a village along the shore.

The scenario was for the Anglo-Egyptian force to clear the Nile in this area in preparation for a larger operation in the near future. The shore battery would also need to be silenced for the mission to have been deemed a success.

After a brief overview of the rules and how to use the ship logs, we were ready to start. B&B uses activation cards, so when a ship's card is drawn, the player commanding the ship goes down a list of options such as movement, increasing speed, moving around the crew for damage control, etc... Although it sounds like a lot, it really plays pretty quickly. Once players get a feel for the movement, turning, and how to fire the weapons the game proceeds at a better than average pace. Although we did not have any boarding actions, that could take some time to resolve. Players use to playing TSATF will recognize and grasp onto the combat system fairly quickly.

The game opened with the Abbas moving to engage the Mahdist shore battery while the Sennar and the Alexandria



closed with the enemy gunboats. At this point everyone was getting the hang of the turn sequence and how to move their ships. In the next few turns both sides continued to close the range and the first few shots from each side's main batteries were exchanged with negligible damage to any ship.

The Abbas and the shore battery now began to exchange fire. One of the Krupp guns was knocked out and the machine guns were taking a toll on the crew. A lucky hit by the remaining Krupp, however, damaged one of the Abbas' sidewheels, causing it to lose movement at the worst possible time. The ship moved to close to the shore and ran aground! Also, one of the Abbas' guns was knocked out on the next exchange of fire, but the Mahdist shore battery was finally silenced by a combination of machine gun and cannon fire. The Abbas then spent the next few turns trying to get back into the Nile and into the fight. Luckily, a few good rolls got the Abbas back into fighting form.





The Korti and Ariab returned fire as well, scoring several hits on the Alexandria and Sennar. The Hafir was able to control her steering, but the fires were still out of control and spreading. The Hafir turned back towards the enemy ships with the goal of getting back into the fight.

The machine guns of both sides had by this time killed off most of any crewmen who were on deck and several ships had flooding and hull damage. A few

more turns of firing followed, then the Haifr began to sink, still with fires raging out of control all along the length of the vessel. Now outnumbered 3:2 the Mahdist gunboats decided to break off and head for home, giving control of this area of the Nile to the Anglo-Egyptian fleet.

The game had proven to be as much fun as we thought it would be going in. The random card movement, the firing, critical hits, current speed, etc., all made for a pretty chaotic game. You definitely have to make some decisions about movement, where to place the First Officer, how many crew to use for damage control, and more. All of the effort to make the gunboats, prepare a reference card, markers, etc., was well worth it to try out this highly unusual subject.

A few things that we thought would need fixing before a second game. First, the machine guns were pretty powerful and we came up with the house rule that all crew (except if they are in an exposed space or loading/unloading something) were classed as artillery crew in TSATF, thus needing a low hit number and face cards for hits. If we hadn't of done this then it is doubtful that 50% of the crews would have survived the first few minutes. Second, it seems as if there are no



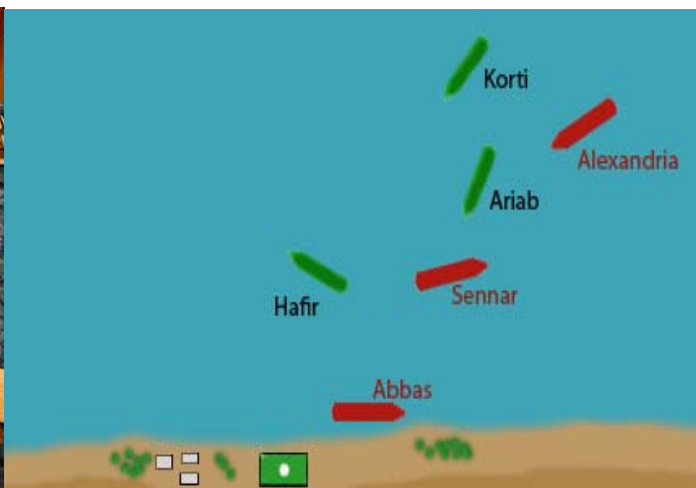
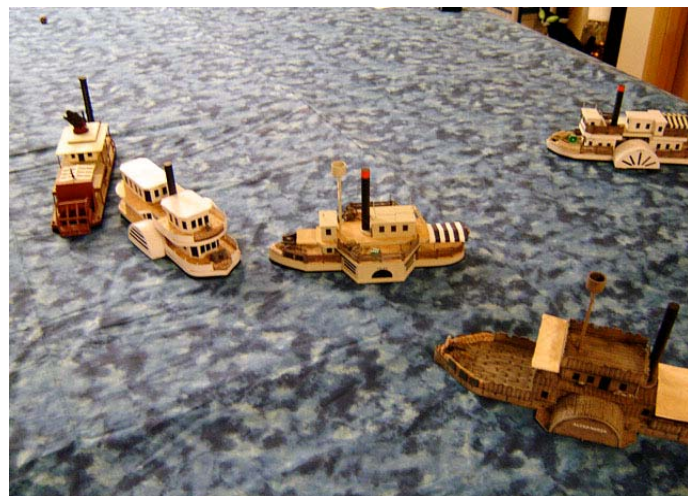
limits to the number of people that can assigned to damage control and no limits on how much damage can be repaired! We're going to work on some kind of system where every other hit (or something to that effect) cannot be repaired during battle or no one will ever get sunk!

Overall, a very fun game on an unusual topic and we'll do this again soon.

The Sennar and the Hafir charged in at each other, with the Mahdist Hafir coming off the worst of it. The Hafir was on fire and several of the topside crew were killed by the Sennar. After several exchanges of fire, the Hafir went out of control (due to a critical hit) and began to wander out of the battle area, still on fire.

Meanwhile, the Alexandria had taken several hull hits and two critical hits for flooding. Damage control teams were able to resolve the problem, but the ship lost a few valuable turns trying to get back into the action. The Mahdist Korti and Ariab went through the enemy formation and began to violently turn back to bring all of their guns to bear.

The Abbas by this time had freed herself from running aground and was raising steam to get back into the action. She still had one gun available and began to take long range shots when opportunities presented themselves. The Alexandria and Sennar continued to turn and deliver accurate fire at the Mahdist gunboats.



Memoirs of a Miniature & Board Wargamer Pt. 10

The Star Fleet Battles Experience

“Back in the day” there was this little known game from Lou Zocchi about Federation cruisers fighting Klingon ships using miniatures. There were very few variations in terms of ships and the rules were popular with the sci-fi crowd, but there was no large scale following.

Well, that changed dramatically with the release of Star Fleet Battles from what at that time was called Task Force Games. There wasn't much to talk about in the way of components as there was a map with small hexes, counters with bland colors and no artwork to discuss, plus a rulebook and what were called ship SSDs. You have to remember that back then (the early 80s) it was all about function and not glossy, attractive covers and rulebooks which dominate today's gaming.

What there was in that first game was a very fun set of rules that gave sci-fi fans what they were after, namely large scale ship combat set in the Star Trek universe. On that level the game far exceeded its expectations and became a phenomenal success. There were enough ships and scenarios to play the game over and over without getting bored, and it was fun. When the first expansion came out the game really took off. This showed that the game was not only just a one shot deal, but like D&D, there were going to be more supplements and the company was in it for the foreseeable future.

I've stated this before in previous columns and it deserves mentioning again, but back in this time period gamers had a commodity that they don't have today; time. We also had something that you rarely see in today's gamer and that is passion. Combine those two and it creates a powerful driving force in terms of the hobby. Everyone crowded around the UPS guy when he dropped off the boxes that held the latest supplement, miniatures, or Captain's Log. There were campaigns, long discussions about tactics,



and massive battles. It was definitely a lot of fun and a very exciting part of my gaming memories.

I can still recall getting off of work on a Friday at around 6pm, then a large group of us going out to dinner, then stopping off at a store for bags of sodas and snacks, then going to someone's house and playing Starfleet Battles until 3 or 4am! There was no Internet, Sony Playstations, and video stores were in their infancy, so gamers had time to devote to the hobby and Star Fleet Battles had a tendency to get people involved like few other games I've ever seen.

In fact, there was an Air Force guy who played with us who did graphics work. He made each of us our own digest sized SSD book, complete with a professionally done cover and every SSD laminated and punched! When the miniatures came out our group painted entire fleets and bought several giant hex mats for our fleet battles.

You could see that the game was successful in terms of stores carrying products, gamers in the area playing games, the discussions in the stores, and more. The series reached its zenith with the release of the second expansion (drones were the big news here) and the third expansion, which had carriers and fighters. We would stay up all night, reading and re-reading the new rules, fixing existing rules with the errata that was sent out, trying out new tactics, then discussing all of it endlessly over dinner and at the local stores. It was definitely one of the most fun times of gaming that I've ever had.

Naturally, by this time everyone was tired of one off battles or big slugfests, so the era of the Star Fleet Battles campaigns began. Our group played in several and although we never finished one of them, everyone had a great time and spent many hours poring over cam-

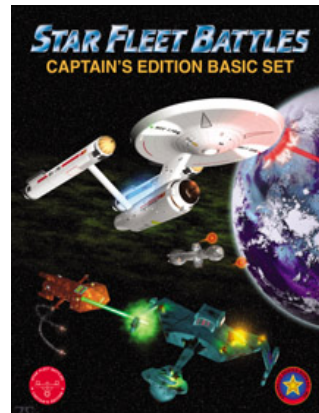
paign maps, plotting strategy, then having large battles that served a purpose and influenced events in the campaign. However, it was at this stage that we began to notice that something was wrong.

I think it was the release of the Captain's Edition rulebook that finally did it. Back in the summer of '83 or '84 when it came out there was a lot of excitement and all of us rushed out to get one. Here was the holy grail that would unite all of the rules, clarify all of the questions, and restore balance to the Star Fleet Battles universe of gaming. It was not to be...

The rules had grown so much and had so many exceptions that it was almost impossible to play. The running joke was that it was Squad Leader in space, and this was before ASL came out! It got so bad that you almost swore that there were rules like, “On Thursdays after 4pm in the Spring months, Romulan ships have a +1 power rating, except if they are fighting Hydrans who are using the exceptions noted in section 18.17.114 paragraph 3, 2nd sentence...”.

Interest began to waver and then it died completely. Most of the group moved on, friends took on new jobs, went off to school, got married, or new games came and took its place. When the Captain's Edition boxed set came out in the 90s I bought one and tried to rekindle the fire, but it was obviously gone. I looked through the rules, which were by now a good sized technical manual, and thought to myself, “We really used to play this?” I haven't tried the new incarnation that has come out recently and I doubt I ever will as the passion for Star Trek space combat has all but gone.

Will anything ever come out that could be like Star Fleet Battles back in its heyday? I think not. Gamers don't have the time or the attention span to give to a game like that anymore. But ever so often I think of the fun that was Star Fleet Battles, the many friends I knew, the long nights playing the game, and the passion that went into it all bring back fond memories.



Blast From The Past Pt. 9: Rules That May Live Forever

I thought it might be a good idea to look back at some popular rules that have been played for a long time and that are still around. Yes, even though many of the rules that have come out recently which have glossy covers, color pictures, web sites, forums, etc., there are still those that were produced with the bare minimum and are still being used today.



The Sword & The Flame

Still considered to be the premiere set of colonial rules after 30 years! I started playing this back in the early 80s and although its gone through some

changes over the years, it is still loved and adored by a large number of gamers.



General Quarters

Although a new version of this has come out, this set of rules still has a devoted set of followers. For around three decades it was the most popular set of WW2 naval rules and will continue to go on for quite some time.

STARGUARD



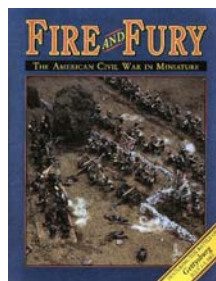
Starguard

This sci-fi set of ground rules that came out in the 70s still has a loyal legion of fans. I can remember playing it in my early years and the sci-fi figures that went with the game bring back fond memories. The game concepts still work well after all these years and hopefully it will soldier on.



Mustangs & Messerschmitts

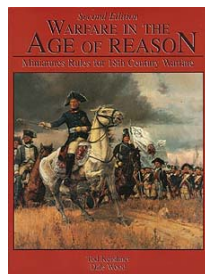
Definitely one of the oldest air combat games in gaming and still going strong today. The system was novel in using 1/72nd scale models with rolling stands to simulate 3d air combat. I spent many hours in my early days playing on garage floors!



Fire & Fury

This brigade scale ACW set off rules will go on for quite a long time due to the popularity of the core system. It has already been adapted to Napoleonics with

Age of Eagles and its influences are seen in sets of rules such as Battles For Empire and many others in magazines such as MWAN for a variety of eras.



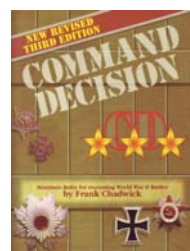
Warfare in the Age of Reason

Still probably the most popular set of Seven Years War rules with a large and dedicated following. Although many other rules exist for the period, these rules are still very successful and well thought of.



DBA

This set of rules probably holds the distinction for ushering in a new era of simpler rules. It broke down huge barriers that saw a wave of rules that featured playability over complexity that was long the mainstay of the 70s and 80s. DBA is still very popular, with world wide tournaments and a large following of gamers.

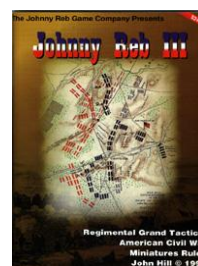


Command Decision

Now in it's fourth edition, this set of rules has proven to be one of the most popular large scale set of rules for WW2 combat. Noted for its platoon scale and command system, this rules set has a dedicated following and will be around for quite awhile.

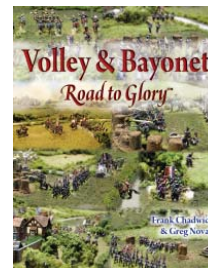
Johnny Reb

Created by John Hill of Squad Leader fame, this was THE set of ACW rules for many years. Now in its third edition it is still one of the more popular sets of rules



for the period, although the change from 1:20 to 1:30 put off a large number of fans. Still, it remains one of the best tactical level horse and musket rules with many loyal supporters.

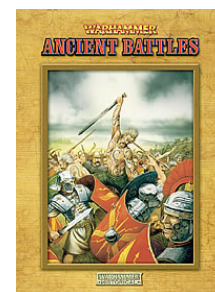
Volley & Bayonet



One of the first sets of rules to depict regiments and brigades as one stand of miniatures. A second edition just came out, but the popularity of the system has spawned a large number of home rules for other periods.

Warhammer

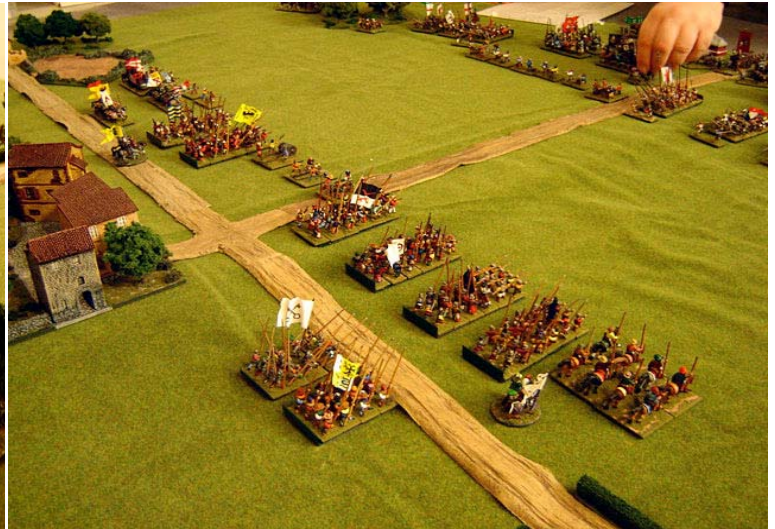
Ancients



I can recall playing the first set of these rules when they use to be strictly for Fantasy back in the early 80s. Who would have known that almost 30 years later the system would still be going strong with thousands of fans and numerous supplements?

While I have not played many of these rules in a long time, they all have several things in common. First, they have stood the test of time and look to be able to go on for at least another 20 years. Second, the fans of these games are dedicated, with most of the rules having active Yahoo groups, additional materials, scenarios, and more. Third, and here's the interesting part, the gamers who use these rules feel no need to change to another set of rules for the given period. That by itself is a topic worthy of discussion, but there's no room left here for that today!

There are others that could be added to this list, namely Empire, Ogre, and a few others. Hopefully in the future I can do a second article featuring the ones I left out! In the mean time, I need to pull some of these out of the "stack of rules" and re-read them!



The Renaissance era is definitely one of our favorite periods to game, generally because of the chaos on the battlefield due to the varying troop types and random qualities of those troops! This battle was no exception either, as it saw some wild swings of fate during the game.

An Imperialist army camped near an Italian town is moving up to do battle with a French army encamped outside the town. The Imperialists had the following troops:

- Two units of Spanish pike

- Three units of German pike
- Two units of Italian pike
- Two medium guns
- One light gun
- Three units of light cavalry
- Three units of heavy cavalry
- Two units of arquebus
- Several units of skirmishers

The French meanwhile, had assembled

their forces consisting of the following:

- Three units of Swiss pike
- One unit of German pike
- Two units of Italian pike
- Two heavy guns
- Two light cavalry units
- Three heavy cavalry units
- Several units of skirmishers

The light cavalry on both sides were a combination of Stradiots, mounted crossbowmen, and mounted arquebus. The French had more heavily armored cavalry and the few units of Swiss more than made up for their numbers in terms of quality. Most of the Imperialists were morale grade 2 (average) while the French also had mostly grade 2 units, but the Swiss and two of the heavy cavalry forces were grade 4 (the best).

Both sides deployed in three “battles”, each with their own commander (a player) and with the deployment system as laid out in the rules (we use Warfare in the Age of Discovery), with this time the Imperialists deploying two battles before the French deployed their first.

The French were obviously going to try to smash the Imperialist center with their Swiss pike units while trying to hold on the other flanks. The Imperialists were hoping that their strength in num-





bers would be the deciding factor.

The battle began with both sides quickly moving their light cavalry and skirmishers out in front of their forces. The Swiss heavy cavalry moved out on the French right, seeking a decisive engagement with the Imperialist cavalry force. The Imperialist pike, meanwhile, moved to the center and the right to try to overwhelm the Swiss.

The action got going with the French heavy guns opening up on the advancing German and Spanish pike. On the second turn one of the French guns rolled bad and blew up! This naturally created a small hole in the French lines and the Imperialists headed directly for it.

On the French right a wild cavalry melee developed with skirmishers from both sides intermingled in the mix. One French cavalry unit got shot up by the skirmishers, but then those same skirmishers were run down by a French unit of gendarmes. The heavy cavalry crashed into each other, with the Imperialists coming off the worst of it, although they did some serious damage to the French horse.

In the center the Swiss came to grips with the Spanish and Germans. In these rules if the Swiss can deliver a knockout blow in the first round they usually triumph in the upcoming push of pike contest, but if they can't then it becomes a battle of attrition which they will still probably win, but be severely weakened.

Unfortunately for the French, that's exactly what happened. The Spanish and Germans held their ground, trading blow for blow in the push of pike. When additional Imperialist pike units attacked the Swiss had been weakened and were in no shape to continue the fight. They wavered at first, then began to fall back, pursued by the remaining Spanish and Germans.

Meanwhile, on the French left the light cavalry of both sides had pretty much wiped each other out, so both sides could expect no help from that area. The remaining French heavy gun blew up on

turn 8, which was the signal for the French to pull off the field as they were being worn down by numbers. The French quality had not proved itself this day and the victorious, but severely bloodied Imperialist army was left in command of the field.

Another good Renaissance battle which saw wild swings of fate that characterized battles of that period. We've found that the Age of Discovery rules do an outstanding job of simulating that and now it's back to painting more Swiss as I need to finally bring out my 128 fig Spanish Tercio someday!



Product Reviews

I know that there are a lot of podcasts out there currently, but one of the more interesting ones that you should know about is called Noisemaker's Podcast (<http://www.noisemaker.libsyn.com/>). The thing I like the most about it is that it sounds like your talking to one of your gaming buddies. The presentation is done in a friendly manner where rules, books, and gaming items are discussed in a very positive manner. I've listened to a few of the episodes and the author should get kudos for at least attempting to keep this interesting series going.

I love terrain and I've been pretty happy with my new brown and green terrain mat from The Terrain Guy. The only problem is that it isn't very photogenic and comes out pretty dark in my



camera images. I blundered across one of the new GW green terrain mats in a local store and decided to try one. For \$30 it's a pretty good deal. The mat is green, but not too bright, with a good backing and when laid out it looks pretty good. Again, for \$30 it's tough to beat and I hope they do some desert ones.

Back in the day, CinC was a great alternative to GHQ micro-armor if you only needed a few things and although the figures are clean, the prices are pretty good. For a long time they were being sold through an Ebay store and the selection was pretty limited. However, they have an online store and I recently sent two orders which were processed quickly and shipped to me inside of a week, so I was pretty pleased. Not as detailed as GHQ's stuff, but if you only need a few of a certain thing, such as howitzers, they are a great alternative.

Speaking of 1/285th scale, a great place to get scenery is Wargamer Products out of Poland. You can find their stuff on Ebay as they have a good sized store with roads, railway sections, build-



ings, tents, and an extensive line of fortifications. The shipping time is a little slow, but it is definitely worth the wait. I purchased the cemetery pictured above (their stuff ships unpainted) and it was very nice for around \$20 + shipping. Most items are in the \$5-8 range and are well worth the money.

With the wave of plastic miniatures coming at us fast and furious I had the opportunity to try out the new Wargame Factory British for the Zulu Wars. This little box contains sprues to make 20 British and has separate heads and arms. For the price (around \$15) it's hard to complain and they look pretty good painted up. My criticisms are minor, such as there are no officers or NCOs in the set, the arms give you little choice in poses, and I wish there were separate rifles, packs, and other accessories. Overall, for the price they are good basic troops for an army.

I reviewed GMT's Combat Commander awhile back and have had many enjoyable games since then. Much simpler than ASL, you can play a game in 2-3 hours, plus the card decks add a lot of

chaos to the game. Not everyone's cup of tea, but it's pretty good for a wargame.

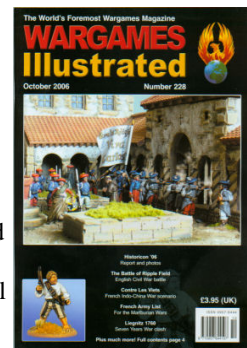
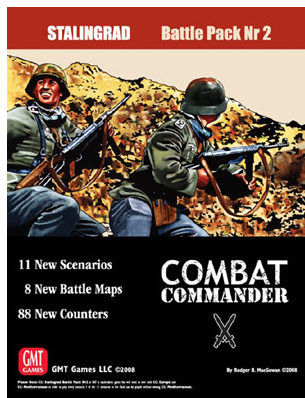
The second battle pack, Stalingrad, has just come out. You get plenty of new mapboards, extra

counters for rubble, Russian units, and Romanians. There are around a dozen scenarios, including a campaign, which is well done. It is similar to the Paratroopers battle pack in that for under \$30 you get new components and new scenarios which continue to add life to an existing product. Well worth the money if you're into WW2 small unit actions.

I'm helping my group out on a Napoleonic skirmish project and received some of the new Old Glory re-sculpts that are now sold in sets. I got two sets of the revised 1812 Russians and I must say that they are pretty good. Although the poses are a bit limited (almost all are in the marching/shoulder arms pose) you do get officers, drummers, and flag bearers in the sets. The faces, clothes, and equipment are sculpted well and these would do great for basic troops. I know that everyone says to buy Perry as they are the best and I agree with that for the most part. However, if you don't like taking out a second mortgage to afford a Perry army these revised Old Glory figures are a great alternative and paint up well.

Finally, I picked up the last two issues of Wargames Illustrated (December 2008 and January 2009 over here) and they were pretty good. WI has been doing a good job lately of having some very nice and inspirational color spreads in their magazine. Naturally, the huge problem is still that the articles are about the same battles over and over again, but the editor has to print what he has. I know that this subject has been endlessly debated on TMP and I'm not sure that there is any definite answer here.

The other news is that Battlefront has now acquired WI, so this should be interesting to say the least. I think after about a year it will turn into BF's own version of White Dwarf, but it's their money and they can do with it what they want. I'll reserve judgment...



Russian Counterattack

AOE Battle Report

I think that I've mentioned that when the first scenario book came out for Age of Eagles, the thing that caused the most astonishment in our group was how compacted the battlefields were. You had well over 100,000 men packed in a very small area for most of the major battles. As with most gamers we love to have big tables with endless flanks and lots of maneuver, but obviously we were doing something wrong!

So lately we've been packing in the figs on smaller tables and have liked the results. This would be another of that type of game, as we played this on a 6x4 and had planned it to go for one night, but everyone had so much fun that it went for a second!

The scenario was set in early Spring of 1813 and was slightly modified from an actual historical battle based on the troops that we had available. The Saxon VII Corps, with one Saxon and one French division has approached a Prussian held village across a river. More French are arriving from both roads and this will be used as the main crossing to get to the enemy on the other side. The Saxons deployed for an attack on the village while screening their left with some light cavalry and a battery of artillery.

The village, however, was not just lightly held, but strongly held by a division of Prussians backed by artillery. They opened up on the French and Saxons, causing some serious damage on the



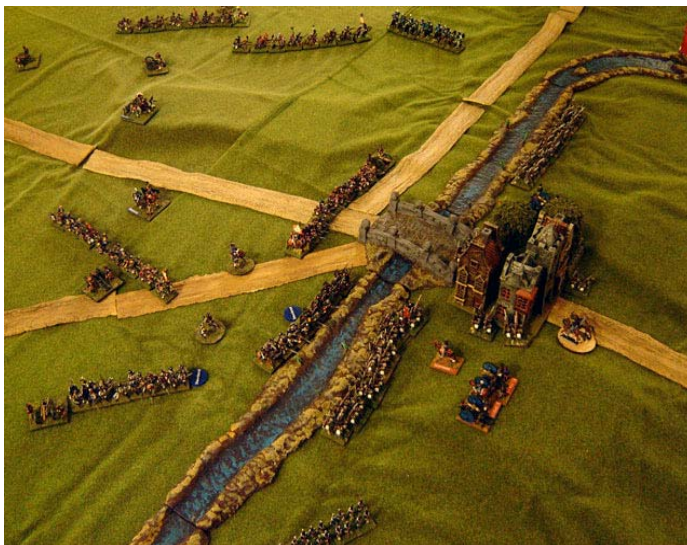
Initial deployments showing the Saxon VII Corps covering the bridge and hill, but with more Prussians and Russians arriving every minute.

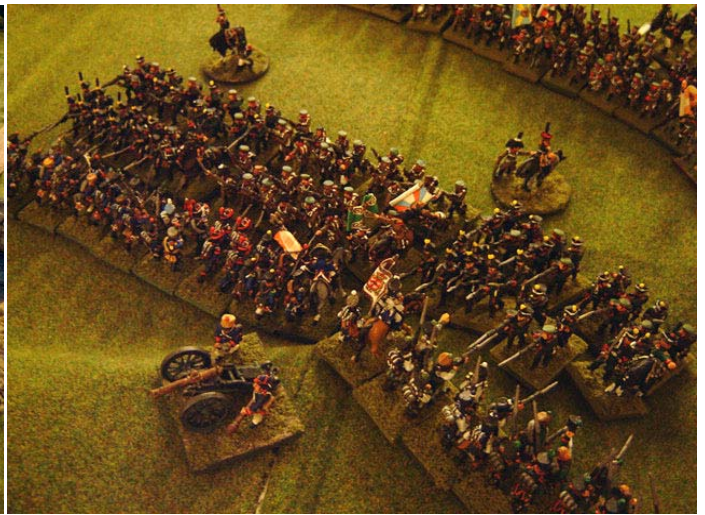
first turn! Obviously this would require more troops and fortunately there was a French infantry corps moving up the side road to assist.

Then the first of the Russians began to appear on the Saxon left. First one division, then another, then another, then another, all backed by lots of artillery. The Saxons desperately began to turn around to meet this new threat while trying to disengage one of the French brigades to form a link with the brigade directly across from the Prussian held bridge. The Prussians counterattacked across the bridge, but were thrown back.

However, their artillery continued to decimate the VII Corps, causing at least a one stand loss each game turn.

Things were not looking good at this point for the French and Saxons. A major enemy force had arrived on their flank and the French infantry corps was having difficulties in moving up. The other consideration was that the defenses that kept the Prussians bottled up on the other side of the river were beginning to crack and the French had to send two brigades over to help on the river when they were desperately needed in the middle of the board.





The Saxon light cavalry charged into the Russian light cavalry that was screening their deployment in an attempt to buy time. Although they were wiped out, they did give the Saxons and French one additional turn to move their forces over to the middle of the board, forming an "L" shaped defensive line. The Russians had by now deployed their infantry and were advancing toward the Saxons in an effort to break the center of the line and win the battle quickly.

Then a Prussian corps appeared on the Saxon left and began to move towards the main road in an attempt to cut off the Saxons. Fortunately, the third French corps along with a division of cavalry arrived to square off against this new threat. The French and Saxons were now obviously pulling back all along the line, even giving up the river defenses. The

Prussians crossed two brigades and began to exchange musket fire with the French along the river.

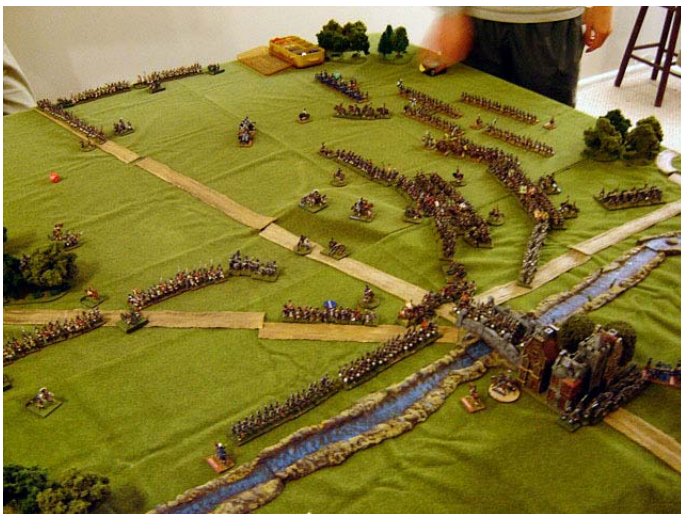
The first Russian attack against the French and Saxons went in. The defenders rallied and although they gave ground slowly, they were being ground down ever so slowly. A second attack pushed the French line back a bit further, but there were several continuing melees that prevented the French and Saxons from disengaging and strengthening the line.

The Prussians now attacked over the bridge and despite some casualties, gained a foothold on the other side. A Russian cavalry corps appeared and began to look for some operating room, but since there was none to be found, they acted as a reserve. All of the French forces and their allies were firmly committed in action across the board and this

is where the first night ended.

When the second night began, the Russians renewed their attack in the center, again driving back the French and Saxons, who were by this time getting down to almost 50% strength. A strong French counterattack stabilized the line for a few minutes and gave time to re-deploy some of the artillery batteries to better positions.

One of the highlights of the game was the heroic defense of the linchpin French infantry brigade attached to VII Corps. It was the center of the line that held the French and Saxons together and although it had been pushed back from the bridge, it was still full of fight! The Prussians charged it again and were repulsed, then a Russian brigade charged it from the front and that, too, was repulsed. (cont. on p19)



Inside Story Headline



Several pictures showing how the battle progressed. We use 15mm figures from various manufacturers along with terrain that is also from a variety of suppliers. The markers were custom requested from Litko and they have proven invaluable.



The French brigade then counterattacked a Russian brigade in the flank, routing it and causing severe casualties! Finally, after being isolated for two turns it was overwhelmed by combined attacks from the Russians and Prussians.

On the extreme French left the Prussians were still attacking, but the attack had stalled and the line was in good shape. Several cavalry charges and countercharges had not produced a decisive result for either side. The river line was also in good shape as the French had a division of good troops along with artillery to face the Prussians. The main problem was still in the center, where the Russians continued to attack.

The Russian infantry hit the center again, this time wiping out one of the Saxon brigades and forcing the French to stretch their line even further. The next attack was repulsed, but there was no time to reform the lines as the Allies continue to gain the initiative at the worst



Near the end of the battle and the French are under pressure all along the front. They have formed a defensive line, but are being ground down in a battle of attrition.

possible times for the French. The next attack shattered the second Saxon brigade and one French brigade was decimated after being hit on two sides. At this point the French line was shattered with Russians pouring through and the Russian cavalry moving to exploit the gaping hole that had opened up. The end was in sight, so the French and what remained of the Saxons called it a day and the game was deemed an Allied victory.

Both sides fought well and there was a dogged determination in the center by the Saxons and Russians to control the hill in the center of the board. The Russians had numbers and were not squeamish about using them in a battle of attri-

tion. They knew that the Saxons would break before other troops could fill the gap, so they came on the attack without regards to their casualties.

Again, the success of the scenario showed that fun game can be played on a small table with a lot of troops. I think it gives gamers a good chance to experience what real commanders of the era had to deal with, namely passage of lines and frontage problems. For large forces you simply can't bring everything to bear, so you must focus on one point and keep hitting it, sending in fresh troops when necessary. Regardless, it was a fun little battle that went a lot longer than anyone would have thought!





WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meets every other Friday night in the SLC, Utah area. We play Age of Eagles, Age of Discovery, Age of Reason, Flames of War, Blitzkrieg Commander, Sword and Flame, F&IW, and too many others to list here!

Email comments or suggestions to:
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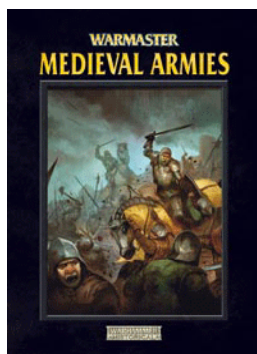
I know that I've complained a lot in the past about the large number of rules that keep coming out, which can be seen as good or bad, depending upon if you are a "rules junkie" or not. However, there has been a recent surge in new rules announcements where hardly any information is given about the rules! You go to some of the links and there's not much there either or you have to join yet another Yahoo group to learn more. Who, besides the authors, are playing these rules? I realize that the hobby is a grass roots, mom & pop, cottage type industry, but this is the 21st century after all. Here's an idea; get these things called computers, make some sample PDFs that describe the combat systems, scale, etc., and put up a web site or blog that has pictures, additional scenarios, and more. Yes, this was hard ten years ago, but not now. Is it because gamers are inherently lazy? Do they think that just because they produce a set of rules that people will buy them? Gamers fail to understand that there are already a lot of rules out there in the marketplace with some having been played on a regular basis for more than 15-20 years. For someone to invest in a new set of rules they need to know why they should. Marketing is a big part of selling the rules and a lot of gamers fail to understand that. You could have just created the best set of Renaissance rules in gaming history, but if your announcement doesn't say much, your web site is broken or has no information, and you have to join a Yahoo group for more material, guess what? You'll probably end up selling 10 copies of your rules!

Warmaster Medieval

Rules Review

I've long thought the Warmaster system must rank as one of the most innovative sets of rules to come along in the hobby. It has been so successful that it has spawned a series of ancient rules, WW2, Modern, and now Sci-Fi based versions. The historical version has been very well received and after the second supplement the rules have proven to be one of the most popular sets of rules for the period.

With the release of Warmaster Medieval the rules now move out of the ancients period and into the medieval and early renaissance eras. The book mainly consists of a large number of army lists, covering everything from the Crusades to the early Swiss army when the Renaissance truly begins. The army lists continue the trend from the first supplement where not only do you get the list, but a page or more describing the units from a historical perspective. I really like this style of presentation for army lists and



hopefully other rules authors will follow suit.

As always the pictures of the various painted armies are a nice touch, but there is a big difference in this supplement. There are a few full page images showing literally hundreds of 10mm figs arrayed for huge battles. If you

weren't inspired to get started in this era before, the large pictures will definitely push you over the edge!

There aren't too many rules changes, but the biggest one is how archers can support frontline troops (think Agincourt or Crecy). I think it is a good rule that is pretty easy to get used to and WMA players should have no problems adding it into their games. Most of the additional rules seem to be reprints from the second supplement, so their inclusion here was a

little strange.

There is also a full section on sieges that has an interesting twist in that you determine how long the siege has been going on before the game. This influences the set up, points, and more, which is an effective and unusual approach. The siege rules are well done and can be used with the earlier WMA rules.

There have been numerous discussions on the Yahoo group that revolve around points values and while I see the merits of some of the arguments, I don't think that one army or another is too heavily favored. With the amount of die rolling in the game it would be pretty difficult to cut the luck factor out of it and trying to make everything as fair as possible is a lost cause in my book.

Overall, this volume is definitely worth the price. Lots of good army lists, a full set of siege rules, great pictures, and it should prove popular with WMA enthusiasts.