

Issue #25

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Warning Order
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WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

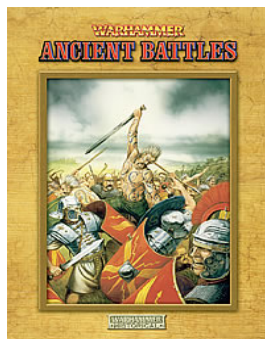
Warning Order

Ancients: One Rules Set to Rule Them All?

My first introduction to ancients wargaming came back in 1977 when I first got into the hobby as a high school student. I was at our regular Sunday club meeting at a USAF air force base where I lived and the club attendance depended greatly upon who was on duty, training, overseas, etc., so it could be as few as six or as many as thirty! This was one of the few times where it was packed and there was an ancients game going on while I was playing another game. The one thing I clearly remember to this day was that the players spent half the game arguing over the rules!

A few years later and in a different state where gamers were few and far between, I got involved with ancients as there were few games around. One guy had three or four armies with a few others having an army, so we did have a limited variety. While some of the games were fun, others were nightmares. This was truly the high tide of the WRG rules as up to that point the competitors were few and usually played by just a handful of people.

Naturally, most of the arguments centered around the



“Barkerese” of the rules themselves and were open to a wide variety of interpretations. However, at the same time there were some interesting discussions about armor, pikes, cavalry, etc., so it wasn’t just arguing over the rules. It may seem strange in this

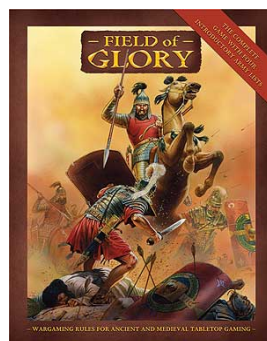
day and age where everything has to be spoon fed to the modern gamer, but it was not uncommon for ancients gamers to “study up” before a big weekend game by thoroughly reading the rules, their own and an opponent’s army lists, or re-reading sections of history books dealing with that period.

WRG’s ancient rules, particularly the 6th edition, came about

as close to unifying the ancient gaming world as any other rules set. Sure, there were detractors and those who swore off ancients after a few games of it, but looking back at old magazines it was apparent that 90% of all articles were about the WRG rules. You

could pretty much move to or visit any other city in the civilized world and chances were you could get a game in with your WRG based armies. So, what happened?

It was certainly a combination of things that led to the current situation in ancients gaming and the demise of WRG as the main set of rules for gamers. For one thing 7th edition came out and it was such a radical change that it split the WRG supporters in two and more importantly, it raised doubts about the direction of the ancient gaming hobby as a whole. More and more rules sets started appearing, articles in Miniature Wargames when it first started let gamers know that WRG wasn’t the only game in town, and suddenly the world of ancients rules that had been long dominated by one set was turned upside down.



This led to years of having no dominant sets of rules and ancients seemed to become a backwater of the historical miniatures hobby for a short period of time. All of a sudden,

if you went to

another city you weren’t assured of a WRG ancients game. There were a large number of sets of rules, running the gamut from rip offs of fantasy combat rules to magazine articles with rules in them. (cont. on p. 19)

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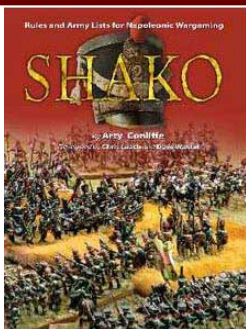
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Special points of interest:

- Interview with Chris Leach about Battles For Empire and Shako II.
- Battles For Empire, General de Brigade, Warmaster, and Blitzkrieg Commander battle reports.
- Several board game reviews.
- Regular features and an editorial.

Interview with Christopher Leach

Christopher Leach, the designer behind *Shako II* and *Battles For Empire*, had a chance to answer some questions about game design, the gaming hobby in general, and what he thinks about the current status of Colonial and Napoleonic gaming. Since our group does both periods and are huge fans of *Battles For Empire*, I thought it would be a good idea for other gamers to read about his efforts and hopefully take a look at his rules.



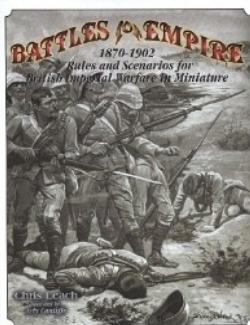
Although I had modeled WWII vehicles and planes for several years, certainly my favorite period soon became Napoleonics. Between Airfix figures and their Bruce Quarrie penned rulebook, I was hooked. It didn't take long for me to graduate to metal figures from Hinchliffe and Minifigs and I have never looked back.

Of course, I soon got into ancients (WRG 5th), ACW and colonial gaming. Strangely, WWII has been a later interest but now occupies much of my modeling time, if not gaming time – I'm really enjoying *Blitzkrieg Commander* and await the new *Crossfire*.

1. How did you get into the gaming hobby and what is your favorite period?

First I'd like to say that I am honoured to be doing this Q&A for *Warning Order*. I have been reading this online magazine for years and have been impressed with the writing, ideas, and diversity of topics. To add my meager thoughts on the subjects below is a pleasure.

Like so many gamers of my generation (I am 43) I started gaming with soft plastic figures and guided by a book aptly called *An Introduction to Battle Gaming* by Terry Wise. This was given to me by a friend of my older brother, Malcolm Grahams. With Malcolm's patience for playing games with a 10 year old, an interest in military modeling, and a father who was a former soldier and a military historian, you could say I was a likely candidate for the hobby. It also helped that my dad was English and so we went to the UK quite regularly which connected me to the hobby more directly. In the 1970s and 1980s Britain was its hub and I fondly remember going to Minifigs near Victoria Station in London and then later, Bill Brewster's Rye Stamp and Hobby Shop to get my Essex miniatures.



2. There were already a large number of colonial rules available, so why did you create *Battles For Empire*?

First, I think there is always room for more rules. Wargaming rules have been embedded in them rudimentary historical interpretations. And just like history constantly requires revision, new wargaming rules reflect more recent scholarship and, equally important to the hobby, developments in game design. We need new games just like we need new histories. So, today one simply could not produce a game system that was extremely complex and required seven hours to play, and expect many people to use it. Of course, years ago that was much more common; playing all day Saturday was what we expected to do.

More specifically regarding colonials, writing *Battles for Empire* was done knowing full well that *TSATF* dominated this genre of gaming probably more effectively than any rule set does for any other period. I had played *TSATF* for a couple of years with a friend's Sudan collection. The games were fun, but left me uninspired. Having cut my teeth on Napoleonics I needed a colonial game that felt more like a representation of battle than a skirmish.

Years after leaving colonials behind, the articles by Peter Gilder in *Wargames World* got me hooked again. His "grand manner" approach

to all games was applied to a Sudan project and this at least looked like 'battle'. I collected my own Sudan armies and picked up Gilder's handwritten rules when I visited the Wargames Holiday Centre. Based on *Pony Wars* the games were large scale and fun, but ultimately again seemed to marginalize the military problems of colonial wars in favour of Henty-like narratives; random events shaped the action as much as the players. Fun, but not enduring as a game.

Meeting Dave Waxtel at Historicon I saw his Sudan game based in part on *Fire and Fury*. I had been playing *F&F* for some time and the unpredictability of the movement and morale system seemed particularly well suited to representing the seemingly irregular behaviour of Native armies. Thus inspired, and with Dave's blessings, I developed his basic idea into a complete system that reflected what I believed represented the character of asymmetrical colonial warfare.

So, did the market need another colonial rule set? Probably not given that most colonial gamers love *TSATF*. But I needed a different game. I suppose that was the shorter answer.

3. If you were going to sell a new colonial gamer on BFE, how would you describe it?

I think three things jump out. First, it is a fast game to play. Second, the aesthetic is really emphasized due to the freedom to choose unit sizes and the possibility to really dress-up the stands. To me this is crucial. Our hobby is largely about aesthetics and single figure basing never allows the opportunities that bigger stands pro-



Interview with Christopher Leach (cont.)



in both contexts. Indeed, I think that the anachronistic qualities of colonial wars, from the European or western perspective, makes them more similar than distinct from Napoleonic warfare. There is a reason why close-order formations and even squares remained relevant. Native armies are, of course, different, but they too had to face similar problems of control at the army level. Here the *Fire and Fury* approach to movement and morale is particularly appropriate.

vide. Finally, the mechanics used in *BFE*, whether for movement and morale or for combat, generally assume a higher level of abstraction. Being roughly designed at the company unit level, *BFE* still allows small actions to be fought and with some degree of role-play for commanders as is common in colonial gaming. But the assumption is that bodies of soldiers are hard to move around in combat and this makes the game feel more like a battle than a skirmish. By pushing the unit representation up to battalion, which can be sustained by the basic game rules, any large colonial wars battle can be fought.

4. Napoleonic gaming is very different from colonial gaming, so how hard is it to create two almost entirely different systems with *BFE* and *Shako II*?

First, I must emphasize that *Shako* is Arty Conliffe's creation although I can claim a significant influence on it, especially in the second edition. Arty is a superb game designer who almost never allows himself to drift off the design concept he has chosen. This is a wonderful attribute, although the market place is fickle and constantly wants included what a designer has decided is extraneous to the game. I was lucky that Arty trusted me to be part of his 'staff' about 15 years ago and I have learned a great deal.

Anyway, the differences between Napoleonic and colonial gaming are perhaps less stark than they first appear. The same problems of battlefield control, fire discipline, maneuver, and timely assaults are present

I think, therefore, the question is based somewhat more on the difference between colonial games like *TSATF* and typical Napoleonic games. *BFE*'s conceptualization of battle places it more in line with the place Napoleonic gaming occupies than it does with the colonial skirmishes that are commonly played.

5. In your view, what is the state of Napoleonic gaming?

I think that this is a marvelous time to be gaming Napoleonics. Some might find the lack of a dominant rule set frustrating, but there are so many strong systems out there that you can certainly find a great game that suits your conceptualization of the period. The 'big battalion' approach to the period has *General de Brigade* which has a particularly large following in the UK. I still have a soft spot for Gilder's *In the Grand Manner*. Sam Mustafa is a won-

derful designer and his up-coming *Honour* system looks like it might be interesting. For really big battles there is *Age of Eagles*, which warms the heart of every *Fire and Fury* player, and *Napoleon's Battles*. *Volley and Bayonet* has long interested me and Mustafa's *Grande Armee* (especially the free fast play version) gets lots of positive press.

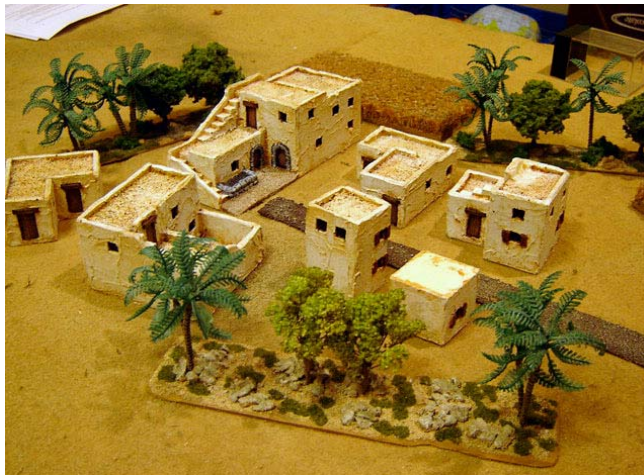
Of course, I want big battles and I want to have identifiable battalions, painted in all their splendor, able to perform the evolutions of column, line and square. *Shako II* does this. At risk of promoting a game I have been involved with for a long time, *Shako* really does allow for massive games played quickly but with all the little narratives that make battalion level combat interesting. We played Wagram two months ago in 25mm using *Shako II*. With over 7000 miniatures, hundreds of units, and 36' of table, twenty players resolved the action in about 6 hours of play. It was epic.

Yes, this is a great time to be playing Napoleonics.

6. Recently, the trend in the hobby has been towards skirmish gaming with few figures on the board, yet you've written rules that require a large number of figures for a game. What is your philosophy on this subject?

As I have noted above, I am interested in the problems of battle management. Indeed, I think that going too low down the representational scale increasingly undermines what ever his-

torical simulation worth our games have (unless the game rules are so complex so as to be unpleasant to play). I suspect that some of this trend has to do with the popularity of first-person video games. My group has done loads of skirmish games usually intended for convention use. Pirates, cowboys, Viking raiders and the Alamo have all occupied our modeling efforts and were fun – for a couple of games. They all get sold almost immediately after being played and I don't (cont. on p. 4)



Interview with Christopher Leach (cont.)

plan to go that route again (of course, I will...).

In addition to exploring higher-level military problems, I am also interested in the visual impact of the hobby and want my armies to look like, well, "armies." So, this trend toward skirmish gaming, driven by a host of reasons, is a shame at a number of levels. And with the massive number of scale choices for figures, it is unnecessary. If painting 300 25mm Zulus is too much to handle (both financially or artistically) get some 15s or even better 10s. Much cheaper and easy to paint but the effect can be excellent.

Ultimately people should play what they want and I have had lots of fun preparing skirmish games, but for me they just don't satisfy my expectations of the hobby. By all means read first person accounts of war. They are our means to understand the human cost. But to pretend that we can represent the variables of that experience with toy soldiers is unlikely. Getting at the theoretical problems of war based on its principles and doctrines is slightly more approachable and the aesthetic of massed armies is hard to beat when coupled with excellent terrain.

7. When designing rules, what is the hardest part about it in terms of playtesting, marketing, editing, etc.?

I have been fortunate in having Arty and Dave of Quantum Publishing for the production, printing and distribution of my two books. I really had little to do with that side of things. Ultimately I think the distribution aspect of a product is the most difficult unless you are willing to spend up-front on advertising and promotion at conventions. It seems to me that popular games are often that because they get press and play at the big conventions. This is easily done in the UK where distance is not an issue or even on the east coast of the US, but

living in Vancouver has been frustrating for my desire to support my rules and scenarios. Perfectly good games remain obscure because of lack of exposure. Of course, ultimately the product has to be well conceived and that takes me back to the previous comments about production values and support.

In terms of game design there is the obvious balance between game and simulation that can be difficult to achieve. Getting that balance relies on effective playtesting. That means having guys who are willing to 'break your game' by pushing your concepts to a point where the mechanics breakdown or the historical underpinnings are either revealed as too prescriptive or inadequately present. That willingness to be honest is often NOT found in your own group. Indeed, you might not want to play wargames with these rule 'breakers' socially, but you need them in your team whether you use their advice or not. I have had good people involved in my wargames writing and have done much more of this type of work for others. In addition to working



on most of Arty's games, such as *Shako* (I and II), *Armata*, and *Crossfire*, I have also provided playtesting, conceptualization, or editing services to Pete Jones for his *Cold War Commander* and to Colin Rumsford for his second edition of *Rapid Fire*. In many ways I find this an extremely gratifying part of the hobby, although pulling concepts together for one's own creation is always the most exciting.

8. Currently in the hobby there is a lot of discussion about whether or not rules should have just the bare minimum (i.e., a color cover with B&W text for the rules) or go the glossy route such as *Flames of War*, *Warmachine*, and others. What is your opinion on this?

Gilder and MacFarlane invented glossy presentation for wargaming with the original *Miniature Wargames*. It was inspirational, especially for a hobby that still in the 1980s was fragmented in small groups around the globe without the internet to provide shared approaches to modeling and rules. When colour photography and elaborate layouts were applied to rules it was very exciting. There is no question that when I first got *Tactica* and *Fire and Fury*, really the first two games that went this route of colour and fancy graphics, I was blown away.



Interview with Christopher Leach (cont.)



Expecting high production values is ubiquitous today in any form of publication. So, wargaming rules need to satisfy that expectation. Colour is still great and I am a sucker for a good looking book, but now I think the colour has to be used to also reveal the game. *Blitzkrieg Commander* does this well, using the colour pictures of nicely finished models to explain game mechanics. However, this can be achieved in B&W with clear formatting and diagrams, and some decorative illustrations.

Of course, for new gamers, the colour illustrations also serve as a guide for how a game should look and how one might paint one's miniatures. I don't play *Flames of War*, but you would have to be really grumpy not to like the production values. Complaining about all the supplements for that game also ignores how much they are used by new gamers who need the textual and graphical support and get inspired by the pictures.



One last thing on this point, there is much criticism of GW about their many up-dates and supplements. The same criticism was leveled at WRG. And yet, without revisions and supplements rules can slowly die in favour of new, although not necessarily better, games. *TSATF* is remarkable for its longevity, but even it has gone through revisions and there are countless supplements and versions of it to keep it fresh and 'alive'. So, keep the supplements, new editions and high quality graphics coming. They are a way of keeping our hobby exciting.

9. What are some of the innovations that you've seen lately in the hobby in regards to game design?

I'm not sure that I have seen many new innovations in design, *per se*. I think most mechanics have been ferreted out of throwing dice and reading them in almost every conceivable way! Trends in design seem to be moving toward a little less control over what our miniature units do and when they get to do it. This is not new, but games like *Warmaster* and its variants reveal a willingness to let chance, modified by training and quality, shape the degree to which we have command and control over our armies. This is distinct from the chess-like approach to design where you live and die by your own decisions translated onto the table. For some games I quite like this change in approach and the move away from rigid turn sequences. However, this type of game is often less suitable for large, multi-player battles. Waiting for one

player to go through his actions prior to seeing if the next player will pass a command roll, or worse, having one player achieve successive actions with his battle-group can be a problem when several players are inactive.

10. Finally, what are you currently working on and what can we expect to see from you in the future?

I have been chipping away at *Battles for Empire II* for a long time. I have a basic draft largely done and want to see this project completed by next year. I am mostly doing it for my group and the small cohort of guys who play *BFE* either as a secondary game to *TSATF* or as their main colonial rules. My intention with the second edition is to



streamline certain mechanics, add more tactical nuances to the way mounted units play in the game, integrate more specific rules for more campaigns, represent technological differences a little more specifically and finally make the game play even faster.

I will continue to work with Arty on his various projects and look forward to playtesting the scenarios in development for *Shako II* by Michael Hopper. Lots of fun, the most important thing.

If you have not given Battles For Empire a try, I strongly suggest that you do. Although the rules look complex, they are not and they do an excellent job of giving that "horde" type of movement for the native armies as they advance towards the colonial forces. We would like to thank Chris for taking the time for this interview.

Romans vs. Seleucids 2,000 Point Battle

WMA Battle Report



cided this time to go with a “heavy” army list with few skirmishers and archers, which would almost prove fatal in the long run. There were two units of elephants, three units of heavy cav, six pike units, two units of imitation legions, pus a mix of archers, skirmishers, and light cav to round out the army. Either way, 2,000 points per side is a lot of units on the board!

The Romans went with a conservative deploy-

We finally finished enough units of Romans and Seleucids to do a 2,000 points per side battle for Warmaster Ancients. This probably took us about a year and a half to get the required number of units, but it was worth it in the end. The biggest hurdle was the pike units for the Seleucids. I used the later Seleucid list so I needed six units of pikes with 48 figs per unit! Yes, that was a lot of drilling and cutting pikes, but you can be the judge of the end result from the pictures in this report!

The Romans went with quite a few legions backed by auxiliaries, plus archers, skirmishers, and some heavy cavalry from the additional lists posted on Rick Priestley’s Warmaster site. The Romans also had two units of artillery for ripping into the elephants and pike units of the Seleucids.

As the Seleucid commander I de-

ment, basically lining up legions across the length of the board, interspersed with the artillery and screened by archers and skirmishers. The placed their cavalry on the flanks to cover the advance of the legions. The Seleucids deployed the pikes in the center with the heavy cavalry on the right flank in an attempt to overwhelm one side of the Roman line. The elephants, light troops, and some archers would pin the left flank of the Romans while the damage was being done by the heavy units in the center and the right.

We used the standard deployment in the rulebook and it was a pretty impressive sight! There were a lot of units on the board and although it had taken a lot of time to create this it did look impressive!

The Romans moved first and immediately had command issues. The Romans advanced in fits and starts with their entire right paralyzed for the first turn. The Seleucids, however, were able to move almost their entire army and some units got two moves before the start of the Roman second turn. Turn two was almost a repeat of the first turn, with a few Roman units moving and most of the army failing their command rolls. The Seleucids again rolled well and the entire army advanced in unison against the Romans and things were beginning to look



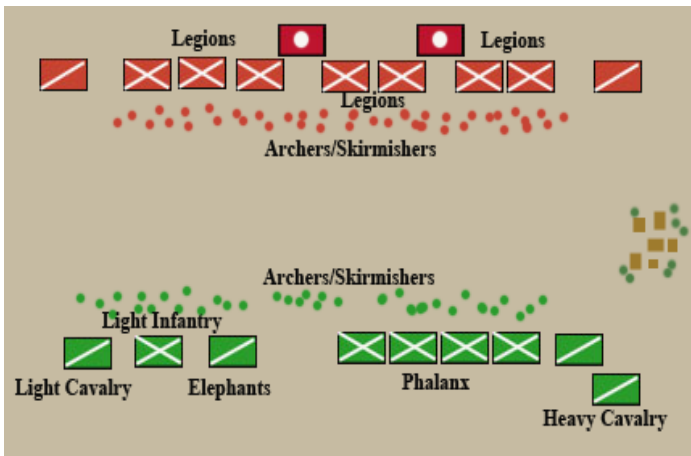
pretty good for the Seleucids.

Things began to change in the third turn, however, as everything started going right for the Romans and everything went wrong for the Seleucids! The Romans began to advance and successfully rolled multiple orders for many units, which moved their archers into range



Romans vs. Seleucids 2,000 Point Battle

WMA Battle Report



where they coordinated a barrage on the leading Seleucid elements. The Seleucids tried to stabilize the situation by bringing up reserves and getting them into line to meet the Roman threats, but poor command rolls left many units out on a limb just when the Romans launched their main effort.

The Roman right rolled forward, wiping out the Seleucid light cav and some of the supporting light infantry. The Seleucid elephants charged in, creating havoc, but they were slowly ground down in attrition type combat. By the end of turn five the Seleucid left was in danger of collapsing and it was only the bad command rolls by the Romans on turn six that saved the flank!

In the center the Seleucid pikes could not get moving and several attacks could not make any headway. The Roman

archers, skirmishers, and artillery began to cut up the pike units and again things were looking bad for the Seleucids. The only success was that the elephants were doing some serious damage to the Roman left, but were being wiped out in the process.

The turning point was the Seleucid heavy cavalry now came into play when

they crashed into the legions and their supporting cavalry. The Seleucid cavalry tore a gaping hole on the Roman left and poured through, threatening to roll up that flank. The Romans responded quickly by grabbing any units in the area and rushing them forward to fill in the gap. The Seleucid cavalry, however, was just getting started. They hit the reserves and destroyed three more units, including some artillery. Finally, with most of the cavalry reduced to one or two stands they pulled back into a reserve position.

Now the pike phalanxes began to move towards the inevitable clash with the legions. We've used these two armies against each other several times and it always results in a bloody, chaotic affair and this time was no different. Each side

attacked, counterattacked, then charged again. After two turns both sides primary fighting units were down to less than 50% strength. The Seleucids had now evened things up across the battlefield and both sides had few, if any, fresh units still left.

With each side only one or two destroyed units away from breaking both sides made a final push. The Seleucids held their own during the Roman half of the turn then counterattacked and destroyed the needed one unit to win the game.

In the end the Seleucids had won, but just barely. Both sides had taken huge



losses and the battle had seen some wild swings of fate. The Romans in WMA are very tough and the Seleucid decision to go with few light troops is something that will not be repeated by myself in the future!



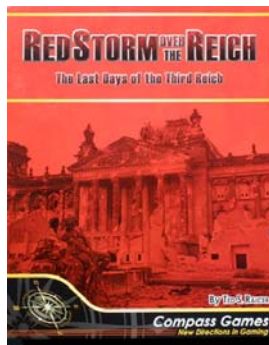
I think you have to ask yourself about what kind of gamer wants to play a game about the destruction of Army Group Center and the Russian drive to end the war. Are they: A) Masochists who love seeing their forces destroyed over and over again, B) Play the Germans in a lot of Barbarossa games and are now giving their opponent a chance to get some retribution, or C) Really love a desperate battle where defense is at the forefront.

For me it would be B and C, but after playing Bitter End, which was also produced by Compass Games, and having Paths of Glory from Red Storm's designer, Ted Raicer, I decided that this game would be a good investment and I was right.

Red Storm Over the Reich is what would be called a "mini-monster", with two 22 x 34 maps, two counter sheets, and several charts, plus the rules. The components are the usual high quality from Compass and the maps look great laid out. The counters and charts are also very high quality, easy to read, and are not a distraction or problem as in some other games.

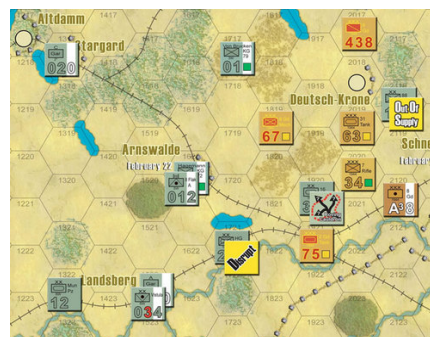
The rules are also well laid out and are pretty easy to digest. The hardest thing is to wrap yourself around the unusual sequence of play and I think this will be the stumbling block for many gamers. My first game prematurely ended when I did one turn out of sequence and forgot to subtract some movement from the Russians! My suggestion is to go over the rules carefully, especially the example of play at the end of the rules, then go through the first few turns step by step to make sure that you are doing everything correctly. Again, it's not rocket science, but it's a sequence of play that most gamers are not familiar with.

The game covers the spring drive to end the war and with the set up you can see how hopeless the German position actually is. There are stacks of Russians everywhere while the German front line is pretty thin, with several panzer and panzergrenadier divisions a few hexes



back from the front lines as a mobile reserve. You just know that this is going to get ugly real fast...and it does.

Basically the Russians roll for how much movement they get each turn. Then the Russians choose how much to spend in their initial movement, being careful not to move too far or the artillery can't barrage and they need to save some for breakthrough. Then there is the barrage phase, a German reaction phase, combat, then the Russians finish their movement with whatever movement points they have left. Then there's still redeployment movement and exploitation movement with overruns. In other words, the Russians move a lot!



Big, gaping holes appear in the German lines, the panzers roll in to plug in the holes, "roving cauldrons" of out of supply German formations try to get back to the front, refugees, naval evacuations, and more are all here to create a truly desperate situation for the German player. For the Russian player it is trying to keep the offensive going. Once the frost is gone and replaced by mud the movement becomes much more limited. Then the problems with supply begin and if you haven't won by an automatic victory by this time, then Berlin begins to look further and further away.

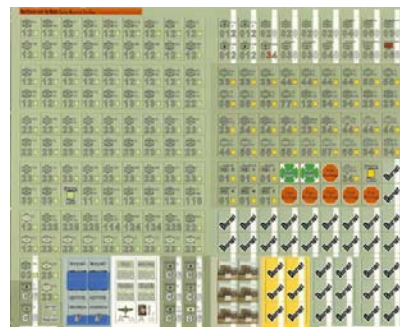
The Germans keep coming back as well. Other units from other fronts begin to show up, replacements in the form of kampfgруппes and garrisons appear,

the front becomes shorter, and time gets short for the Russians to win a victory. The game could literally come down to the last turn or two as the Germans try to scrape up enough units to form one last defense line while the Russians go for one more push that will take the Bunker in Berlin.

I liked the little touches that add a lot into this game. Evacuating refugees, naval movement, the formation of kampfgруппes, and the Russian logistical strain area all well represented. The addition of General Heinrici (for those of you who've read The Last Battle), Hans Rudel, and the "roving cauldrons" are all great little items that add a lot of flavor to the game. I also like the historical dates on the map showing the Russian advance which lets you know how you are doing in comparison to the real event. I've read many books about this phase of the war and this game is definitely one of the best at portraying the events. Most games give this short shrift, usually relegating it to the very end of East Front operational or strategic games as most players have usually given up by this point. This is a shame as it is a very interesting situation.

The game has had very little if any errata and most questions can be answered by going over the rules again or referring to the example of play, which covers an entire turn in one area. I've found that the play balance favors the Germans surprisingly, but just by a little. If the Russians get some good rolls for movement, then it could be a short game for the Russians.

I think if you can adjust to the sequence of play and how movement is dealt with, then you will enjoy this game. If you're an East Front fan, this game definitely belongs in your collection. With this game and Bitter End, Compass Games has given us two outstanding games on the end of the war on the Eastern Front that are definitely worth the time and money that will be spent by gamers.

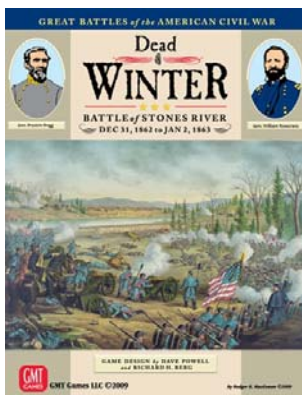


Dead of Winter is the fifth game in GMT's Great Battles of the American Civil War series. If you've played any of the other games in the series you can quickly go through the latest version of the rules and get started almost immediately. If this is your first game in this series, then you're in for a treat.

Dead of Winter covers the Battle of Stones River in late December of 1862 and early January of 1863. You get four 22 x 34 maps in the box, which makes this game larger than the Gettysburg game in this series! There are several sheets of counters, two sets of tables and charts, plus a second booklet with specific rules, scenarios, and analysis. As with most games in this series it's tough to complain about anything that you get in the box.

Stones River saw two roughly equal forces try to turn each others flank, but the Confederates struck first, which provides the basis for several of the smaller scenarios. There was a series of desperate fights, especially the "jackknife" shape defense with Sheridan's division that prevented a Union disaster. This was followed by little action on the second day, then a futile Confederate offensive on the third day that was repulsed with great loss. Even though both sides had similar losses and the Union gave up the most ground, the Confederates fell back first, leaving the Union with a victory.

The latest version of the rules adds a few more clarifications, but there is no earth shattering changes where players will need to re-learn aspects of the rules or retrofit existing games in the series with new charts, counters, etc., which I



always dread with some game series. The GBACW system in its current incarnation has been very successful, plays well, and most of the questions seem to arise from unusual situations that don't occur that often. To me this is a huge selling point and I hope that the trend of just improving the system, not reinventing it, continues in the future.

Now this is not a complex game, but it's not for first time gamers either. There is an outstanding command system where division officers need to see if they are in range of their corps commanders, then chits are drawn for efficiency. This translates into how many activations each division commander gets, which are used to activate the brigades under him. When a chit for a division is drawn, all of the brigades under that commander are activated and can then move and/or fight. This keeps the game unpredictable and it can cause some real chaos on the battlefield if a division gets a few activations in a row, nicely simulating a determined attack or defense.

Units are regiments of infantry or cavalry and batteries for artillery. Each unit is rated for its strength, cohesion, and movement, plus they are color coded for division and brigade, plus what they are armed with. Yes, all of that fits onto each counter! Brigades are under either March, Advance, or Attack orders which can be changed by their officers.

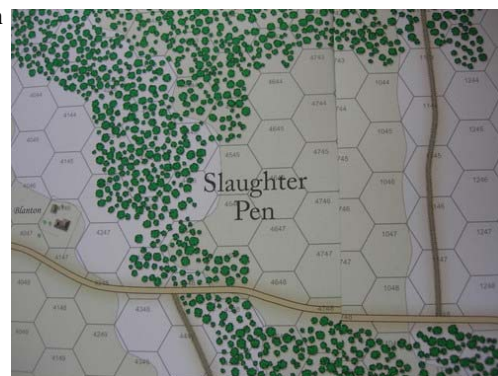
Movement and combat are of course the heart of the system, but despite the several pages in the rules on this it flows pretty smoothly. Once you get the hang of the shock system (melee) it gets easier each time that you do it. Players are faced each turn with a wide variety of decisions, from choosing orders, how to move, keeping reserves, and basically managing your activations and preparing for the unexpected.

Players are helped by the excellent charts and tables that list pretty much everything that you could need during the

game. The combat tables are easy to read and figure out, so even new players can get up to speed on the firing and movement quickly. Once you understand how one turn flows, you can grasp the system as a whole and then tack on things like refused flanks, efficiency transfers, putting a brigade into reserve, and more.

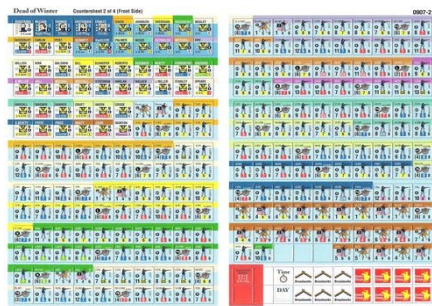
Now some of this would be a problem if you had to play just the campaign game with over a thousand counters! Fortunately the games in the series come with several scenarios and you only need to set up the full campaign with all of the maps if you choose to. Dead of Winter comes with a few one and two map scenarios which are excellent for learning the system. There is also the full battle which was fought over a few days, plus an interesting second day "what if" battle.

Now here is my only gripe with this game. I generally punch out and organize all of my counters as soon as I get a game, which is a HUGE mistake here! I tried to set up some of the smaller scenarios and it took possibly twice as long as



setting up the full campaign! My suggestion would be to leave the counters on the sheet, then hunt for the units you need if you're only going to play the one or two map scenarios.

But that's the extent of my complaints! This is an outstanding, beautiful game that can satisfy the gamers who only have 3-4 hours or who are looking for a long weekend or 25-30 hour campaign slugfest. The game has beautiful components, the rules are well written, and it is a worthy addition to the series. Now I'm hoping for a re-working of Pea Ridge or Wilson's Creek for the next one!



French Flank Attack

General de Brigade Scenario Replay

It is late spring in 1813 and the French army is in another of its titanic clashes with the Allied forces arrayed against it. At the extreme left of the French line a combined French and Saxon force is attempting to turn the flank held by the Russians and Prussians. A Russian artillery battery commands the direct approach to the flank, but the remaining Russian and Prussian forces are still arriving, so they will need to buy some time and serve as an anchor for the defense.

The French and Saxons are arriving by brigades as well and it will take some

few of the Prussian brigades have to march a long way to block the French attempt to turn the flank.

The game began with both sides marching onto the battlefield, except the Russian 12 gun battery which was deployed on a hilltop overlooking the Allied entry area. The Saxon brigade came on first and immediately moved to engage the Russians near the hill. This was followed by a French brigade that began to move towards the center. These moves were matched by the Allied forces

as the Prussian artillery and infantry began to arrive and move as quickly as possible towards the center.

This continued for a few turns as more and more brigades arrived on each side. The final brigades of both teams had to march well over half the board to get to the end of the flank and even then it was a race to see who could reach the best terrain possible for either an attack or defense.

The Saxons and the French brigade in the center, however, didn't wait for all the forces to deploy and began to move to engage. The Saxons began to be shelled by the Russian artillery at long range and a unit of Russian infantry deployed into skirmish to engage the leading elements of the French brigade. The French took a few turns to push the skirmishers back and get themselves sorted out into lines for an attack.



The second French brigade by this time had passed through the village and was trying to turn the Prussian right. The Prussians wheeled some artillery into action, but due to the constricting nature of the hills were unable to develop a full defense of the area. The French took advantage of this and began to pile in troops to the attack while the Young Guard brigade remained near the town in reserve.

Now the action began all along the line, with the Russian artillery devastating the advancing Saxons. The French infantry in the center continued to push forward, but met determined resistance by a few Prussian battalions. Both sides were taking heavy casualties, but still few units were giving ground on either side. The Saxons and a few French battalions made one final push against the hill defenders, getting into melee with two Russian units and despite some success they were pushed back. Another salvo by the Russian artillery broke the Saxons and they streamed back to their original deployment line to rally.



time to get the commands lined up for the attack into the center of the defense. Some of the French brigades will have to march quite some distance to prepare for their attack, including the Young Guard.

The Russians and Prussians decide to base their defense on the Russian artillery battery, then as each brigade comes on line, continue to shore up the length of the defense line. As with the French, a



French Flank Attack General de Brigade Scenario Replay (cont.)

So the Allied left was secure as not much was going to move the Russian battery, especially since the Saxons were still licking their wounds. This meant that the action now fell on the center and the Prussian right.

The French launched a series of coordinated attacks that were barely held by the Prussians. Both sides counterattacked, pushing battalions back and forth in the area just outside of the village. A French breakthrough was stopped by a

attack and for a time it looked as if they might split the French force in two, ending the battle. However, they had pushed too far and exhausted their attack. Two French battalions that recently rallied came back on line and closed the hole, then drove the Prussians back who were beyond support.

Now the Young Guard brigade moved to the attack just left of center to hit a weak area of the Prussian lines. The Prussians had stripped this area to send help against the attack on the extreme Prussian left, leaving only a few battalions in defense of this critical hill.

The Young Guard moved up and exchanged fire with the Prussians, then charged home. Surprisingly, (and something that will go down in gaming legend around these parts!) the Prussian reserve battalion held and threw the Young Guard back! This was only temporary, however, as the Guard rallied much easier than the Prussians and attacked again, this time carrying the hill.

By this time we had played for well over six hours and at least 20 turns. Obviously night was going to fall soon and the Allied situation wasn't the best. The Prussians would have to shorten their lines and pull back towards the entry



area. The French and Saxons had perhaps won a marginal victory. They had turned the Allied flank, but not in time to affect the battle raging elsewhere.

After playing so many games of Age of Eagles it was a good and refreshing change of pace for this period. You have to get yourself out of the mindset of handling brigades where the formations aren't that critical to General de Brigade's battalion size units where it is extremely important to be in the right formation.

Once we got the hang of the orders and firing systems the game went pretty smoothly, although calculating firing and morale can take up some time. Overall, it was a good gaming experience that produced a long, but well fought game. I'm sure that we will return to GDB in the future, perhaps a Peninsula battle or two once more British figs are done!



counterattack by a fresh Prussian unit and the French paused to reorganize for another attack.

In the center the French pushed forward again, but were met by withering musketry which shattered one French battalion and damaged others. Feeling the time was right, the Prussian brigade in the center counterattacked, overrunning one French battalion and forcing two others back. The Prussians continued to

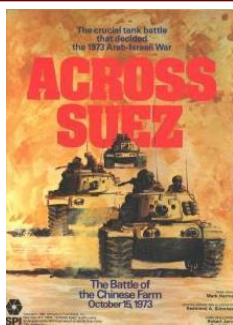


There is a subject that will almost always grab the attention of the historical gamer and that is the Mid-East Wars. Perhaps it is because it is one of the few conflicts where there have been large battles, mechanized combat, huge air to air melees, and where the weapons of the world's arms producers get to be tested.

Naturally, this area is fertile ground for gamers as seen by the large number of board games on the subject, miniatures rules, and figures that are available in all scales. I have played many board games on the subject, several miniatures battles, and read as many books that I can find on the subject. Yet, despite all my interest, I'm still not sure if these wars can be gamed properly.

There's not much to game in the '48 War except for skirmish actions, which could be interesting for a few one off battles. Likewise for the '56 War which saw Egypt being overwhelmed on several fronts. Same goes for the '67 War as who would want to play the Egyptians? For the naval actions there's not many choices either. Yaquinto did one of their album games on the missile boat battles which was pretty good, although very limited. To play that in Harpoon 4 would take a lot of work for not much gain. The air combat, while interesting, is also very one sided, particularly the Bekaa Valley debacle where 102 Syrian aircraft were downed for no Israeli losses. Although I've played several air battles from the Mid-East Wars, it's not a period I return to often. You need to seriously imbalance the game to give Arab players a chance.

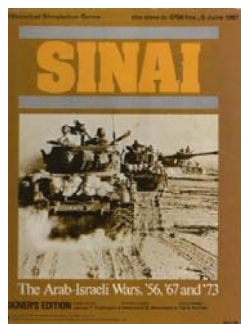
This pretty much leaves the '73 War as the best opportunity for gamers, especially since Egypt and Syria came close to winning the war. Now there are a lot of games on this subject and plenty of miniatures available, so



what are the attractions of this conflict and can it be successfully gamed?

Board game designers have approached this in multiple ways and we'll get to miniatures gaming later on in the article. Basically, you have multi-front games, operational level, and tactical level. There are very few multi-front games on the '73 War, the most notable of them being Bar Lev which is being reworked by John Hill and is eagerly anticipated. I believe that there were also one or two by SPI that I played awhile back, but my memory fades after too many games!

The most popular games are the operational level which focus on either the Golan Heights or the Suez area of operations. There is no way to possibly list all of the games that would fit into this category, but I'll comment on a few of them.



Two of the most popular and that have been around for quite some time are Across Suez and Golan by SPI. Across Suez was a stand alone game that is great for introducing people into the hobby. It is a straightforward game of the Israeli crossing of the canal and it can be fun if

played solo as well. The odds of the Egyptians winning this game are slight, but again, it is a good introductory game. Golan was part of the excellent Modern Battles quads which are still fondly remembered. Golan covers the Syrian attack and the Israeli counter-offensive. Although the map is the typical SPI 70's style, the game is very good the first few turns. However, if the Syrians haven't won by turn 10 then it's going to be just a question of how many victory points will the Israeli player accumulate before the end of the game!

Two other games at the upper end of the complexity scale are Sinai 1973 by GMT and Suez '73 by GDW. Suez '73 focuses on the Israeli crossing of the Suez and the battles on both sides of the canal during the period of the crossing. It is

almost a tactical level game with operational level units and decisions, which does add to the complexity. Sinai 1973, however, has scenarios for the initial crossings, counterattacks, and a complete campaign game. This game attempts to show the flexibility of the Israeli command structure and combat can be a very involved process, which is why it is one of the most complex games on the subject. These two games use battalion and company size units with rules mechanisms that make them *feel* like tactical level games. Both games do a good job of portraying the desperate battles of the war, but will take an investment of time by the gamer.

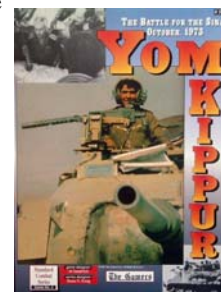
There are many others, including Operation Badr by West End Games, Sinai by SPI, and Yom Kippur (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) to name a few.

Naturally, some are better than others in replicating history or at least giving gamers the same kind of decisions or challenges that their real life counterparts had.



When it comes to tactical level games there are several that have come out over the years. The one game that was specific was Avalon Hill's Arab-Israeli Wars, which was based off of the Panzerblitz system. This boxed set had a ton of scenarios and counters, but did not seem to ever reach the level of popularity of Panzerblitz or Panzer Leader. The game offered a wide variety of scenarios, from the 1956 war all the way to a hypothetical conflict in the 80s or 90s (which did come to pass!). Overall, it still remains as one of the best and most accessible tactical level games on the '73 War.

Now many other tactical level games could be used for the '73 War or had scenarios in them, such as Firepower by Ava-



lon Hill or Mech War 2. Most of these games were based on Soviet/Warsaw Pact forces going against NATO, but since all sides in the Middle East used the same equipment, designers seemed to throw in a few scenarios for the sake of completeness or as an afterthought. Not much went into the thinking on doctrine, training, etc., as most of these games are strictly duels between equipment such as tanks, artillery, and aircraft.

But that is what makes the Mid-East Wars so different than many other conflicts or even the hundreds of games covering hypothetical conflicts. There were major differences in training, tactics, doctrine, command, planning and more. This was the ultimate quality vs. quantity matchup and all of these games portray it in different ways.



I think why there has never been a “definitive” game or set of miniatures rules

for these conflicts is that designers have a hard time trying to figure out how to replicate what happened. Too many games focus on how a Centurion would fight a T-62 or what happens when a F-4 goes up against a Mig-21. But these battles feature far more than just a simple contest between differently equipped combatants.

As a designer, how do you address the fact that no F-15 or F-16 was ever shot down by Arab forces? How can several Centurions hold off hundreds of armored vehicles and infantry as on the Golan Heights? How can you force the Egyptians to launch ill advised attacks that result in the loss of hundreds of tanks? How could the Egyptians continually ignore the buildup of Israeli forces on the west side of the Canal? Better yet, how do you simulate these kinds of things in a game?



The answer is that there is no easy answer to this dilemma. Try to explain it in detail such as with GMT's Sinai 1973 and you end up with a treatise on ground combat around the Suez Canal which takes considerable effort and time to play. Simplify it by giving the Israelis better units and you get a romp as in Across Suez. Force players to make attacks and you take away freedom for the gamer to make their own decisions during the game.

Most of the games I've played on this subject have one common theme and that is that if the Arab side is going to win, it needs to do it in a hurry. If they don't, then the game is as good as over, no matter how many turns there are left! There will be no comeback, no second chance, just one headlong rush at glory and that's it. This may seem unjust to many gamers, but because of the forces involved, the terrain, and other contributing factors the Arabs will get one shot and they better make it count.

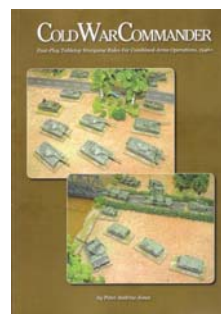
If they don't then there is the inevitable Israeli buildup of armored and mech units, then the IAF gets unleashed and the steamroller begins picking up speed and it's all downhill from there for the Arab players. In fact I would say that being an Arab player at the end of a 1973 battle must be one of the most unenviable or thankless tasks in gaming! Sitting there watching the Israelis get stronger and stronger, then pulverizing what's left of your army that couldn't quite get to the top of the hill is not a fun time in the gaming hobby.

Now one area where there is a challenge is at the tactical level and here is where games such as Arab-Israeli Wars and miniatures rules come to the forefront. Here there is a chance for doctrine, training, quality, etc., to be shown at a level where both sides have a chance and it could be a decent game. Rules such as Cold War Commander, Combined Arms (Command Decision), and others rate the



combatants and sometimes include point values so you can balance the scenarios.

Cold War Commander gives the Israelis better command ratings and more command elements. Other sets of rules force the Arab armies to fight in a certain way and they almost always get a ton of stuff to work with. It could probably be said that this is about the only way that the 1973 conflict could be gamed with both sides having a fair chance of winning. There are no overriding strategic concerns, operational level issues to deal with, and the air campaign doesn't play a major role in the scenarios (although the IAF generally makes an appearance or two).



Most 1973 miniatures games I have played have been hypothetical scenarios and have generally ended up being enjoyable games. The one or two historical ones I've tried ended up as big Israeli wins. No Egyptian player wants to be told, “Tonight's scenario involves these 80 T-62s trying

to make it to that hill that is guarded by 20 Centurions, 20 Patturians, and backed by artillery. Have fun!”

So, can the 1973 conflict be gamed? Well, yes, but the question should be in what way? Certainly at the strategic and operational level there is little room for error for Arab players. My personal observation is that these games are great for solo play and you try out numerous strategies for both sides. It's just that when the game reaches a certain point, there's not much sense in going further.

At the tactical level there are a lot of possibilities, particularly with miniatures battles. There are large number of figures and rules from 6mm to 28mm and from platoon level to a one to one skirmish game. At this level many of the problems that are present at the operational and strategic levels don't manifest themselves, so this would be a good way to game this period.

As for me, I'll keep buying games for this period in the quest that someday one will get the period right.

Egyptian Attack!

Battles For Empire Battle Report

Playtesting is always fun, but it can be challenging at times as well. Everyone usually has rules laying all over the place, notes have to be taken about problem areas, no one can find anything during critical parts of the game, and you uncover things you had either glossed over or didn't sound right the first time you read them! However, it is always a rewarding experience in that you and your club helped get a set of rules out to the gaming public. We've playtested Age of Eagles, Age of Reason's naval rules, Harpoon scenarios, and several boardgames over the years. Now we turn our attention to the second edition of the popular big battle colonial rules, Battles For Empire.

Most of the changes to the rules are not big changes, with the biggest being



that units now take 8 hits instead of the previous 4, meaning that they last longer in combat. Other changes were made to the movement charts with the intent of keeping the "big battle" theme and trying to make the game move faster. Battles



For Empire does have a lot of rules and at first glance appears to be complex, but as you read the rules and play a few turns you realize that you can play the game with just the charts.

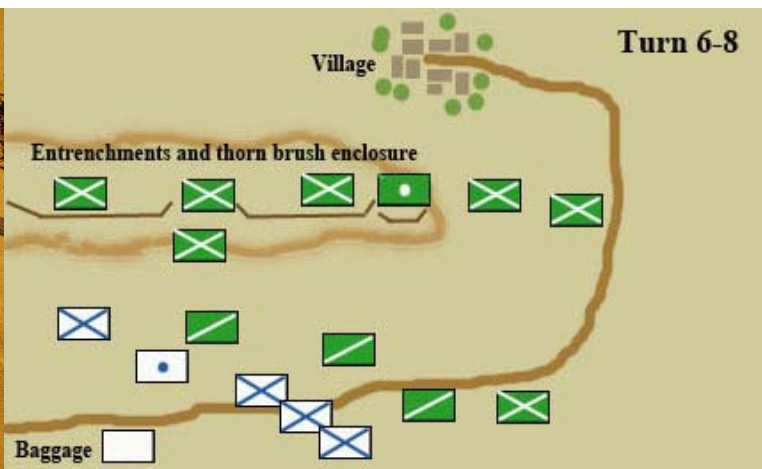
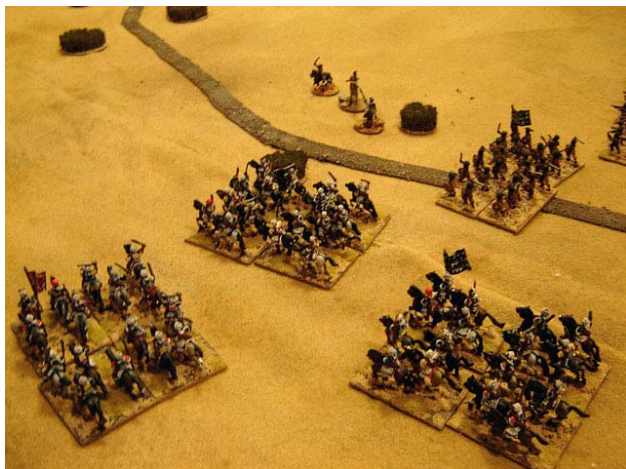
The setting for our test game was the early Sudan period, before British troops were involved. The Dervishes did fortify their positions several times against the British and the Abyssinians, so it was a preferred tactic to lure their enemies into battle. In this scenario the Dervishes have fortified a hilltop outside of a remote desert village with rifle pits, positions for their artillery, and placed a line of thorn brush in front of their positions, making it a formidable obstacle. Two captured Krupp guns and two rifle units are on the hill, with a dozen or so more infantry units behind it, plus three units of cavalry.

The Egyptian objective was to secure the village and while the advanced guard of one cavalry and one camelry unit were

deployed on board, the remaining forces would enter from the road. The Egyptian force consisted of two Sudanese gendarme units, two Egyptian regular units, two units of Bashi-Bazouks on foot, and two militia units, plus a battery of two Krupp guns. While the Egyptians and Sudanese were classed as 2nd rate, the remaining forces were 3rd rate, so while the Egyptians had the firepower advantage, the quality of half the force was suspect.

The Dervishes planned to fire on the Egyptians as they deployed, hopefully forcing them to change into line or square early, which would give their cavalry and infantry time to go around the hill and launch a coordinated attack. The Egyptians were going to push down the road as fast as possible and attack the hill from the flank or behind once they secured the village. Both sides had sound plans which ended up being changed by circumstances, which often occurs in gaming.

The Dervishes moved their cavalry to attack right on turn one. They also moved up some units of infantry to support the attack which surprised the Egyptian side. The Egyptians thought the Dervishes and Fuzzies would wait until they rounded the hill before attacking. The Egyptian cavalry, caught between the random shelling of the Dervish Krupps and the advancing cavalry, deployed into line, but rolled badly to coordinate with the other Egyptian cavalry unit.





The Dervish cavalry crashed into the Egyptian cavalry, which held, but just barely. On the next turn the Dervishes hit them again and even with the second unit of Egyptian cavalry coming up in support the first unit was obliterated. The victorious Dervishes then attacked the second Egyptian cavalry unit, destroying it as well. The Dervish cavalry then tried to catch the Egyptian artillery while it was deploying, but because of their losses they were unable to close the gap quickly enough. The Egyptian Krupps slammed into the Dervish cavalry, destroying one unit and forcing the others back. The Egyptians then silenced one of the Dervish artillery sections with counterbattery fire and began to exchange fire with the entrenched rifle units.

The Egyptians were desperately trying to get their units into line and form some kind of defense before the Dervish infantry got into attack range. The die rolls for the units moving onto the board



continued to be average, meaning that while fresh troops were arriving, it was in piecemeal fashion and they got caught in a traffic jam.

The Dervishes, flushed with success, now tried to move in with a killing stroke. Four fresh units of infantry tried to move through a gap in the entrenchments and over the thorn brush obstacle to attack the Egyptian center. If they could reach it at the same time as the Dervishes coming around the other side of the hill, the Egyptians would be shattered and cut down.

Unfortunately, the Dervish infantry ran into two huge problems that brought the plan to a screeching halt. First, they had to cross the thorn brush obstacle which slowed them down tremendously. Second, they didn't count on the Egyptian Krupp gun battery that scored hit after hit on the lead unit, causing it to remain in place and creating a traffic jam. After a few turns the Dervishes withdrew from this attempt to flank the advancing Egyptians and started to send the units around the hill.

This left the other Dervish force alone against the ever growing Egyptian force and the Egyptians advanced to attack. Forming line with three units they advanced against the Dervish infantry while the remaining forces skirmished with the Dervish rifleman on the hill.

The Dervishes launched a coordinated attack on the Egyptian line and in a series of melees caused some damage to the Egyptian units. The approach to contact, however, ran through a murderous series of volleys which left them too weak to break the line. The Egyptians counterattacked, mov-

ing units to bring the other Dervishes under fire and driving them back to possibly try to regroup with the other Dervish units massing on the side of the hill.

By this time we had been playing several hours and although we were slowed down by using the new charts, finding rules, recognizing what had changed, and taking notes, we felt that the Egyptians would continue their advance and seize the village. The Dervishes had used an unexpected strategy, namely hitting the Egyptians before they could deploy and it almost worked. Good movement rolls let the Dervish cavalry steamroll the Egyptian advance guard, but then the attack ran out of gas. Once the flanking column got hung up crossing the obstacle and shelled until forced back, the attack fell



apart and all that was left was for the Egyptians to advance in lines and defeat the remaining Dervishes. All in all it was a fun scenario that saw some great charges, firefights, artillery duels, and masses of natives!

We were pretty pleased with the new movement charts and the extra hits allowed per unit. We felt that this gave the units additional staying power that worked well in the context of the game. There are still more changes to come and we're confident that the new edition will be a great set of colonial rules.

If you've played a lot of colonial skirmishes and are looking for something new or you wish to do big battles from this era, then I strongly suggest giving Battles For Empire a try. The look and feel of the game are a breath of fresh air in the colonial period and worth the time and effort to learn the rules.

Kustrin Corridor

Blitzkrieg Commander Scenario

Background: Before the massive attack on the German positions on the Seelow Heights and the final offensive towards Berlin, the fortress of Kustrin along the Oder River proved to be a thorn in the side of the Russians. Virtually cut off from the main German defenses except for a narrow corridor, the Kustrin position had resisted all attempts by the Russians to clear the fortress.

Numerous attempts were made by the Germans to resupply the fortress, bring in reinforcements, take out the wounded, and to relieve pressure on the garrison by spoiling attacks. The main problem is that the German forces were assembled from various commands and often did not arrive at the starting line on time, which created numerous problems for the operations in this area. Also, most of these attempts were done in plain view of the Russians who would bring every available resource to bear on these attempts. This fictional scenario is based upon an attempt to run the corridor to Kustrin.

Set Up: The German forces listed as

being in the Assembly Area at start should be placed, then the German side rolls for each combat group to see if it is available on Turn 1 at the Assembly Area. The remaining German combat groups are rolled for at the start of Turn 2 and 3 until all forces are placed in the Assembly Area.

The Russian At Start forces can be placed to enter anywhere along the North edge of the game board. The Russian side then rolls for the first reinforcements and they can enter during the Russian turn.

Terrain Notes: The Kustrin outer defenses consist of 18 inches of entrenchments, 12 inches of barbed wire, 12 inches of mines, and three fortifications/bunkers.

Initiative: The game begins with the German side moving/firing first.

Ending the Game: The game ends when any one of the following occur:

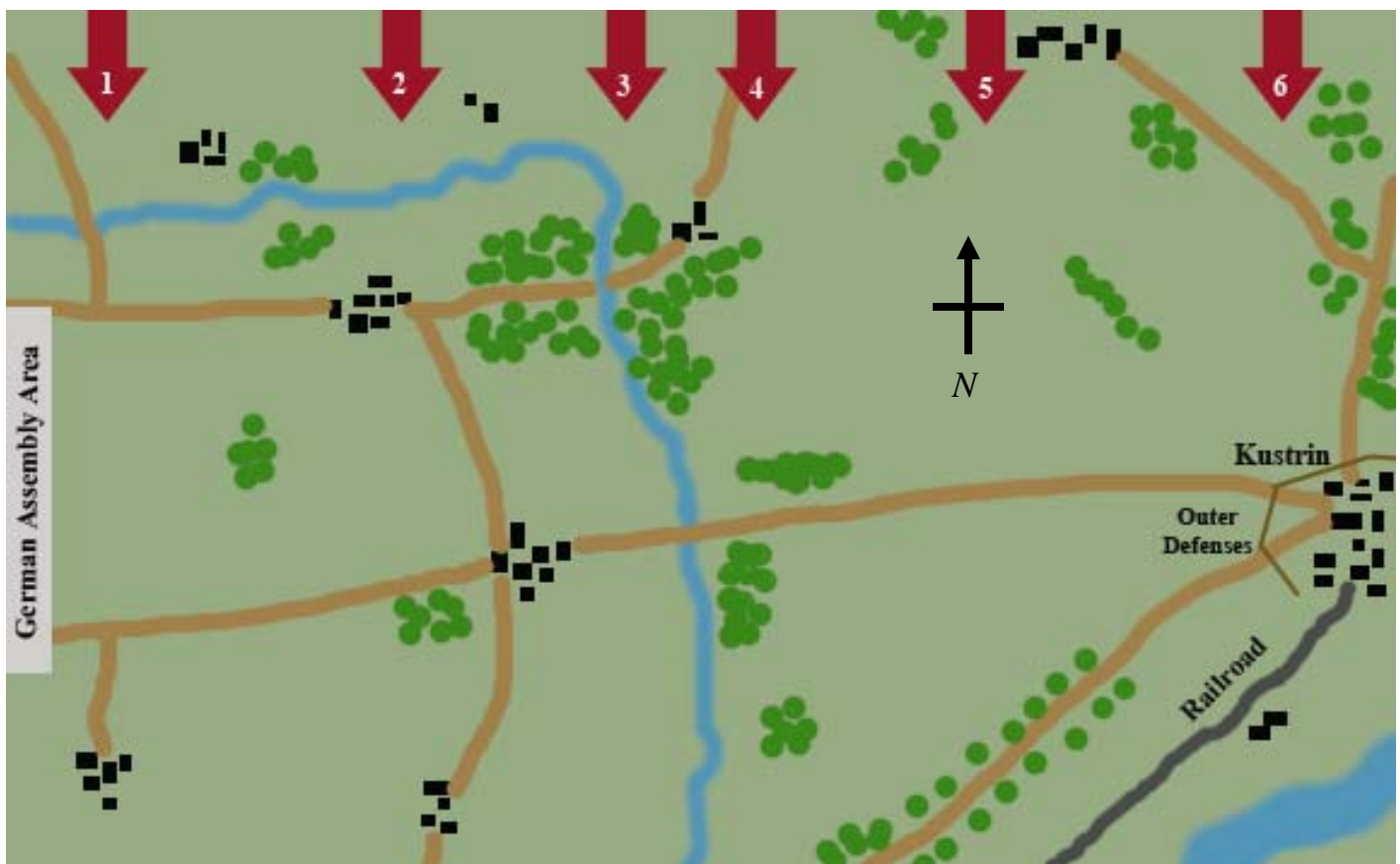
- 1) German forces reach their break

point.

- 2) As many of the convoy vehicles as possible reach the Kustrin town area.
- 3) The Germans realize that they will not be able to break through and withdraw their forces to try again some other time.
- 4) If the section of Kustrin on the game board is taken by Russian forces the game automatically ends as a Russian victory.

Determining Victory: Each convoy vehicle that reaches Kustrin is worth 5 points. Add up the totals and refer to the table below:

<u>Total Points</u>	<u>Result</u>
0-25	Russian Major Victory
26-40	Russian Tactical Victory
41-60	Draw
61-75	German Tactical Victory
75-100	German Major Victory



German Order of Battle

At Start (Assembly Area)

General: Command = 9
FAO
Recon unit (German choice)
3 units of 105mm artillery (off-board)

At Start (Kustrin Area)

Commander: Command = 8
6 Infantry units
2 MG units
1 Mortar unit
1 88mm AT/Flak unit
2 Jgpz IV

Convoy Group #1

6 Opel Blitz trucks
Each truck is worth 5 victory points if it reaches Kustrin.

Convoy Group #3

6 Opel Blitz trucks
Each truck is worth 5 victory points if it reaches Kustrin.

Convoy Group #2

6 Sdkfz-251
Each halftrack is worth 5 victory points if it reaches Kustrin.

Only the German At Start forces begin on the board. The forces at Kustrin may be placed anywhere inside of the fortifications and outskirts of the town. The remaining German combat groups and the convoy groups appear randomly. At the start of each turn, beginning with Turn 1, the German side rolls 1D6 for each combat or convoy group. On Turn 1 a 1 or 2 is needed to deploy, on Turn 2 a 1, 2, 3, or 4 is needed, and on Turn 3 all remaining groups arrive. Each group arrives anywhere in the Assembly Area and gets one free move/firing action that counts as an order for further attempts. The German side needs to decide if they should press on with the operation or wait until all of their forces have arrived.

Combat Group #1

Commander: Command = 8
4 Pzkfw IVH

Combat Group #2

Commander: Command = 8
3 Pzkfw V

Combat Group #1

Commander: Command = 8
3 Stug IIIG or H

Combat Group #4

1 Tiger I
1 Tiger II

Combat Group #5

Commander: Command = 8
3 Infantry units (panzergrenadiers)
3 Sdkfz 251 halftracks

Combat Group #6

3 Infantry units (panzergrenadiers)
3 Sdkfz 251 halftracks

Combat Group #7

2 MG units (panzergrenadiers)
1 Mortar unit (panzergrenadiers)
1 Engineer unit (panzergrenadier)
3 Sdkfz 251 halftracks
1 Opel Blitz truck

Combat Group #8

1 Sdkfz 251/9
1 Sdkfz 251/22
1 75mm AT gun unit
1 Opel Blitz truck



Russian Order of Battle

At Start (Can either enter Turn 1 at any of the 6 reinforcement entry areas or deploy anywhere on board within 20cm of the northern board edge.

General: Command = 9

1 FAO

1 Recon unit (Russian choice)

3 units of 122mm artillery (deployed off board)



Reinforcements

<u>Die Roll</u>	<u>Reinforcements</u>
1	3 T-70
2	3 SU-76 + 1 Commander: Command = 8
3	3 76mm AT/Artillery + transport
4	3 SU-122
5	6 T-34/85 + 1 Commander: Command = 8
6	3 SU-85 or SU-100
7	6 T-34/76 + 1 Commander: Command = 8
8	2 BM-13 Katyusha (deployed off-board)
9	3 units 152mm Artillery (deployed off board)
10	3 JS-2
11	No Reinforcements This Turn
12	6 T-34/76 + 1 Commander: Command = 8
13	No Reinforcements This Turn
14	1 Commander: Command = 8
15	6 infantry units, 1 Support unit (MG), 1 Support unit (mortar), 1 Commander: Command = 8, + 8 Trucks
16	Roll twice this turn for reinforcements
17	6 infantry units, 1 Support unit (MG), 1 Support unit (mortar), 1 Commander: Command = 8, + 8 Trucks
18	Roll twice this turn for reinforcements
19	6 infantry units, 1 Support unit (MG), 1 Support unit (mortar), 1 Commander: Command = 8, + 8 Trucks
20	1 IL-2 Sturmovik airstrike

Each turn the Russian side rolls 1D20 and consults the Reinforcements table. Then, roll 1D6 to determine where each reinforcement group arrives on the northern board edge according to the entry areas listed. Each group gets one free move/action that does count as an attempt if they try to receive a second order.

Once that reinforcement number is rolled, cross it off the list. If the number is rolled again, proceed to the next unused number on the table. For example, if 12, 13, and 14 have been used during the current game and a 12 is rolled again, the Russian side would get #15 as the reinforcements for the current turn.

Reinforcement Note

If numbers 5, 7, or 12 are rolled the Russian side should roll 1D6. If the result is a 4, 5, or 6 then that reinforcement group also includes 3 SMG units (tank riders).

Variants

Players should feel free to adjust the table for play balance or to reflect the forces that they own. The Russians had numerous infantry, tank, mechanized, and support units in the Kustrin/Oder area, so almost any type combination of units could be used.

Ancients: One Rules Set to Rule Them All? (cont.)

Ancients gaming was due for a revolution and it came in the form of two sets of rules that definitely changed the landscape. The first was DBA by WRG author Phil Barker. DBA was a small sized booklet with several pages of rules and a few pages of army lists, but its small size was hardly an indicator of its impact. Armies only needed 12 units, games could be finished in under an hour, entire tournaments in a day, and even if you didn't know a thing about how Greek Successor pike formations were arrayed, you could play ancients.

Soon figure manufacturers were selling DBA armies, there were articles on tactics, and the game took off. What it did more than anything else was to change how the ancients hobby was viewed and who could play. No longer did you have to know the secret formula for figuring out casualties caused by Roman legions in the second round vs. Parthian cavalry or quote chapter and verse from some long forgotten tome on Caesar's campaigns. No, all you had to do was paint up about 36-50 figures, bring some dice, and start playing ancients. DBA eventually created two spin-offs in DBM and DBR, plus the still popular Hordes of the Things (HOTT) for fantasy DBA combat.

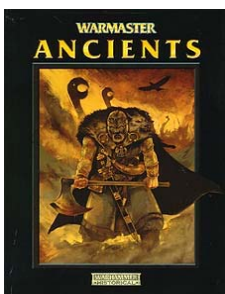
The other was the historical version of the popular Warhammer Fantasy rules called Warhammer Ancient Battles or WAB. For a long time 25/28mm ancients gamers had taken a back seat in the ancients hobby. WRG 7th, DBA, and DBM were definitely far more suited to 15mm than 25mm and many an ancient army languished on hobby shelves as ancient gamers looked for something that was suitable for their preferred scale. When WAB came out it had a major impact on the ancients gaming community. Ancients gamers came out of the woodwork, new manufacturers offered high quality figures, and ancients was back in business as one of the main historical gaming periods.

No doubt the beautiful pictures in Miniature Wargames, Wargames Illus-

trated, and in the rules themselves helped considerably. For probably the first time a professional set of published rules used "eye candy" to generate interest and it succeeded. Today WAB is one of the dominant sets of ancients rules and a driving force behind sales of 25mm ancients figures.

DBA and WAB heralded what was to become a trend in gaming that is in full force today, namely simpler rules. Gone were the lawyer like rules, charts and tables for every weapon created since the dawn of time, along with several hours to do one turn. Now gamers could buy a set of rules and a supplement, paint their armies and put them on the table without even knowing what century their army was from!

Still, the quest for the ultimate set of ancient rules goes on. Despite all of the success that DBA/DBM and WAB have had, many were still looking for a better set of rules or tried to find something that fits what their view of ancient combat is. And this is where the main problem lies within the ancients gaming community.

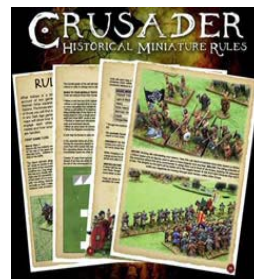


Unlike WW2 or ACW where there are literally thousands of books, movies, photos, etc., there is really not much information on the ancients period besides text. You can read two or three books on the Battle of the Bulge, watch some actual combat film of the battle, go through several uniform guides, etc., and have a pretty good idea of what happened there. It makes finding a rules set that fits what you've seen and learned plus painting an army that much easier in gaming terms.

Now compare that with ancients. Exactly how did Egyptian and Hittite chariots fight each other? Could skirmishing cavalry disperse clouds of skirmishers armed with bows and javelins? Many of the answers to these questions may only come from one source, which naturally fuels the arguments about the period. You're left with sets of rules where you hope that the author did his or her research, then you just have to trust

that the rules reflect this. You know that a set of WW2 rules is faulty if a Sherman can punch a Tiger frontally at 2500 yards, but if a Successor pike formation defeats a legion time after time, is that accurate?

Naturally, this creates an open market for rules and they keep coming out. Recently there have been quite a few sets such as Warmaster Ancients, Vis Bellica, Classical Hack, Crusader rules and supplements, and Field of Glory along with its numerous additions. That all of them have sold many copies, have Yahoo Groups for the rules, and have active gaming communities attests to the fact that ancients gamers are a tough crowd to please! Not only that, but now you have figures available in almost every scale from 2mm to 40mm!



Will there ever be just one set of ancient rules for the gaming community? One set that everyone can understand and can go anywhere in the world and get a game in? Probably not in our lifetime. There are so many divergent factors at work here that it would be an almost impossible task to even get half of the ancients gamers to endorse one set of rules. On one hand you have the "experts" and grognards who have been playing this period for a long, long time and generally dislike anything that has come out in the last 20 years. Then you have the current generation of gamer who wants to get a huge game in with thousands of figs in under two hours. On top of that you have other gamers who look for rules that allow their favorite armies to do well on the tabletop.

Despite all of this, the ancients gaming hobby has never been in better shape. Numerous sets of professionally produced rules, a massive choice of figures in all scales, a wide variety of terrain, and more and more information is becoming available about the period. Still, the problem will remain about trying to get gamers to agree on almost anything in this interesting period. Good luck....

I've been playing historical miniatures rules for well over 30 years and have seen just about every type of gamer possible. When it comes to rules, there are several types of gamers:

- 1) The Rules Lawyer-These guys own the rules, all of the errata, keep up to date on forums, blogs, etc., and can quote sections of the rules from memory.
- 2) Interested Gamer-They own the rules and are generally interested in the period. They've read them and can play the game, but will need to refer back and forth in the book for some situations.
- 3) "Yes, I Know" Gamer-They own all of the rules, supplements, and make sure everyone knows that they are the biggest fan of the rules in the area. However, even though they've been playing the rules for who knows how long, they need to look up every single item during a game.
- 4) "Let's Game" Gamer-They own the rules, but have never read them, nor do they ever plan to. They have, however, looked at the nice pictures in the rules.

Now, what is disturbing is that I'm seeing a new kind of gamer emerge that combines elements of all of the above types. This gamer is interested in the period, buys the rules, can quote parts of the rules, explains that they understand all of the rules (even if they've only just glossed over them), and wants to desperately get in a number of games with the rules as quickly as possible.

This has led to an interesting trend in miniatures gaming, namely everyone having a copy of the rules, but not really using them! I'll explain in a minute, but from reading after action reports on the web, gaming blogs, forums, and seeing games in my area, I think this is a pretty common occurrence.

Here's an example. Let's say that a group is playing Disposable Heroes,

which is clearly meant to have had some scenario preparation before the game starts. Units, officers, etc., need some stats for variety and to differentiate differences in tactics, training etc., to make the game interesting. However, that would be too much work, so all Germans are rated the same, all British are rated the same, and you may as well be using black and red checkers as everyone's ratings are the same! This is not what the designer intended, but getting in a WW2 game is more important than understanding the rules and doing some preparation.

This is actually quite a common occurrence in skirmish games such as Sharp Practice, Arc of Fire, Sword and the Flame, etc., where not much effort goes into the game prep as everyone just wants to put hordes of figs on the table and let the killing, err...sorry, gaming begin. Do gamers just get so excited about new periods that they spend all of their time and energy on ordering figs, painting, making terrain, reading about the period, etc., that they don't have time to read the rules?

Or not using the smoke rules in a WW2 naval game as that would involve reading another few paragraphs and it just slows the game down anyway. Yes, those destroyers will get killed by those cruisers since they have to approach without cover, but hey, we're getting in a game plus rolling dice to kill things and that's what counts! What about refighting Midway, but each side only gets to use Zeros and Wildcats because torpedo attacks and dive bombing might become too involved and people at the table might lose interest?

And what about Flames of War? Not my cup of tea, but you rarely see gamers use all of the special rules that they are entitled to. Here they have a stack of rules and supplements, and all they've ever read are how many big tanks they get in their army lists. It would be interesting to take a survey of FOW gamers

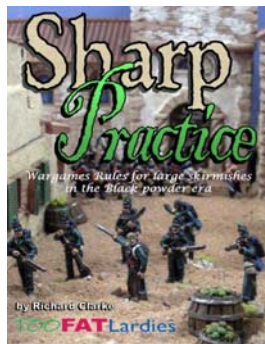
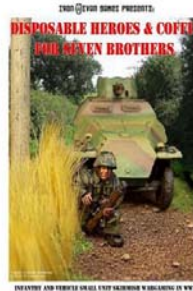
(not picking on any one group, but this is just an example) and see how many of them could explain the ambush, scouting, melee, or any other basic concepts of the game. My guess is less than half.

Just to show this editorial isn't biased, what about ancient gamers? You'll see some with an armload of rules, supplements, and errata, but they don't take certain units in their army because they would need to learn another section of the rules! Or with modern jet combat making everyone use heatseekers as radar guided missiles have too many rules!

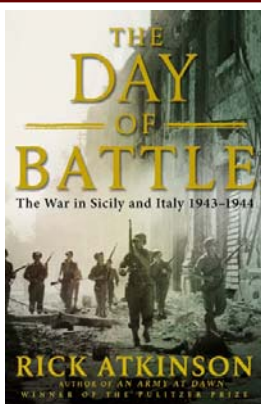
Not only that, gamers aren't even aware of what options they have in a game. I can't count how many times over the last decade I've heard things like, "IF only I could have done such and such a formation I could have attacked/survived/won..." Well, guess what? You could have if you had read the rules! There's no way a GM can possibly tell you everything and at some point the players must take a little responsibility themselves.

So what is it that causes this? Reading comprehension (I work at a university and it has gone downhill every year!), too much time spent painting and not reading the rules, no incentive to read the rules as someone else will answer the tough questions, or is it something more than that? Yes, we live in an age where there a lot of distractions, but you bought the rules and want to play the game, right? Then why not take the effort to actually read the rules and use them? You don't have to know them cover to cover, but even the basics would go a long way to helping alleviate the situation. There is a major difference in someone trying to learn the rules and needing help compared to someone who owns Warhammer Ancient Battles plus every supplement, but who can't tell you how the pursuit rules work.

Don't even get me started on the optional rules, which is where some gamers begin their rules reading! Try reading the basics first then we can progress to the optional stuff. Just think how much more enjoyable the hobby would be if we played the rules as they were intended!



It's hard to believe that the outstanding first part of this trilogy, *Army at Dawn*, came out several years ago! But yes, it's been a long time between books for those who have been looking forward to the second installment. Fortunately, it has been worth the wait and the reader is in for a treat as this book is actually far more interesting than the first book!



When we last left the series, the U.S. Army was triumphant in Africa and wondering where to go next. Many of the problems encountered by the U.S. Army had been overcome, but quite a few still remained. In fact, the Army was still learning its way in this war and this would be continued in both Sicily and Italy. The author takes a fair amount of time describing the problems the Army had, from incorrectly loading Navy ships to leadership issues, to poor integration of air assets. Still, you can see the genesis of what would become the foremost military machine in WW2 slowly and surely emerge.

The first part of the book details the invasion of Sicily. The initial landings, including those of the disastrous airborne elements, are vividly described. It is here that you see that the author has changed his methods out of necessity. Where the first book clearly focused on the U.S. Army, the British and Commonwealth forces were only mentioned every so often. In this book that has changed dramatically. With the British army closely paired with the U.S. Army in Sicily and the drive up through Italy, the author describes many of the British attacks, planning, shortcomings, and problems.

This gets to another point and it may not be what every reader is interested in or wants to hear. The author is exceedingly blunt on his assessment of the leaders of both sides and few come away unscathed. Many leaders who readers have read about in countless other books may have to reassess their previous evaluations of many of WW2's most famous leaders. To his credit, the author

lays out his case and then explains why attacks failed, leaders were replaced, or why the strategies were faulty.

Naturally, the Patton vs. Montgomery race in Sicily takes center stage and it is not as exciting as it has been previously portrayed. It is still interesting, particularly how both men would do almost anything to beat the other to the punch. The desperate battles on the landing beaches, the problems with AA

fire downing many of the paratroopers planes, the inability of the Allies to prevent the Germans from escaping across the strait, etc., are all described in wonderful detail.

Then the book begins to go into the planning for the invasion of Italy and there is a lot of discussion about this front, what assets should be assigned to it, and whether or not the invasion of France should go earlier than they planned. It does bring out the politics, rivalries, alternate plans, etc., that make this a fascinating part of the book.

It is at this point of the book where you really begin to feel for the common soldiers and lower level officers who have to slug their way, hill by hill, village by village, through the Italian peninsula. At times it seems as if many of the higher level officers were guilty of criminal negligence or stupidity. Some of the plans, attacks, and thinking that went into the operations in Italy deserved to be questioned and the author explores many avenues during this part of the book.

Of course no book on this subject would be complete without spending a lot of time on Anzio and Monte Cassino. The landings at Anzio take up a good sized section of the book and explore all of the command issues, the problems with coordinating the British and U.S. forces, and the opportunities that were missed. The counterattacks by the German forces and the speed with which they responded are noted and it is amazing at how close the outcome actually was. For awhile it almost looked like it could have ended in complete disaster for the Allies.

The same could be said for Monte Cassino and the British/Commonwealth operations to crack that part of the German defenses. Again, this is where the second book differs greatly from the first book in this series. Whereas the first book focused exclusively on the U.S. Army, the second book goes over many of the operations of the British forces in the region.

The author also spends a great deal of time on Mark Clark, the overall commander for the Italian theater and one of the most interesting personalities of WW2. The author describes his command style, his relations with the British (which were never rally good), and the problems that he faced while in Italy. By the time that the capture of Rome occurs it had almost become all about Mark Clark and not about winning the war! A fascinating look at this commander and how the war was fought in this region.

I learned a great many things in the book that I had never known, which is the mark of a good history book. The bibliography is quite extensive and it is clear that the research into this topic was considerable. The German attack that caused Mustard gas to leak out of a sinking ship that killed quite a few Allied personnel was something I had never hear about. Also, there were several other incidents about killing of prisoners, conduct of officers, minor disasters, and more that were kept quiet for years. The author had certainly done his research and is to be commended for bringing out these extremely interesting bits of information.

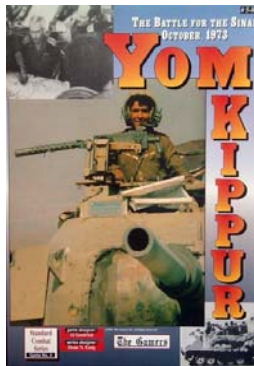
When all is said and done you are left with the feeling that is was the common soldier who carried the Allies to victory. All of the bickering, in-fighting, poor planning, politics, poor officers, and more only made it worse and made the Sicily and Italian campaigns go on for much longer than they should have. However, you can begin to see the competent commanders emerge, new tactics, integration of air and naval assets, plus the veteran combat troops begin to take over just in time for the campaign in France to begin. This book is highly recommended for anyone with an interest in the Italian campaign of WW2.

One of the best “pure” wargame series out today must be the SCS, or Standard Combat Series from The Gamers who are now run by Multi-Man Publishing (MMP). These games are no frills, straight to the point wargames with rules for the series and exclusive rules for the individual games, which harkens back to the old SPI quad series. As I’ve always been interested in the Mid-East wars and MMP was running a sale on this for only \$10 (the standard price is \$28) I jumped at the chance.

The map is the usual Gamers fare of charts and tables on the map, the funky brown for the hills, well drawn cities, and hex numbers on only every fifth hex. They’re not the best maps you’ll ever own, but they are functional, work well, and add to the game rather than serve as a distraction. The counters are clear, color coded for the various commands, and are easy to use with the set up. You also get a series rule book of only seven or eight pages plus a second rulebook with the special rules for the game.

Although there are several special rules such as SAMs, air units, bridges, etc., they are pretty simple and anyone who has played the SCS series can be ready to play in about 15 minutes. There are several smaller scenarios, the historical campaign, plus a few hypothetical scenarios that are pretty tough on the Israelis that deal with catastrophes on other fronts. All in all, there is pretty good replay value here.

The game naturally starts out with the Egyptian crossing of the Suez which is not as impressive as you would think it was! Only a few units get over on the first turn, they take out several of the forts on the Israeli side, then the rest of the Egyptians begin to arrive. I think that here is where first time players are going to have problems and that is that the Egyptians simply don’t have enough units to cover the



entire front, so you don’t want to become too spread out or the Israelis will defeat you in detail. I found it interesting in that once you are across as the Egyptian player, what do you do now?

The Israelis for their part are desperately trying to cobble together some kind of a defense until help arrives. If the Egyptians have not seized all of their objectives by the end of turn 3 they are not finished because of the victory conditions. The designer was clever in adding a rule where a ceasefire could start pretty much anytime after a few turns and the longer the game goes on the higher the chance of it happening. This definitely gives the Israelis a sense of urgency in that they need to attack and either push the Egyptians back across the Suez or cross it themselves.

This may seem easier to do than in reality. The Israeli armor units are powerful, but they are only one step while most of the Egyptian infantry units have three. The SCS combat table is pretty brutal and the attrition works in the Egyptians favor. Fortunately the Israelis recover tank losses quicker than the Egyptians, so usually on the following turn there is more armor to throw into the fight.

The thing I liked about the game is that it features many of the historical facts that I have read in several books on the subject. The SAM defenses keep most of the IAF at bay during the game, the Egyptians are faced with challenges about what to do after the crossing, the Israelis not having enough infantry, and more. There

are several little touches such as this that really add to the game, but without needing to add in pages and pages of rules to deal with these issues.

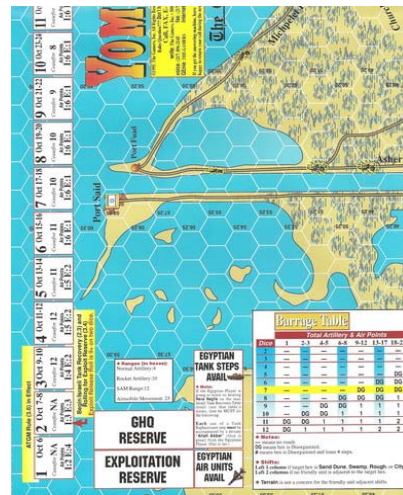
The Egyptians also have a chance to release their exploitation forces and if the Israelis do cross the Suez then the Egyptians release their GHQ Reserve forces. This is also what I like about the game, namely that there is some randomness and unknown factors that force both sides to adjust their strategies.

If the Israelis ignore the ceasefire there is a chance of superpower intervention which is another nice touch. Both the Russians and U.S. have several brigades that arrive and can be committed to battle, which can drastically change the game. Finally, I’ve found that the victory conditions are tougher on the Israelis and it forces them to act quicker than probably many players would like.

Now there are other games on this subject that run the gamut of complexity. From Across Suez by SPI which was a cakewalk for the Israeli side to GMT’s Crisis: Sinai which is a detailed study of the 1973 Sinai front. I think that Yom Kippur

ranks somewhere in between both ends of the scale. It is nowhere near complex as Crisis: Sinai, but far more playable and balanced than many of the old SPI games on the subject. Also, again while not as historically accurate as GDW’s Suez ‘73 or Crisis: Sinai it does try to represent the historical actions.

I think the one of the positive things that Yom Kippur has going for it in comparison to many other games on this subject is playability. A fairly quick set up, few rules to memorize, nothing unusual in the sequence of play, and the game plays fast (probably 3-4 hours max). It may not be the most accurate game on the subject, but it is a lot of fun and the SCS series proves yet again that it is adaptable to a wide range of conflicts.



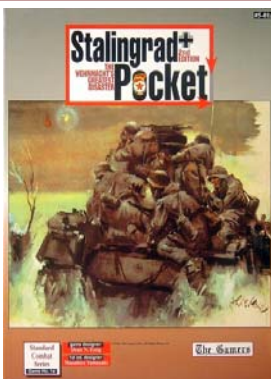
Yet another of the Gamers Standard Combat Series (SCS) games now owned by MMP. I received this along with Yom Kippur as part of a MMP summer sale, so it was a pretty good deal as I had planned to purchase this game anyway! Although I love East Front games I had some trepidation about buying yet another game set around Stalingrad since I already own quite a few as it is, including the excellent A Victory Lost, Drive on Stalingrad, and Storm Over Stalingrad.

If you own any of the SCS games then you will be familiar with what comes in the box. You get a 22 x 34 map with the standard Gamers/SCS color scheme, the standard rules, the exclusive rules with scenarios, but the big surprise is that there are far more counters here than the average SCS game. The components are of good quality, the counters are not as sharp as later SCS games (the step numbers can be a little small), but you can easily differentiate the units, corps, etc., so no major problem.

The standard rules are pretty basic stuff and once you are familiar with the +2 cost to enter a ZOC, the first step loss off the strongest unit, etc., you are ready to play. The exclusive rules add in artillery barrages, supply, HQs, and more, but again, these take up about a page and a half and are pretty easy. The big changes to the SCS series are the Determined Attacks (DAMs) and Reserve rules, which take about turn or two to get used to using, but after that it becomes secondary.

The sequence of play also has a few changes in it, with a German Reserve phase which gives the German mech forces a chance to plug holes, plus both sides have to place Reserve markers at the start of their turn, which prohibits the units getting the markers to move in the initial phase.

You get two scenari-



os for the Soviet drives to cut off the city plus the campaign game. Since I already knew the SCS system I went straight to the campaign game, which is 16 turns long.

First, there are a lot of units to set up. With around 500 combat units, artillery, HQs, etc., it can take awhile to sort this out and get it set up. The second thing you notice is that the map is

packed with stuff, particularly around Stalingrad. Larger hexes and a double map would definitely have helped here! Also, why companies don't either print objective symbols on the map or provide markers is beyond me. There are around 17 objectives on the map and I made up some counters as it's difficult to have to keep referring back to the scenario for the hex numbers.

The Russians will naturally start out by trying to cave in the Romanians that are holding both of the German Army's flanks. The "pocket" doesn't actually form for quite some time, so Russian players need to be patient as they will slowly grind down the Axis forces and force them back. The German player has several choices here, including abandoning Stalingrad and it's six VP objective hexes, but the chances of retaking it would be slim and none. So, the Axis units take it on the chin while trying to hold onto the city. Not an easy task.

Although the Romanians have plenty of artillery, they have virtually no mobile forces and the strength of the units makes them little more than roadblocks. The front begins to crumble and at some point the Axis player needs to determine when to save what you can and run back to the river lines to make a stand.

Now this isn't 1944 when the Russians overrun the German defenses over and over again, so they do take casualties and mobile German formations can counterattack to drive back the Russians and inflict some pain here and there. The problem is that there just aren't enough forces to do this every turn, so there will be some breaks in the line here and there. Also, the Russians don't have the strength to break through everywhere, so they will usually pick a few spots and hammer the defenders in those areas.

At some point Stalingrad and the surrounding area will probably be cut off. The Germans will have to assemble whatever mech forces they still have and try to punch a hole to relieve it. By this time the only thing left of the Romanians is their artillery and a few HQs, with scat-

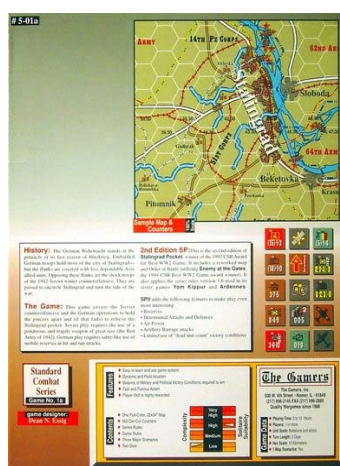
tered German forces here and there holding vital bridges or towns. The Russians will have been bloodied as well, setting up an interesting last few turns where the Germans try to hold onto enough of their VP objectives for a win.

The positives: The SCS system is easy to get into and the few special rules don't add that much complexity

to the game. The combat is brutal and there is a lot of it, akin to a knife fight in a telephone booth. Endless barrages, counterattacks, probing attacks, and more as the Russians search for a gap to drive through.

The negatives: Set up takes awhile and the game can go on for a long time. With 16 turns, several phases for both sides, and around 500 units on the board, this won't be over in 3 or 4 hours!

Overall, this is a good game, but probably not as good as The Mighty Endeavor from the same series. East Front gamers will enjoy it as the game has everything you could want with armored forces, barrages, desperate defenses, etc., but you will need to set aside some time as it is not a short game.



The Railway Station

BKC Battle Report

I had been reading a lot lately about tactical level armored battles on the Eastern Front during 1944-5 and found that many of the actions centered around railway stations. With this in mind I designed a late war scenario based on a typical Russian attack towards a railway station on the German frontier. This would also give us a first time to use our Eastern Front stuff as up to this point all of our Blitzkrieg Commander games had been on the Western Front.

The Russians had a battalion of T-34/85s (six T-34/85s + a command stand), a battalion of T-34/76s, three SU-85s, a battalion of infantry, two JS-3s, plus three batteries of 152mm artillery off board in direct support. The Russian objective was to seize the railway station just beyond a German village. Although there were forested areas, a few farms, and the village, most of the approach to these areas was over open ground, which probably would prove difficult.

The German defenders had three PZ-IVHs, two Panthers, a Tiger, three Stug-III, a battalion of infantry with a 75mm AT gun, and a company of panzergrenadiers in halftracks. There were also three batteries of 105mm artillery off board for support. The Germans were allowed to set up anywhere up to the crossroads and decided to defend in depth. The infantry battalion would defend the village while the armor would protect the flanks, with the panzergrenadiers taking up positions near the railway station. The plan was to force the Russian armor to flow around the village and the German armor could take care of any breakthroughs.

As with most plans in wargaming, this one didn't survive the first few turns! The Russians attacked with the T-34/85s moving toward the German left and the T-34/76s moving to the center. The infantry were going to skirt the village and come around the German right. The SU-85s were held back initially as a reserve to exploit any breakthrough.

The Russians didn't get off to the best start either, failing numerous command rolls that left the Germans little to do until the Russian armor got within firing range. On the third turn the T-34/85s ran into the PZ-IVHs on the left flank which quickly sucked in the Panthers as well. This started a serious engagement that was to last several turns as both sides tried to deal with numerous suppressions and bad command rolls.

In the center the T-34/76s stopped in the woods surrounding the crossroads and began to exchange long range fire with the Stugs and the Tiger posted in positions behind the village. Again, this was a multi-turn engagement that saw both sides slowly grinding down each other. At the end of the fourth turn there were a few burning vehicles on both sides, but nothing major had occurred to this point.

The Germans looked as if their defensive plans were working and the Russians were having a difficult time pressing the attack.

The one thing that was working was the Russian artillery. It continually zeroed in on target, suppressing German armor, causing hits to the infantry in town, and basically making things pretty hazardous for the German defenders.



The Railway Station (cont.)

BKC Battle Report



Then the Russians began to pick up the speed of the attack. They closed the range on the PZIVs and Panthers, knocking out two while losing two of their T-34s, then the T-34s in the center knocked out one of the Stugs while losing one of theirs in return. The SU-85s, meanwhile, sneaked past the left hand side of the town and took up positions to bring the railway station area under fire.

The German AT gun in the town was



engaged with the JS-3s and after a long duel was knocked out. The Tiger and the remaining Stugs continued to engage the T-34s in the crossroads woods. The Russian artillery, however, continued to be on target, knocking out a few units and suppressing others.

The Russian infantry battalion took some small arms and heavy weapons fire as they crossed the open ground on the right hand side of the village, but they made the cover in relatively good shape. They then engaged the Germans in the village, but then slowly worked their way

down the board towards the rail line.

At this time, although things weren't looking to good for the Germans, they were still in a position to counterattack and hold on for a win. However, they kept getting bad command die rolls, especially the Stugs and Tiger, plus the Russian artillery kept hitting everything all over the board.

The Germans tried to engage the SU-85s with the panzer-grenadiers at the rail line in a series of buildings along the tracks. The SDKFZ-1/22 engaged the SU-85s, but was knocked out quickly. The panzer-grenadiers mounted up and prepared to close the gap by reaching the woods next to the SU-85s then closing for short range AT weapons, but bad command rolls again left them in the open where they were virtually wiped out by the SU-85s and artillery fire.

The seesaw struggle between the Panthers, PZ-IVHs, and T-34/85s was rapidly coming to a close. Although both sides had lost armor, the Germans could not afford a battle of attrition. Each time the Germans gained the upper hand several of their armor units were suppressed or couldn't make a second command roll. The killing stroke came when

the Russian commander on that side rolled a double activation, which left most of the German armor in flames.

This was the signal to make the final push to end the game. The JS-3s now moved down the left hand side of the village free from any German AT fire to met up with the SU-85s for an attack on the station itself. Several German infantry platoons did come out of the village and counterattacked the advancing Russian

infantry, causing some serious casualties. They were in turn, however, dealt with by the T-34s in the forest and some of the Russian heavy weapons. The Russian infantry continued to work itself around the flank and moved up to the rail line itself. By this time the Germans had only the Tiger left, a platoon of panzer-grenadiers, and some infantry still in the village, but no way to get to the station. At this point the game was called as a Russian victory as the Germans had no way of stopping the attack.



Overall, it was a very fun game, although it does show if you have really bad command rolls that it can be a deciding factor in the outcome, more so than most miniatures games. The German armor just could not disengage itself to deal with the multiple threats, which left some German units unsupported and the Russians eventually rolled them up. BKC does a great job of simulating East Front combat and the game did feel like a desperate defense somewhere in Germany during 1944-5.

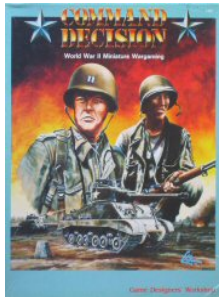


Memoirs of a Miniature & Board Wargamer Pt. 12

Who Are These People?

All of us at one time or another have met some, shall we say, “interesting” gamers. You know, the ones with enough psychological issues that even Freud would have had a hard time dealing with! So, I thought I would run through some of the more interesting ones I’ve encountered.

I was running a Command Decision game at a con and had clearly explained to everyone that since this was a learning scenario there would be no hidden movement. Well, one guy and his friend who was on the opposite side were almost playing their own game within the game. I saw one of them moving pieces of lichen down a river bank and I asked what he was doing. He told me to keep it quiet, but those lichen pieces were his command and they were trying to make a hidden flank march! I replaced the lichen with his actual models, then noticed his friend on the other side moving tiny dice along a forested road and sure enough, they represented his command moving hidden as well. This went on for the entire game as they continually replaced their models with terrain and moved that instead. The other players spent the game wondering who these two idiots were!

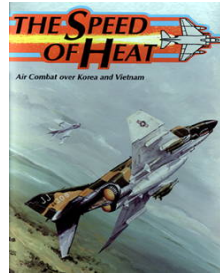


At another game at the same con there were two players who would spend their opponents turn rolling dice over and over again, then when a good roll came up they would say that they were using that roll for their first roll of the next turn! After several other players and I said that they couldn't do that they accused us of calling them cheaters and they left the game!

Also, why is it that air combat games bring out the worst in gamers? At one huge game of M&M I was at one of the “star” players who always got kills suffered some critical hits and was going down in flames. He was determined to get a kill, however, so looked for someone to ram on the way down. When every other player flew away from him,

he went into a rage, picked up his stuff and left!

Then there was the time that we were playing a fairly complex air combat boardgame and one of the players who fancied himself an ace, got hit by a missile when he outsmarted himself with a fancy maneuver and made himself a target! This was another learning scenario and there weren't any plans to do a campaign or even play it again as a group, but we thought we would try the game out. It was at the very end of the night, so when his wingman bugged out we called it a night, with his plane still hurtling to the ground in flames. The next day we were all at the local game store when he came in, plunked down the \$50 for the game, opened up the rulebook to the section on ejecting, rolled the dice and said that he survived and that pilot could be used in future games!



Another classic was when we were playing a rather large 20mm WW2 skirmish game with the Battalions in Crisis rules. This game had about 10 players with a lot of stuff on the board and it was going pretty well. There was a large, 20 foot high railway embankment that ran down the center of the board that both sides were fighting back and forth over. One of the players who only came a few times, moved his Shermans from the front lines back to the edge of the board, then declared he was going to shoot at the Germans on the other side of the embankment. When pressed about how he was planning to change the laws of physics he tried to explain that the further you get from an elevated obstacle the easier it is to shoot over it and see things on the other side! All attempts to explain geometry and physics, including that the Shermans were only about 200 yards from the embankment, were to no avail, so he spent the entire game saying how he was cheated and no one else in the club understood WW2 combat!

And who among us haven't played with gamers who are apparently involved in their own game within the game? The guys who take their cavalry commands

on a wide circular patrol of the battlefield and never get into the battle. Or the ones who ignore orders and just do whatever they want and refuse to help out their side, no matter the consequences?

In one memorable Empire game a player took his command out of a critical sector in the defense because he thought he saw an opportunity that no one else on his side did. Naturally this left a massive hole in the lines where the opposing forces drove through, split the army and ended the game almost before it began! Another time this same guy took his cavalry corps, reversed course, then launched an attack on the opposite side of the board. Now with Empire you had this rule where units could move large distances to get to the front lines, but this was even going beyond that. When pressed about it (you needed orders do to this) he said he was just trying to get into the action and make the game interesting!

Or how many times do you see a player become bored and then take their command and charge across the table to “shake things up”? This is all well and good if you're playing WH40K, but if you're playing on the Mexican side at Palo Alto and one of the players takes his brigade and goes charging into the American center because the U.S. side isn't attacking him, it can be a little disconcerting! Players need to realize that sometimes you're going to get the glory and sometimes you need to hold your position for the team. If you have to be involved during every second of the game or have a need to roll dice every two to three minutes, try Poker or Yahtzee.

I guess that as long as there are wargames there will be these kinds of gamers. Some of them are perfectly harmless and are just trying to have fun at what is primarily a social gathering, but it can grate on the other players after awhile. Others are just selfish, willing to cheat, or act like two year olds when they don't get their way. My patience and understanding only goes so far with them. Even though we are always trying to “grow the hobby”, there are times where it could easily do without a few more of these gamers!

Blast From The Past Pt. 11: GDW Miniatures Rules

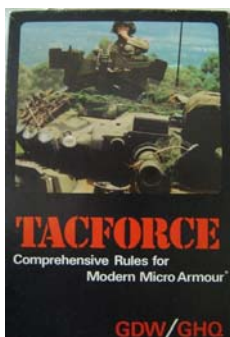
GDW was one of the most prolific producers in the gaming industry during their, in my opinion, all too brief existence. Besides the Traveler series for which they produced boxed sets, supplements, etc., they also did board wargames and a few sets of miniatures rules. Their Third World War and Assault series still stand as outstanding examples of wargame design.

I realize that today it would be hard to imagine a world where there were no rulebooks without glossy photos, well produced components, online support, etc., such as Flames of War, Fields of Glory, WH40K, and others. But yes, "back in the day" most rules were printed in black and white with little in the way of illustrations or components such as charts, counters, or supplements. Sure, there was Johnny Reb and The Complete Brigadier with their boxed sets, but they were seen as the exceptions rather than the rule.

So when GDW decided to get in on the miniatures rules market, there was some interest in just how they would do. One of the first entries was Tacforce, a boxed set of modern 1:1 scale combat rules designed for micro-armor. Now, most gamers already had the WRG rules, Enola's Combat Commander, or any of another dozen or so lesser known sets, so breaking into this market would be tough.

The boxed set was well done, with multiple booklets and an entire series of data cards for Warsaw Pact and U.S. forces. The layout and rules writing was very similar to what they had done for Traveler, including the size of the rules booklets. GDW had a straightforward style of rules writing that was pretty good, as you could read the rules (even if there were a lot of them) and grasp the concepts without too many questions.

The game had some good ideas, especially in regards to artillery and the cards were pretty easy to use. So why didn't the game catch on? I



think one of the reasons is that there were only cards provided for the U.S. forces. Gamers being gamers in those days, you had collections of NATO forces, so all of your scenarios had to be done with strictly U.S. and Warsaw Pact stuff. For many that was a deal breaker right there, plus there were no planned supplements, campaign materials, etc., so it looked as if this was all you would ever get. It was almost

as if someone at GDW bet a designer that they couldn't do a set of modern micro-armor rules, then the designer did and said, "Here it is!" then went back to what he was doing before the bet!

Another interesting set of rules was Striker. Designed to go along with Traveler, it was a boxed set very similar to Tacforce and Traveler, with multiple booklets that covered everything from the combat rules, creating mercenary forces, and a lot more. My memory of this game was that it was a pretty comprehensive set of sci-fi ground combat rules which impressed many in my group at that time.



Not only were there rules for command and control, but for communications, different tech levels, a wide variety of weaponry, artillery, and air support. For everyone who had been craving a decent set of sci-fi ground combat rules, this was very close to the holy grail. Not only could you fight ground actions, but you could create mercenary forces, design vehicles, there was a monetary system, and you could integrate all of this into Traveler.

So why didn't this catch on and thrive if it was so good? Well, for one thing there were few decent sci-fi miniatures at that time. Striker was a realistic set of sci-fi rules so no heroes with chainswords, bizarre aliens, etc., so the choices were fairly limited. Another thing was the time required to create a force and plan a battle. It took hours

and possibly days to design your combat command, then get it on the tabletop. In the end the effort didn't seem to justify the results, so many gamers moved on.

Finally, we come to System 7 Napoleonic, definitely one of the most controversial sets of rules in historical gaming history. It was your typical GDW boxed set of rules, which was finely produced, but tried to bring GDW's vision of Napoleonic combat to the miniatures gaming community.

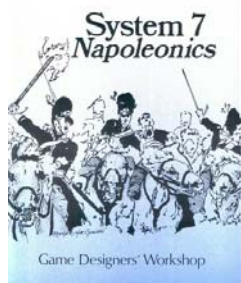
The problem was is that they also produced multiple counter sheets for every combatant that were supposed to be used in place of miniatures! So on one hand you had a new set of miniatures rules, but you were being told that miniatures weren't that important and instead use these nice, colored counters for your battles.

Naturally, this instantly divided the gaming community into those who thought this was blasphemy and those who said the rules were good and everyone should give them a try. At that time I was still into ACW and Colonials as my primary periods and did not know much about the Napoleonic era. I tried the set out with our group and found it was OK, but I didn't understand the controversy at that time.

The debate got some more life when at Origins (I think?) it was awarded for the best miniatures line! Yes, the counter sheets had received an award for the best *miniatures*. I can remember the letters in The Courier after this as it created quite the firestorm!

But then the controversy died down as other rules and systems arrived. By the early 90s GDW and the entire gaming industry was in serious trouble, culminating in the closing down of this once powerful force in the hobby. Although none of these systems are popular today and few remember them, they provided many gamers, including myself, with some fond memories of good times.

Special Edition
Fire & Steel
Rules for Battles with

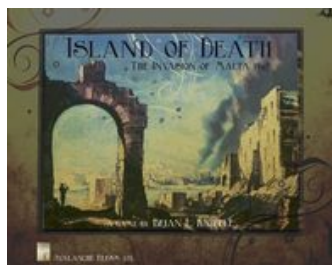


I definitely have a love-hate relationship with Avalanche Press. They can create some very good games such as the Third Reich series, Defiant Russia, Red Vengeance, Soldier Kings, and Red Steel. On the other hand you have some real clunkers such as Strange Defeat, Imperium, Gazala, and Napoleon in the Desert. In my experience it seems that every other game I've bought from them ends up going on Ebay, so it was with some trepidation that I approached Island of Death.

I've always been interested in well done "what if" games, especially if there were actual plans, training, etc., for the event such as Operation Sea Lion, Operation Eclipse, and the invasion of Malta, which is the subject of this game.

When you open the box you see that you get a map (about 20 x 22), a sheet and a half of counters, several sets of tables and charts for both players, and a large rulebook. The counters are thin, but look good with clear numbers and symbols, plus a good variety of colors that makes picking out the various formations easy to do. Likewise, the charts and tables cover most everything that you need, but you will need to refer back to the rulebook for various special rules. This leaves the map and frankly, I think the color used for the ocean is about two shades of blue too dark. It makes the rest of the map look dark, when it should stand out against the background, especially since not much action occurs on the ocean hexes!

Finally, it's time to talk about the rulebook. With around 35 pages of rules and several pages of scenarios and set up info, your first impression is that you've stumbled into a TCS or OCS game from MMP/The Gamers! As I began reading through the rules it dawned on me that some of the systems were similar to Red Steel and Avalanche, with the morale factors, ammunition expenditure, and other similar items. Also, every time I see that there are breakdown counters I cringe. This usually means another



page or two of rules about breaking down or combining units, separating the counters and keeping track of what is broken down and what isn't, plus, how often do broken down units get back together to form the parent unit? In my experience not often.

So, after reading through the rules and sorting the counters you're almost set to play. I say almost as there is a pretty involved pre-planning phase in which the Axis player plans his airdrops, first and second waves for the two Italian divisions that will make the amphibious landing, and yes, all of these units need to be broken down into companies for this!

Finally, you're set to go and grab the double-sided card with the sequence of play. The Axis makes airstrikes against the coastal guns, Italian fleet is placed and does a gun battle with the coastal guns, then the coastal guns fire at the first or second wave, then the amphibious units land, check for casualties, then there is waterline combat, then you get to drop the airborne units. If you've survived all of this, then the proper turn starts with movement, combat, supply, etc. .

Now the Axis player has a lot of choices here in terms of what units go in the first, second, and follow up waves. The Axis side also gets to choose the landing beach areas and the airborne drop zones, so your not tied to any particular plan. However, getting ashore alive is a definite challenge!

If you've played Red Steel or Avalanche, then you know that combat is pretty involved. You determine odds ratios, compare the average morale, add in offensive/defensive artillery support, and then a host of modifiers that produce some bloody results as the combat table is tough on the attacker.

My impression is that

there are two possible outcomes to this game. Either the amphibious assault gets slaughtered (this happened in my first game) and the airborne units get isolated and killed off piecemeal, or both the amphib and airborne units get a toehold, then there is a long and steady grind where the overwhelming Axis numbers eventually grind down the defenders. With four turns per day and the game lasting over two weeks this could be a long, long game.

In fact, that is the problem with Island of Death. It's not the map, counters, charts, or the idea behind the game. It's the simple fact that everything about this game takes a long time or is carried out to extremes. Do you really need to track how much artillery ammo is landed each turn? Does everything have to break down into smaller units? Do you really need sections of rules that cover every

little thing so that the sequence of play is on two sides of a card? If you bought the game, opened the box without looking at the components and just read the rules, you would think that Malta is represented by three 22 x 34 maps, there's 1,000 counters, and you're fighting a very tactical, small scale battle.

But you're not. There's a handful of British battalions and various units holding off a massive Axis assault. What should be a straightforward game on an interesting topic devolves into a numbers crunching exercise that drags on for a few too many hours. In my opinion this would have been the perfect vehicle for a Defiant Russia or MMP SCS type game. Keep the battalion and special unit counters, shorten the amphibious section to a few rolls, get rid of half of the rulebook, and you could have a decent game playable in a few hours that would have excellent replay value.

As it is the game isn't bad, but you will need to dedicate some time to it. It is an interesting topic for a good price, but it could have been so much better.



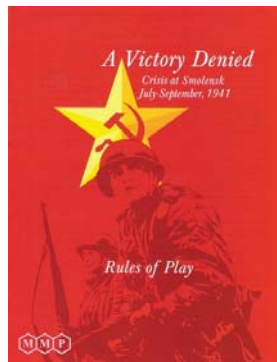
A Victory Lost from MMP must rate as one of the best wargames to be come along in the last five years. It harkens back to the “classic” hex and counter days of board wargaming with just enough twists to make it an outstanding game design. Now there is a sequel to what many regard as an instant classic, but this time it deals with the earlier stages of Operation Barbarossa.

A Victory Denied (AVD) covers Guderian’s lunge towards Smolensk and Moscow in 1941. Now many in the hobby may consider this blasphemy to even create another game on the same subject as SPI’s Panzergruppe Guderian, but MMP has broken new ground with AVD.

The components are very similar to AVL. A beautiful and functional 22 x 34 map that covers the Smolensk area all the way to the gates of Moscow in summer colors of green, tan, light brown, and light blue rivers. The counters again provide the option of NATO type symbols for the armor/mech units or silhouette style icons, which is appearing in more and more games lately. Finally, a full color rulebook with many examples that should be a template for other game designers.

If you’ve played AVL you should be able to get into this game quickly as there are only a few changes to the system. However, the changes that they’ve made for this game in an earlier time period are major, so you do need to go over the rules. For one, there are fewer command chits, but some activate other HQs now and some activate entire panzer groups. There are also chits for reinforcements and supply, so these things aren’t done at the end of the turn or checked at various times through the turn sequence.

Special chits in the command cup include the Guderian chit which can activate the 2nd Panzer Group at any time during the turn. There is also an Artillery



chit for the Russians to make separate artillery attacks, an Airpower chit which adds Stukas to the German options, and several chits that can be bought during the reinforcements phase.

Combat has been changed slightly with the Russians rolling 1D10 and the Germans rolling 1D6, which does add some varia-

tion to the combat results. The situation in Minsk is also covered, with the Germans able to send infantry divisions from the containment forces to the drive on Moscow, but release too many and some Russians may escape the pocket. Also, both sides are really limited in their choice of chits, so choosing the correct ones each turn is critical.

This, in essence, is what makes AVD so good. There are a large number of simple, but critical choices that need to be made every turn. Which armored group should lead the attack this turn? Should the Russians bring in more infantry or extra command? Should the Minsk pocket be left as is or should the Germans divert the infantry to the main attack? There are so many options that I would think the replay value of the game is very high. Not only that, but the VP chits for the various cities and towns are

hidden, so you have no idea how you are doing in the points totals. Finally, at the end of Turn 6 there is a table where the Germans either end up ending the campaign on turn 8 or Hitler directs Moscow to be taken and the Germans go all out until turn 10. Each decision has advantages and disadvantages in terms of calculating victory points.

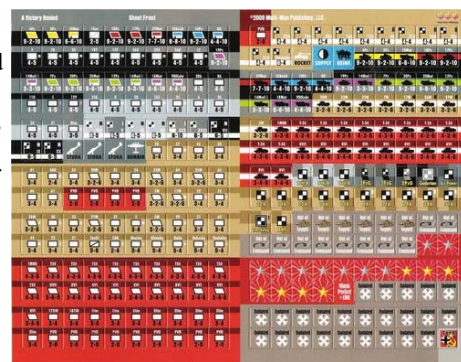
The game basically starts out with an attack by the 2nd Panzer Groups’ mech units to open up some maneuvering room. Then the 3rd Panzer Group gets to do the same and after that the regular chit pull begins. The Germans get one turn to terrorize the Russians with a large

number of command chits and combat modifiers. After that, things get much tougher. For one thing the Russians never run out of HQs and units to put in the path of the German advance. The Russians also get to mark

some German units out of supply each turn, further slowing the advance. By turn 6 the Germans may still be looking for that breakthrough.

Are there problems with the game? Yes, but they are minor. Turn 1 can be a learning experience as there are a lot of special rules, but once you get to turn 2 things get easier. Figuring out the 2nd Panzer Groups and 9th Army’s colors/command structure took me awhile to get it right. Finding things in the rules can be annoying at times as small things are all over the place. However, these things can be solved and are relatively minor.

Overall, this is a worthy successor to AVL. The game offers many, many options and strategies, so you won’t get bored after one play. MMP and the designer have already stated that this is going to be a series, with the next two games on the Autumn operations in Hungary in ‘44 and Berlin in ‘45, with possibly more to come after that. Highly recommended!





WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meets every other Friday night in SLC or Sandy, Utah. We play the following rules: Age of Eagles, Age of Reason, Age of Discovery, WAB, WMA, BKC, TSATF, BFE, Phantoms, Old West, Fire & Fury, board games, and much more.

Contact the editor:
mirsik1@juno.com

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It's hard to believe that this is the 25th issue of Warning Order! This project started out as a simple club newsletter with a few articles and pictures of our games for club members to have something to remember good times with and to show others that we were maybe a little bit more than your average club. The first few issues were pretty primitive in comparison to the last dozen or so, which from the comments I get seem to indicate it's moving in a more professional direction! Actually, it's just that I've become better at the program (I actually teach this program at a university now!) and am always trying to do better with each issue. I'm always surprised by the number of people who read this little magazine and most of the comments are of a positive nature, which does help to keep me going.

Where to go from here is the big thing. I'm already running behind on the three issues per year as this does take a lot of time to get ready. As I've said before, it's a one man operation with no staff, there's no profit to be made, I usually don't get free samples or review copies, so I sometimes wonder why I keep it going! I do love the hobby and I like to share with the gaming community what our little group is up to, which is what this magazine tries to accomplish. Yes, I can get a little grumpy with the hobby and fellow gamers as seen in my editorials, but I've been in the hobby since the mid-70s and I try to call it like I see it. I'm going to keep going forward with this project and hope that my drive for making the hobby better doesn't burn out!

Raiden Miniatures Modern 1/300th Jets

Product Review

If you've ever built any of the GHQ or CinC modern jets you instantly notice two things. The first is that they are more like miniature models with numerous pieces that take a lot of patience and second, that they're not going to stand up to gamers using them! So the objective for gamers who use 1/300th scale aircraft for air combat games is to find something that works, but still has enough detail so that you can recognize the aircraft.

Well, if the three jets I received from Raiden Miniatures are any indication, I

think that the problem may have been solved. I received an A-4E, a F-8C, and a F-4B/C to look over. Two of the models came with drop tanks, which is great for the price (less than \$3 per jet). I compared them to some of the models I have from Scotia, Enola/Navwar, and the GHQ and CinC ones I mentioned earlier. The Raiden miniatures appear to me to be correctly proportioned and scaled.

All of the models were free of flash and would need just a little bit of filing on the mold lines such as on the F-8. The panel lines were done well, and what I really liked is that they've started a hole in the center of the under side of the fuselage to help you fit whatever type of flight stand that you are using.

These are definitely gaming models for gamers, but don't think they are just blobs of lead as some others are. These are beautifully designed models with just



enough detail so that they can be painted correctly, but you won't break pieces off of them during gaming! Raiden has an ever growing line of 1/285th aircraft that includes many WW2 and post war aircraft, including many that are quite unusual.

Hopefully Raiden will continue to expand their modern line as it would be nice to see some well done Sea Harriers, Mirage IIIs, A-6s, and more! Highly recommended!

