

Warning Order

Issue #30

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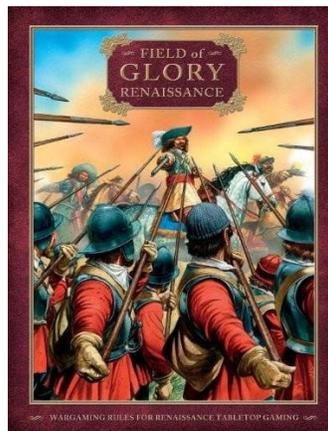
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Fields of Glory: Renaissance

The Renaissance period is one of those gaming eras that is hard to get right. If you've read anything about Renaissance era battles, sieges, and campaigns you quickly learn that it was chaos on a massive level. Widely varying troop types, lots of mercenaries, continuously shifting objectives and political goals, and commanders who really didn't have any idea how to use their forces in any kind of combined arms operations. Battles became more of a rock, paper, scissors contest as you had no idea what your troops would do on certain days!

Most gaming rules, however, take a more set piece, orderly approach to things, including the Renaissance era, which is why many of them end up looking more like ancients battles than with few wild swings of fortune, but yet that is what made the Renaissance battlefield so unpredictable.

One of the newest entries into this fascinating era is Fields of Glory: Renaissance by Osprey Publishing. Basically an extension of the rollout for Fields of



Glory (FOG) Ancients rules with a hardbound rule book and then plenty of softbound supplements with the necessary army lists.

The rule book is simply a beautiful and well done piece of work. Amply illustrated with Osprey art from the Men at Arms, Elite, and Campaign series of books, plus painted miniatures in tabletop settings

and along with full color diagrams for almost every section of rules in the book. However, one of the things that you first notice is the length, which exceeds 200 pages! This by itself may put off many gamers who are use to much smaller rules sets, but there is a reason for the length and it will be explained as we go along.

There is an overview of the period and a brief discussion on basing figures, etc., before the actual rules begin. They system does use what are called MUs, or Movement Units, which work for all scales. At this point most gamers are looking at the army lists, figs needed per base, and thinking about how they are either going to use their existing figs or paint up a new army. Every gamer does this and then they get back to actually reading the rules!

This is where the first problem or obstacle to me occurred. While there is some discussion about basing and figures at the start, most of the info is at the back of the book. Also,



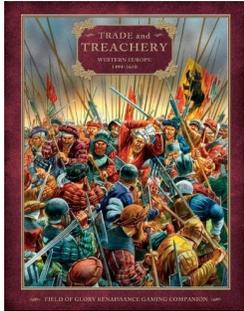
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Special points of interest:

- Multiple battle reports for *Age of Reason*, *Fire & Fury*, *Warmaster Medieval*, *Sharp Practice*, *Age of Eagles*, and *Blitzkrieg Commander 2*.
- In depth review of *Field of Glory Renaissance* along with a battle report.
- Regular features and an editorial.

(cont. from p2) next few sections cover Battle Groups, Command, and the Sequence of play. Battle groups are the essential pieces that make up the armies of each side. Battle groups can be kiels (usually Swiss or German pike), tercios (in a variety of different formations depending upon year), then regular and mixed formations. Understanding what battle groups are, how they interact on the battlefield, their cohesion, quality rolls, and disorder is to me the essential part of the game.



This first fundamental section of the rules sets up what is a steady diet of what you will see in the rest of the book. Each section of the game, whether it is command, melee, shooting, etc., is laid out with excruciating detail. Every possibility or option that a player can have, no matter how dumb/futile/preposterous, is given a rule! Obviously, this set of rules has been written for the tournament player in mind which is good and bad. Obviously, if you are in a tournament, there will be few if any, unanswered questions. If you're just into playing Renaissance games with your gaming buddies then you are going to have to read through a lot of rules that at times seem unnecessary.

Movement is not as hard as you would think for this era as there aren't things such as attack columns, moving from

front to flank, etc., as in many other periods. Most of the troops in this era were not very well trained in complex maneuvers, so most of the movement in the game will be straight ahead or adjusting to attack an enemy force. There are many special situations and as noted above this is what makes the rule book so large. Every possibility for movement, no matter how unlikely to occur, is documented leaving nothing open to interpretation if you're in a tournament.

The firing/ranged combat section is likewise very easy to grasp. In fact, you can probably figure it out with nothing more than the charts if you've played miniatures games before. Again, every possibility involving line of sight, obscured targets, etc., is covered, but after reading through the section and looking at the charts, it's pretty easy to understand.

So now we come to the meat of the game and the sections that will take some work to understand properly. These are the Impact and Combat phases. The Impact phase occurs during movement when opposing units contact each other. It should be thought of as melee that is resolved during movement with combat being the actual melee phase later in the turn. Yes, it will take some getting use to, but basically in Impact you are judging how successful a unit's attack is at

breaching the opposing force's front/flank or if they hold. Combat is then whatever happens after the two forces have collided.

Now to give you an idea about the level of detail for impact and combat, the example of play is only 4 1/2 pages long! Yes, this is nothing that is going to be decided in 60 seconds and combat will take awhile until you learn

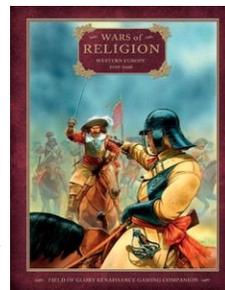


the modifiers. You will also need to study carefully what could be termed "movement into impact/combat" as this can also get quite involved. Which stands need to match up, stands that can adjust/step into combat, which ranks can join in, flanking units, etc., are gone over in great detail.

There are a large number of modifiers and too many to go over in this review. Basically, each battlegroup gets a number of dice to throw during impact and/or combat. This is modified by what are called Points of Advantage, or POAs. As you go down the list of modifiers (it reminded me of the old WRG Ancients rules from back in the day), you keep track of each side's POAs, then the difference is added or subtracted from what you need to roll to score a hit.

For example, most average troops might need a 4+ to hit on a D6, but if you had one POA then you might need a 3+ while your opponent who was down one POA would probably need a 5+ to score a hit.

The losing side needs to then make a Cohesion (think morale) check followed by what are called Death Rolls. For example, if you suffered three hits you need to roll a 4+ to avoid losing a stand. The winning side gets a +2, so when you start losing combats a battlegroup can get chopped down to size. The problem? Combats can go on for a long time, especially if both sides roll bad or are evenly matched. The other thing that affects this is the quality of the unit, (cont. on p5)



FOG: Renaissance vs. Age of Discovery

Rules Comparison

When I started to be interested in the Renaissance period I went back through every article I could find in The Courier, Wargamer's Digest, Miniature War-games, Battle, etc., to determine which rules I should use. After buying several sets and looking them over I chose Warfare in the Age of Discovery as that seemed to me to be the best representation of the period. If you've been a regular reader of this magazine for the last decade or so all of the battle reports for that period are done using AOD.

So why did I buy FOGR and give them a try? Well, for one it was the "hot new thing", I was curious about how it portrayed the period, and there were a virtual horde of army lists to look over and contemplate painting more armies!

In reviewing the rules and playing them it became readily apparent that these are two different beasts with totally different outlooks on Renaissance warfare. FOGR is written for the tournament gamer first, then friendly gaming second, while AOD is the exact opposite. The presentation, color pages, examples, and army lists of FOGR is truly breathtaking while AOD is a bare bones set of rules.

Having played a ton of WRG games in the past and feeling refreshed when newer rules sets started to use different activation methods, more randomization, etc., FOGR took me back to those days. Maybe not as "clockwork" as many of the WRG old rules, but still it reminded me of that era where you knew the percentages of almost every combat or

shooting phase and it was just a question of whether the dice came up +1 or +2.

I think this is where, at least to my mind that AOD still comes out ahead and why I'll still be doing most of my Renaissance gaming with it. The rules are great for group play, you can get new gamers into the period quickly, and there is a level of chaos that pays homage to that era. While not as flashy as FOGR, the rules work and you can feel that the authors were doing the best to get people fascinated about this interesting period.

FOGR is a good set of rules, but it's not for everyone. I certainly recommend that all players have the rules, have read them, and understand all of their options or it could be a long evening.

Rules Feature	FOG: Renaissance	Age of Discovery	Notes
Presentation/Graphics	★★★★☆	★★☆☆☆	FOGR's ties with Osprey come to the forefront in this category-beautiful rule book.
Completeness	★★★★☆	★★☆☆☆	FOGR covers every aspect of the era, but army lists are separate.
Complexity	★★★★☆	★★☆☆☆	Beginners are not going to grasp FOGR and it will take a few readings of the rules even for experienced gamers.
Suitability for group play	★★★☆☆	★★★★☆	You can get a group going with AOD in no time at all, but for FOGR it definitely helps if everyone owns the rules.
Army Lists	★★★★★	★★☆☆☆	AOD provides some lists which are helpful, but there really is no comparison here.
Pike melee/combat	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	Both games accomplish the same thing, but with different ways of doing it.
Historical feel	★★★☆☆	★★★★☆	AOD has a high degree of chaos, which seems right for this period.
Examples of play	★★★★★	★★☆☆☆	Almost every page has detailed examples in full color in FOGR.
Fun factor	★★★☆☆	★★★★☆	FOGR is a little too predictable and hard to get into.

Where you can reroll certain results depending upon how good or bad the unit is. For example, if you are classed as a Poor unit you need to re-roll all 6s, where if you are a superior or elite unit you get to re-roll certain misses. I thought that this would have more of an impact during the game than it did. When you read the sections about unit quality, the extra points paid for better units in the army lists, etc., you are led to believe that this should have a big impact on the game. In our playtest we found that this wasn't necessarily so.

Cohesion comes in several states; normal, Disrupted, Fragmented, and Broken. If you get beyond that or if the unit reaches a certain number of stands lost, then it will rout/auto-break. Once you lose so many battlegroups that army will leave the board and that's the end of the game. You can recover, i.e., rally, if an officer joins a unit.

The remainder of the book is taken up by a large number of appendices, charts, and more. There is an elaborate terrain set up system that was quite impressive, but left me with the impression that it would take some time to do properly. I think it's a great system for campaigns, however. The glossary and index are extremely well done, which is good because you are going to be needing them for your first few games!

Overall, it is an impressive tome of rules for Renaissance era gaming. Checking in at around 200 pages, with

color examples of combat, pictures, charts, etc., it is the model of what modern rules publishing has become. When you add in the army list books you have an impressive work that even if you never play the game could be good for ideas, armies, what period to game, and more.

All of this is nice, but the focus is on gameplay and should you give these rules a try or not. I read through the rules several times and even though I play a lot of complex board games, it took me two or three tries to grasp what was going on here. It wasn't that the rules were incomplete, badly written, poorly organized, or made no sense. No, what the problem was is that EVERY little thing, no matter how small, had to be explained in excruciating detail! By the time you read all of the common sense rules you had forgotten the rules that make this system unique and so you find yourself going back over them again and again. What takes two pages in some sets of rules takes five here.

You can easily see that it is written for the tournament gamer and rules lawyer in mind. Nothing is left to chance, no possibility of misunderstanding, and everything must be followed in a strict sequence. This is great for a tournament, but what about the regular gamers looking to do a Renaissance game at the club meeting? I firmly believe that the rules could have been cut down to at least half that size and you could definitely do a quick start set to get gamers into the system, then pile on the complex stuff later.



My readings of this period led me to believe that chaos was the order of the day in this era. It was a real, rock, paper, scissors game where no one, especially the commanders of the day, knew what was going to happen on the battlefield. Units charged and fled for no or little reason, units were difficult to control, and sure defeat was turned into victory more than once. Can you recreate any of these things with FOGR? Sadly, no. The game is so clocklike in play that I doubt you will ever see anything that would shock you or cause you to say, "Well, I didn't see that coming!"

A gamer in our group remarked that they did everything possible to take the chaos out of the period. Tournament gamers don't like chaos and they definitely won out here. You can watch a pike battle and because of the various modifiers you can say to the group, "Well, that should go another three or four turns then unit B will lose cohesion and break". No surprises, no real chance of anything out of the ordinary happening, just a simple numbers crunching exercise.

Now this may appeal to some gamers and with the army lists, terrain set up, etc., I can see where this would make a good campaign system. My biggest question, though, remains that did they expect people to buy this off of the shelves of bookstores and learn how to play for their first miniatures game? You definitely need some gaming experience to even begin to attempt this and it will take some work.



Having bought the FOGR rules and deciding to do a full review, it would be only proper to report on a playtest of the system. After going through the rules several times, printing off the reference sheets from the Yahoo group (these are definitely essential items!), and creating two army lists, I felt that the game was about as ready as it could get.

This was to be a battle between an Italian Wars French army and a Caroline Imperialist Spanish force. The French had a large battlegroup (BG) of Swiss pike, a BG of poor quality French pike, a BG of superior German pike, two BGs of arquebus, some BGs of light cavalry, a BG of fully armored Gendarmes, two artillery batteries, and three commanders. The Spanish force had a large tercio, a BG of poor Italian pike, a BG of superior German pike, a few BGs of light cavalry, some BGs of arquebusiers, a few artillery batteries, a BG of armored cavalry, and three commanders. The forces were pretty even, with the tercio off-setting the Swiss pike. I had set the terrain up beforehand as the process in the book would take too long for this first game and I thought that we would have problems with the rules, so no use in adding more time to the game!

Not knowing how the game would play, both sides used a fairly standard set up, with cavalry on the wings, artillery in the center area, and the best quality pike ready to take out the opposing side's center. With both sides deployed (we skipped the deployment section in the rules, again in the interest of time) and



got started.

Right off the bat we had to re-read the command section to make sure that we were doing it right. That section of the rules was a bit unclear on a few things, but as the game developed and we read through other sections regarding Cohesion, movement, etc., we figured out the positioning of the commanders. It also took awhile to get the hang of the movement, as if there are no enemy within six inches units can go a second or third move, but it needs to be declared at the start of the movement phase. We also had to revisit the shifting of units, terrain, and more in the rules, so we took up about an hour getting our first few moves in.

By the third turn some of the artillery batteries had unlimbered and started bombarding the closest enemy units. We worked through the first few as a group, going through the modifiers, the death rolls, and the cohesion checks to make sure that we understood what was going on. By the second or third time we had the firing system down pretty good and that is definitely one of the easier parts of the game to pick up. Several of the arquebus units on both sides got into range and began a series of fire-fights across the battlefield.

Our first attempt with the Impact/Combat phase came when a French BG of German pike charged home against

an Italian pike BG. Again, we went slowly through the Impact modifiers, found the number of dice, to be rolled and got on with it. Later, in the Combat phase we continued the melee by going down a new list of modifiers that eventually ended in a few hits on both sides. After cohesion tests and death rolls, we felt that we knew how the system worked, but there was a lot of discussion about it, both good and bad.

The game continued, with a unit of Italian arquebus joining the melee in the center against the German heavy weapons on the flank of the German pike BG. This caused us to have to look up overlaps, how the modifiers worked, etc., but after about 15 minutes we sorted things out and the game continued on. By this time there were several exchanges of fire, a big melee in the center, and a light cavalry action about to occur on the flanks.



The melee continued...and continued...and continued. The superior quality of the German pike BG really meant nothing except for the ability of being able to re-roll certain dice, which is great if you're rolling those numbers. If not, the pike battles could go on for quite some time. We didn't see it occur in our game, but clearly it's meant for other units to join into the combat, which looked like it would be a nightmare of trying to figure out the modifiers for each BG.

We continued to play on and saw a light cavalry unit break and run after a few turns of combat, but after an hour set up and explanation of the rules, then three





and a half hours of game, we weren't even at the halfway point. The Swiss, Gendarmes, and the tercio were just getting into position for an epic battle when we had to call it a night.

The initial impressions from the group were that FOGR had a beautiful rulebook and outstanding army lists. Everyone was stunned at the amount of detail and options that you could pick for your force. There were, however, some expressions of shock at the length of the rules, which at over 200 pages, is understandable. The rules do have a large number of examples of play, which help a great deal, even if some of them can go on for quite some time (the combat example is 4 1/2 pages long!).

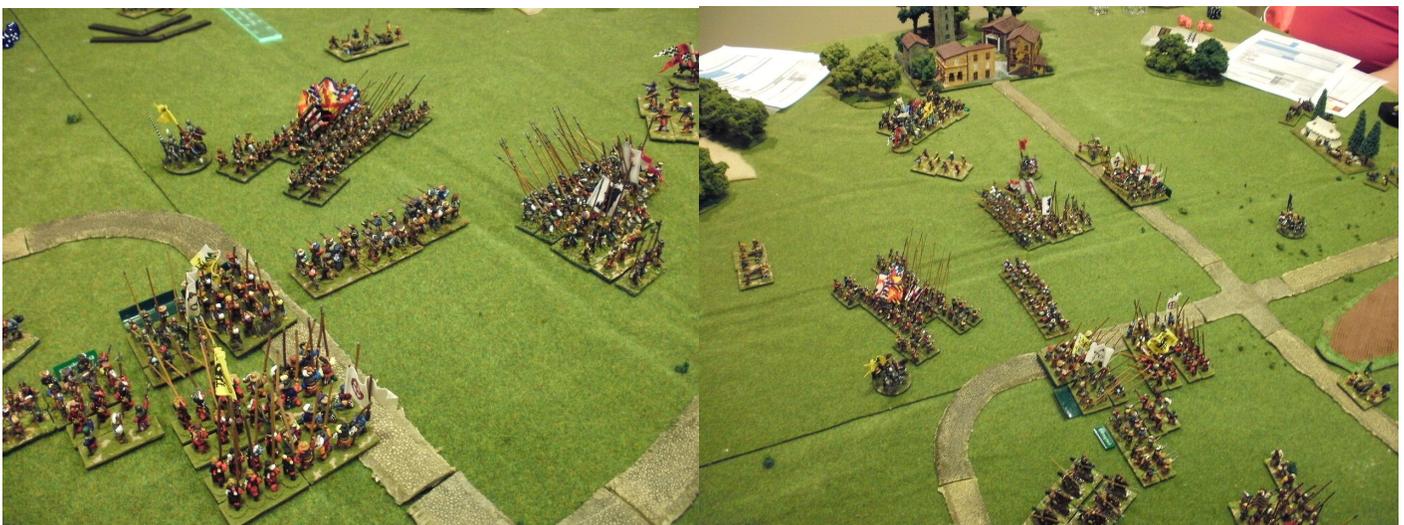
As far as gameplay goes the game looks really good on the tabletop, but in

terms of gameplay we didn't think that the game was very fun. Even though there is die rolling, which introduces an element of chance, everyone got the feeling that it was just one more step towards an inevitable conclusion. That the German pike BG would defeat the Italian pike BG was a foregone conclusion, but it was going to take several turns to get to that point. Going through the modifiers over and over wasn't very fun and at the end another unit was going to join the melee and we were dreading having to recalculate everything.

We thought that the system was very historical in that units acted much like their historical counterparts would have, but it was the gameplay that left us cold. It is definitely designed for tournament gamers and there is little to no chaos in

the game, which was a hallmark of the period. This is also a game where it really, really helps if everyone has and understands the rules. Teaching this to a group for a one off game is a difficult challenge and there are so many options or ways of doing things that you can't possibly explain everything.

In the end, I'm kind of on the fence with this one and I'm not sure if we will bring it out again or not. While there are some positives, the negatives easily offset them and it makes for an indifferent type of gaming experience. I felt that I was in a tournament trying to use everything possible that the rules allowed and not having fun actually playing the game. There is nothing really wrong with the system, but I felt that there was little to no joy and excitement playing it.



Sharp Practice: Meeting Engagement

Battle Report

After a long layoff with this set of rules, it was back to Sharp Practice which we use for Napoleonic skirmish games. By now we've collected a few hundred Russians, French, and British, so we can comfortably run 4-8 player games with each person running one to two units each. Our biggest problem with this battle is that we hadn't read the rules in almost a year! Combine that with everyone buying and reading a half dozen other rules in that timeframe and it took us a few hours to sort out how the game works again!



This was your basic meeting engagement, with the Russians having three infantry companies of 24 figs each (one company was a grenadier company which was rated higher) and a squadron of cavalry which had 12 figures. The French



had three infantry companies (one was a light company which shoots better in the rules) as well with a 12 figure squadron of cavalry. There were multiple terrain objectives in the game which included a large church at the French end of the board, a small village at the Russian end,



a hill, a ridgeline, and a farmhouse for a total of five objectives. The winning side needed to control three of the objectives.

The Russians decided to hold on the left, then push two companies and the cavalry down the right hand side. The French chose almost the exact opposite by unleashing the cavalry up the French right and letting the infantry take the farmhouse and support the attack on the hill. Both sides decided that they already owned one objective, so they would sacrifice one to the other side and go after the final three.

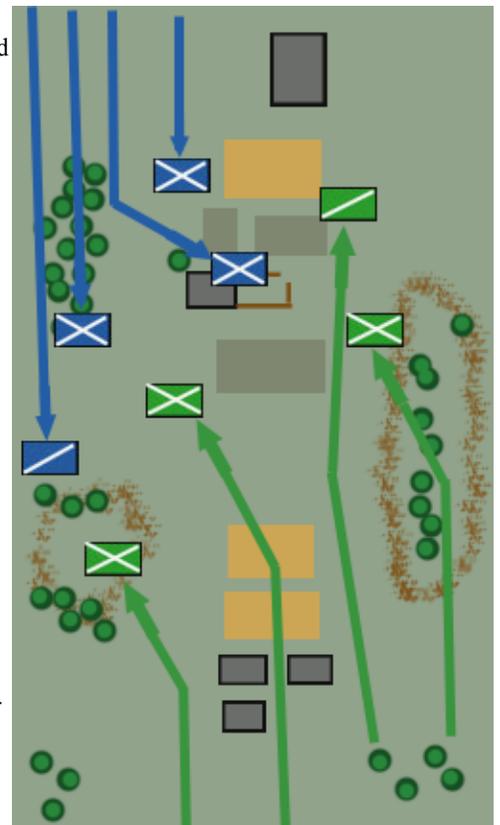
For those who have never played Sharp Practice it is a skirmish game that focuses around the use of "Big Men", who are usually sergeants and officers attached to small units. The average unit size is 12, but you can combine units and in fact you can play with entire battalions! We use 24 figure companies that can be broken down into two 12 figure units. Big Men have ratings that determine how many actions their troops can do which can be shooting, reloading, changing formation, reducing shock to the unit, and more. The system uses a series of cards for each big men and when a card is drawn that big man along with his unit is activated.

Like The Sword and the Flame, the rules are more of a "rules kit" and you will need to interpret some things and create some house rules for others. However, it works well as a skirmish game and everyone usually has a good time whenever it is played.

In a few of the pictures you can see large colored ovals which are called "blinds" in the game. Each blind can be either an actual unit or a dummy which is a simple, but effective way to add hidden movement to the game. All forces start as blinds during the game and you can place the actual figures either when you are spotted or wish to fire, which reveals your position.

When the first few blinds were revealed there were a few nasty surprises for both sides. For one, the French cavalry had maneuvered all the way up the Russian left and launched a charge on the hill where a Russian infantry company had just moved to. The Russian infantry, despite being in light woods were driven out of the woods and off the hill. The problem for the French was that the melee result wasn't that great, so the cavalry could not consolidate their gain and had to fall back to regroup.

The surprise for the French was that like the French cavalry, the Russian cavalry had moved up the right/right center almost to the church before they were





spotted! They deployed quickly, ready for the charge that would sweep the French infantry away and possibly end the game early. However, as is usually the case in card driven games, the wrong cards kept coming up! By the time they got up to gallop speed for the charge they were met with fire from a French infantry company that was able to just wheel in time and from the light infantry company that had moved into the farm. The charge was halted and thrown back to regroup. They fell back from the source of the fire in the farmhouse area and seized the church objective by default!

Meanwhile, the Russian grenadiers on the ridge now turned and engaged the French light company in the farmhouse. This firefight went on for several turns as

the other infantry companies tried to get into firing range of each other. This became the pattern for the next few turns. The French infantry in the farmhouse and the Russian grenadiers slugged it out with muskets, the French cavalry reformed, the Russian infantry near the hill reformed, and the remaining infantry didn't do much as the turns always ended too soon!

Finally, the Russian infantry moved back to take the hill on the Russian left and were met almost at the same time by the French cavalry which had reformed and charged forward again. This time, however, the results were far different thanks to some incredible die rolling by the Russian player! The Russians repelled the cavalry attack and inflicted a

large number of casualties and shock points. With the hill, church, village, and ridgeline in Russian hands the game was called with the Russians leading four objectives to one.

All in all, it was a good little game that went for about 3 1/2 hours, including set up. Again, we really need to do a better job of reading the rules again before we play a game after a long layoff! We messed up several things, which led to our oft repeated cry of "It's just a skirmish game!", which happened whenever we did something wrong. We do like this system, however, and are next going to try the French and Indian War variant. Also, we need to do a better job of creating specialty cards, more unique stats for the big men, etc., for some variation.



Our first try with Warmaster Medieval resulted in a rout of the Saracens by the Crusaders, so this time the Saracens were looking for revenge. Our Crusader armies aren't quite finished, but we had plenty of Normans which do a great job as stand ins for the First or Second Crusade!



ers out in front. The Crusaders put two bodies of cavalry on both flanks with the heavy infantry in the center. Their plan was to overwhelm the Saracen flanks then let the infantry close up and finish the day.

This time the Saracens brought along some skirmishers and some more fanatic infantry than in the first game. The Saracen army had five regular infantry units, four Gazi or fanatical infantry, two units of skirmishers, three units of archers, three light cavalry w/bows, three light cavalry w/spears, and three units of shock cavalry. With nine units of cavalry overall this was definitely a mobile force.

The Crusaders had four units of shock cavalry, three units of medium cavalry, three units of crossbows, six infantry units, plus two units of pilgrims. A slightly smaller force, but they more than made up for it with their heavy armor and special rules for cavalry charges.

Both sides used a hidden setup and when all was ready to go you could see that the Saracens were going to try to overwhelm the Crusader left with a huge cavalry force. In fact, all of the Saracen cavalry were placed on that flank under one leader with a command value of 8. The remaining Saracen forces were placed in lines to cover the right and center of the army with archers and skirmish-

Things were looking up for the Saracens when they got off a series of orders for their forces on the first turn followed by the Crusaders barely moving at all. The Saracen cavalry quickly jumped out to the right and got to the oasis near the hill while the infantry took up blocking positions.

The second and third turns saw pretty much the same where the Saracen cavalry continued to move one order a turn and set itself nicely in position to attack the Crusaders while the Crusaders for their part were only able to move the two units of cavalry on their left flank. The Saracens then rolled very good on their command rolls and flanked two units of Crusader cavalry. This then became the recurring theme turn after turn for the next hour or so where the Saracen cavalry would flank the Crusaders, not do too much damage, then brace themselves for the inevitable counterattack where they would evade. Slowly and surely, however, both sides were grinding themselves down on that flank.

In the center the Crusader crossbowmen finally began to move and engage the leading elements of the Saracen infantry. After several turns the Saracens

charged and finished off the crossbow units, but not before suffering plenty of losses themselves. The Crusader heavy cavalry was still having problems moving up and after about five turns were finally in position to deal a heavy blow.

When the attack finally came it was simply devastating. Entire units of Saracen archers and infantry vanished in an



avalanche of die rolling! However, each successive attack caused a few casualties to the Crusader cavalry and that combined with units of fanatic infantry sacrificing themselves in suicidal charges forced the Crusader heavy cavalry to fall back with only a few stands still left.

Back to the cavalry melees where both sides were now down to a few stands. The Saracen heavy cavalry moved to the extreme right and readied a charge into the main line of the Crusader infantry which had major problems moving up to the support the rest of the attack. The Saracens crashed into the line in a series of charges, dealing a series of heavy blows, but they could not quite





achieve the breakthrough that they so desperately needed. They reformed and charged again and again, but by the third charge they were down to half of their strength.

The end of the game was clearly approaching. Even though both sides had similar break points, most of the Saracen army was skirmish capable, so if they were destroyed it wouldn't matter in the scoring. Each side looked as if they would get one more turn to cause enough casualties to break their opponent's army.

The Saracens concentrated on a few units and finally destroyed enough stands to force the Crusaders to reach their break point. The Crusaders gathered what forces they could and through a series of good command rolls, launched a few

desperate attacks to break the Saracens. They succeeded in killing off a few Saracen units thus ending the game in a draw.

It was a well fought slugfest that saw a lot more cavalry action than what we're used to in this game system. One of the major differences in WMA and WMM is that the later infantry, i.e., the Crusader infantry, are pretty tough customers and have tremendous staying power which allowed them to go toe to toe with the Saracen heavy cavalry.

The knights, however, are as close to Medieval panzers as you will find! They literally exterminate average infantry upon contact and stopping them is a real challenge for any force of the period. Your best bet is to just accept that you will take serious losses and try to grind

them down as best you can, then counter-attack whenever possible.

Dealing with the Saracen skirmishing cavalry is also tough as every time that you charge them they simply melt away only to come back again! You need to set up a series of charges to catch them which isn't easy as if your command rolls fail you can be caught out in a bad position! Also, the command value 7 Saracen leaders are practically worthless! The entire Saracen left only moved twice during the game, so the next time the points will be spent on more infantry, although that means that more figs will need to be painted.

All in all, we are looking forward to some more battles in this period and possibly doing a siege at some point.

Before the advent of the Internet (yes, there was actually a time where the Internet didn't exist) most gamers got their information such as the latest rules, new figure ranges, etc., from magazines. Back in the day it was not uncommon for many gamers, myself included, to drive down to the local hobby store (usually a store that sold plastic models, hobby supplies, games, etc.) on a Saturday and pick up a few magazines.

The funny thing, however, was that if I bought three magazines, only one of them was a wargaming magazine! Yes, the others would probably be Military Modelling and probably a train modeling magazine. Why was that? Well, there were very few wargaming magazines at the time and they had strange production schedules. Military Modelling use to have regular features on board wargames, usually a scenario in each issue, plus there was uniform information and plenty of ads for figures. The railroad magazines were your only source of getting ideas for making terrain and there were usually ads for companies selling trees, flocking, and more.

You see, back in the 70s and 80s gamers were starved for information about their hobby. You had Wargamer's Digest, The Courier, and Strategy & Tactics, plus a few odds and ends every so often. Most of those copies are still in my gaming room and the covers are literally falling off as they've been gone through plenty of times as I would continually search for ideas and information about various periods over the years. When Essex took out multi-page ads in The Courier I can remember going through the lists for days and weeks afterwards, generating orders in my head for when my paycheck arrived!

Each issue had a sense of wonder about it. What new periods would be featured? What new rules, terrain, and figures would be featured in the ads? Would there be a free set of rules that you could tack on to some set that your group already played? Maybe some great ideas for a campaign would be in an issue?



Fast forward to today where you have several high quality wargames magazines available at stores, some are available as a pdf file, or you can order them in a few minutes with a few clicks of a mouse. These magazines offer full color ads, huge glossy photos, and

cover a wide variety of periods and rules. Magazines like Wargames Illustrated, Battlegames, Dadi & Piombo, etc., now grace the racks of not only gaming stores, but some large scale booksellers and magazine shops.

In my above example I might have paid \$10 for the three magazines I would buy on a leisurely Saturday, but today \$10 might get you one of the new magazines mentioned above. Yes, inflation, purchasing power, etc., all play a factor in that, but there's no denying that you are now paying quite a lot for these magazines. So, for \$8, 9, etc., what are you getting?

I think this is where the difference between the eras really becomes apparent. Let's take an issue of The Courier from the late 70s or early 80s. There was usually three or four articles from the theme of that year (F&IW, Sudan, etc.), then some rules analysis, an historical article or two, then a reviews page (usually 5-6 months behind), and a letters page. Today's Wargames Illustrated will have a featured theme (this is only recently since Battlefront took over), several articles on various tabletop recreated battles, some reviews of recent figs/rules/terrain, and lots and lots of ads.



The Courier was black and white text with very few illustrations and any pictures were definitely in no way able to compete with what's in today's magazines. The few ads that were in there are dwarfed by the full page, full color ads that appear in today's magazines. While The Courier focused on well supported periods (ancients, WW2, etc.) today's magazines have articles on periods and battles that are obscure to say the least. So why time and time again, do we find ourselves going back and looking

through the old magazines over and over again, but the new ones get looked at for 15-30 minutes, then thrown into a pile never to be seen again?

Is it nostalgia? Could be. Is it because the old magazines had better layout, pictures, and ads? No. Is it a matter of substance over style? Maybe. Open up one of the newer magazines; OK, there's another article on Gettysburg. Great, only the 50th one you've seen in the last 20 years. Then there's an article on doing something like the Chinese civil wars in the 1800s. Right. I'm going to invest \$500 in figures and terrain for something no one else in my club wants to game and we'll end up doing it once. Then there's all the beautiful, full color ads. Too bad you've already seen them weeks ago on TMP, blogs, and numerous other forums.



Now is this the magazine publisher's fault? No, not really. They can only publish what they get submitted. Is it their fault that there's only 1,000+ other sources for uniform and OB info on the Internet and no one is interested in seeing it in their magazine? No. Can they stop gaming companies from marketing their products to every forum, blog, web site, etc., that caters to gaming so that people have to view them in their magazine? Not possible.

So, where does this leave the magazine publishers of these newer magazines? Somewhere between a rock and a hard place with not much room to move. For myself, I use to buy 24-30 magazines a year, but last year I bought two. Why? There wasn't really anything in them that caused me to say, "Yes, I'll take that because there's multiple articles in there that fascinate me and I will refer back to them several times over the next few years."

As I stated before, in the 70s and 80s gamers were starved for info on their hobby, but no longer. The sense of wonder has faded...

There have been so many WW2 East Front games over the last few decades that the question needs to be asked, "Why do we need one more?" With *Russia Besieged*, *Defiant Russia*, *No Retreat*, *War Without Mercy*, etc., where does *Proud Monster Deluxe* fit into the Eastern Front glut of games?



Proud Monster Deluxe grew from a very successful magazine game called *Proud Monster* that appeared in *Command #27*. The game covered the first six months of Operation Barbarossa and a supplement called *Death & Destruction* that carried the war from '42-'44 appeared in a later issue. The first game was successful, especially for a magazine game and covering only the first six months of the war. The game was large, had plenty of counters, but was very playable and has stood up well through the years.

Having been a fan of *Bitter End* and *Red Storm Over The Reich* by Compass Games, I was intrigued by their pre-publication offering of a new version of *Proud Monster*. Needing another East Front game like I need a hole in the head meant that I pre-ordered it! Developer/re-designer Don Johnson had done a great job of keeping everyone up to date on the progress of the game and the components looked top notch, so I anxiously waited for my game to appear. It was also exciting to note that this wasn't just a reprint, but a much larger version of the game that would clean up any problems in the rules and OBs.

If you have any games by Compass Games then you know that they do an excellent job with components. *Proud Monster Deluxe* comes in a large box and was packed with counters, maps, charts,

and the rules. There are four 22 x 34 maps which are beautiful to behold. Laid out they cover an area almost 6' x 4' with large style hexes which is very useful for the large stacks of counters you will see in the game. Next up are the play aids that cover everything from combat tables to terrain

charts to how to identify the various counters. Then there are the 2,000 plus counters and finally the rule book itself.

The rule book, while it looks long, is pretty easy to read through. Turns, movement, combat, etc., are clearly laid out and explained in a way that you usually only need to read through it once. I had come across a lot of counters that I had questions about, but sure enough, at the end of the rules there is a section going over all of the specialty units, upgrades, etc., so I had few, if any unanswered questions. Not only that, Don lives on Consimworld and questions are answered quickly and in depth.

Proud Monster uses bi-weekly turns that are broken into two, one week segments, so yes, this game isn't going to be over in an evening! Units are for the most part divisions, but there are quite a few brigades, assault gun battalions, heavy armor units, siege artillery, etc., so there will be plenty of counters on the board for multiple players if you want to go that route. In fact, the stacking rules allow for five units in most terrain types and up to ten in cities. In 1941 and '42 most Russian units are untried, so you won't know their strength until combat. This is a great way of simulating the uneven quality of the Russian army at this time and it can be a source of joy/frustration for both players when the strengths are revealed during game play.

For grognards, *Proud Monster* is pretty much a classic hex and counter type game with a familiar sequence of play. Reinforcements, movement, combat, reserve movement for both sides, followed by a second week of the same and then an administration

type phase at the end of the turn. Nothing here is that complex and you can quickly get into the flow of the game with the player aid cards. There is some chrome in the form of close combat markers (allows both sides to occupy a hex-creating more casualties for both), reserves, various supply situations, etc., but the various charts and tables do a good job of reminding players about these things. Likewise, all of the various upgrades to mech units, conversion of Guards units, seasonal offensives, etc., are marked on the turn record cards and described in the rules. Yes, you will have to refer back to the rules from time to time, but it's generally to learn about new things that are showing up in future turns.

There were three things that stood out for me during my first playing. First, the immense size of the theater of operations. Trying to make plans on this level is very tough and as the Germans you simply don't have enough forces to be everywhere in strength. Second, there are so many options for the initial attack that it will take repeated playing just to get the first few weeks right for both sides. Finally, the endless stacks of Russian counters waiting to come on gives the German player incentive to pick up the pace of their attack!



Game play is faster than you think for a game of this size and a number of important decisions need to be made by both sides almost every turn. When to refit units, use close combat markers for attacks, which German formations should be supported by air, how to use reserves for the coming turn, etc., need to be decided upon each turn. The combat results table is bloody and with no zones of control, a break in the lines can be disastrous.

Overall, this is an outstanding monster game. The components, game play, and support by both Compass and Don Johnson has been fantastic. If you're into East Front gaming, then this has to rank up there with some of the best games on the subject and you should get a copy before they start going higher on Ebay!





to simulate the Prussian ability to make those famous oblique marches prior to attacks, they were allowed to shift up to two feet to the left. At this time it definitely looked like a flanking attack was going to develop up the side of the hill that was much less defended than the center. Even then, for the Prussian players the task looked daunting. Long lines of French infantry supported by heavy guns

Tired of our usual Seven Years War battles where the cavalry do a series of charges on the flanks in the opening turns, then the losing side takes up defensive positions until the end of the game, we decided to try something different this time. The premise was that the cavalry actions were occurring on the flanks, but we would focus on the main infantry action in the center.

To that effect, an elaborate set up was arranged. The French were allowed to set up along the ridge of a series of hills that dominated the battlefield. There was also a redoubt where several batteries had taken up position at the end of the hill. The French were classed lower for the scenario (mostly Grade 1) to reflect their defensive stature and unwillingness to slug it out on the field with the Prussians. The Prussians were classed one grade higher to reflect their desire to close the range and force the action.

The Prussians were allowed to set up in two lines in front of the position, then

on a ridge that the Prussians would have to attack.

The Prussians surged forward towards the first line of French defenders and immediately engaged in a series of firefights. The Prussians crossing the bridge in front of the redoubt were met by a murderous fire, but it looked like if they could just get across they might make it up the hill. The Prussian flanking column moved around the French right and things looked promising, despite the good French defensive position.

Then a nasty surprise was found awaiting the Prussian flanking force. A large body of Austrians was moving up in support of the French position and ran headlong into the advancing Prussians. Battalion after battalion of white coated

infantry began to form up and advance towards the Prussians, who now switched to the defensive. Obviously the game wasn't going to be won by a flanking attack, so a new strategy had to be formed and quickly. The Prussians resolved to

hold and/or delay the Austrians while the Prussian infantry did it the hard way and assaulted the hill.

This was not going to be easy. There were two defensive lines of French infantry regiments backed by artillery. The first series of firefights were going well for the Prussians, but they were losing figures as well and it looked doubtful if they would ever even get near the top. The Prussian attack across the bridge was rapidly turning into a murderous exercise as they were flanked by Austrian light troops and fire from the artillery at the top of the hill.

The Austrians now made their first attack on the Prussian brigade at the end



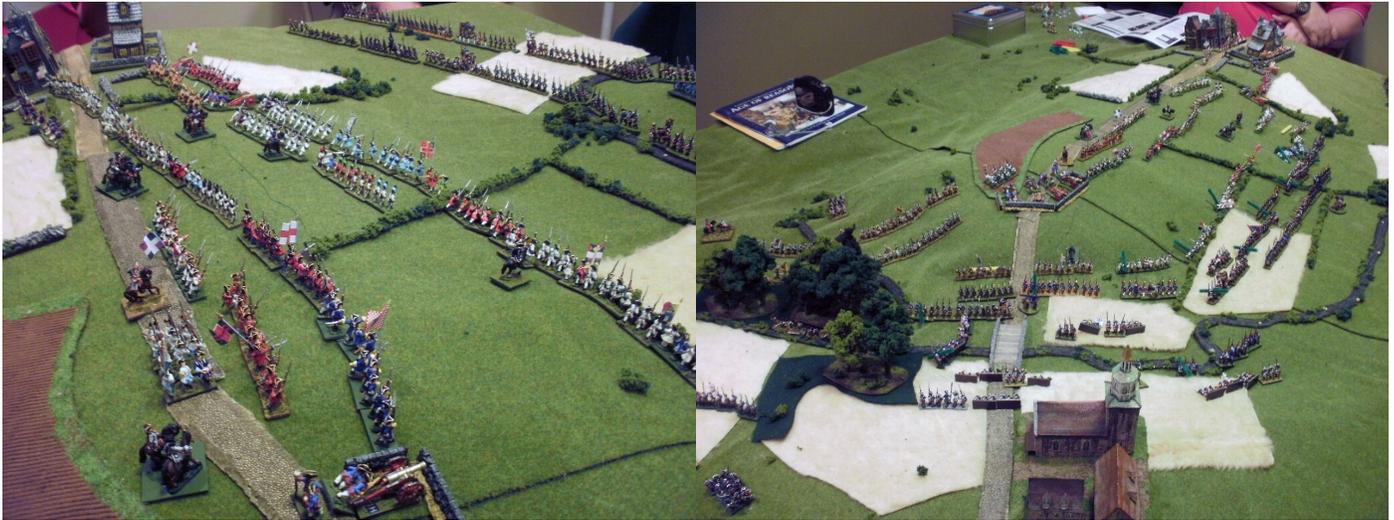
of the line. After a turn or two of firefights the Austrians charged in and were repulsed. The weight of numbers began to tell and soon the Prussians needed to fall back to shorten the lines, hotly pursued by the Austrians.

At this point it was determined that the Prussian cavalry had carried the day on the Prussian left and some of the victorious regiments now appeared to help the Prussians. The problem was the congestion of infantry units and the terrain which really didn't allow for the deployment of cavalry. What it did, however, was free a few Prussian infantry units from holding parts of the line or acting as a reserve and they joined the attack.

The Prussians decided that now was the time to counterattack and to try to seize the initiative. The Prussian line



Age of Reason: Prussian Flanking Action (cont.) Battle Report



went back up the hill and engaged the first line of French defenders. Again, after a series of firefights the French came off the worse for it, but still held their ground. The Prussians brought up the last of the reserves and were determined to make one final attack. It would need to be soon as it looked like the larger Austrian forces were making headway on the Prussian flank.

At this point the French and the Prussians were approaching the 25% threshold for determining if one side or the other would withdraw, so both sides went about trying to cause the maximum amount of casualties possible! At this point there were two decisive moments and fortunately for the Prussians, both occurred on the same turn.

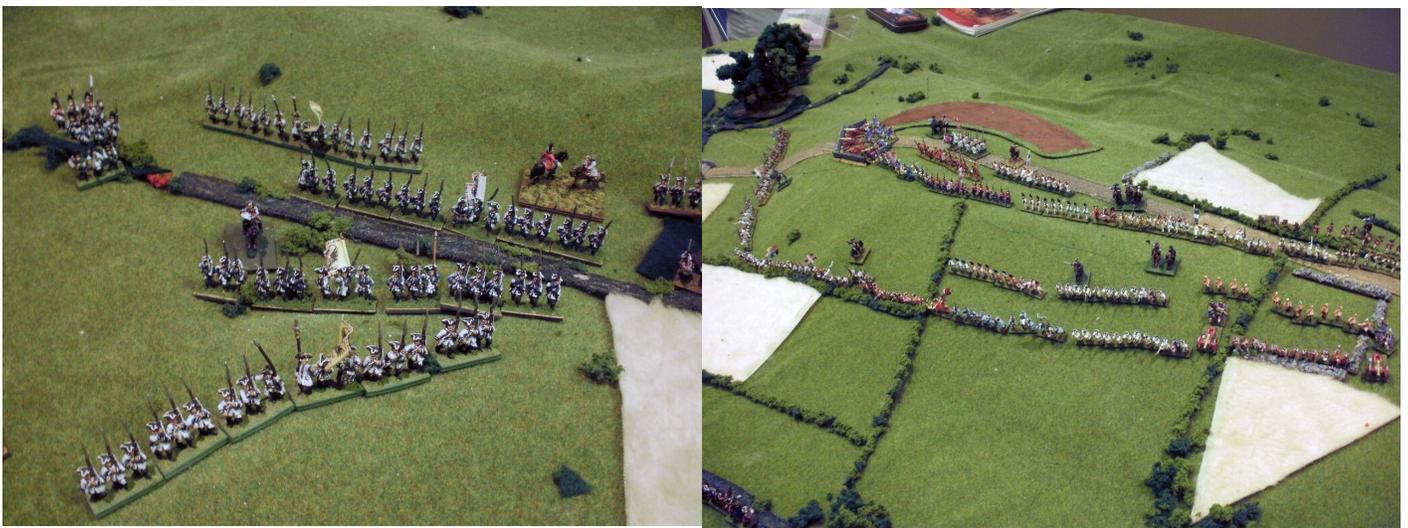
The first is that a Prussian battalion

charged a French battalion still holding the first line of defense and crashed through it. It collided with a French unit behind it, disordering that unit and ensuring that there would be no fire as the Prussian unit made a breakthrough charge. The second unit was routed and all of a sudden the Prussians were on top of the hill! A Prussian grenadier battalion survived a hail of canister and despite nearly 50% casualties carried one of the gun positions in the redoubt. Another grenadier battalion force its way up the hill and took the remaining battery.

The French and Austrian forces were now cut in half. Some French battalions tried to counterattack along the ridge, but didn't have the strength to take the position back. The Prussians continued to firefight as many French battalions as

possible and now that they were on equal ground the French casualties piled up. One last check for withdrawal and the French failed, leaving the field to the victorious Prussians.

Definitely one of the most interesting and hardest fought Seven Years War battles that we've seen! The attack up the hill wasn't very much fun for the Prussians, but determination (and good die rolling!) saw the attack through. The continually changing situation with the Austrians being revealed at the last moment and the Prussian cavalry coming onto the board was certainly a challenge for planning the attack. Overall, it was a very good game that was played well by both sides. It does show that you can have a good game by just focusing on certain aspects of a larger battle.



Russian Breakthrough

Back to the Eastern Front for our latest scenario of Blitzkrieg Commander 2. It is early spring of 1945 and Russian forces have broken through all along the German front. A Russian tank regiment with support has broken out of a bridgehead and is racing forward to seize several objectives. The Germans have defenders in place, but cannot block all of the roads and villages in the area. More defenders are being rushed to the area as quickly as possible, but their appearance and where they will enter is unknown to both sides.

The Russians received three T-34 battalions (one regiment) with one of the battalions being T-34/85s. They were supported with a motor rifle battalion in trucks, a unit of three SU-100s, a unit of four SU-76s, and there were two batteries



station. An FAO with two batteries of 105mm artillery was deployed on top of a hill overlooking the village crossroads. The remainder of the German force consisted of four groups of reinforcements that were rolled for each turn. On a roll of a 5 or a 6 the reinforcements were released and would appear at randomly designated entry areas by rolling another D6. The four groups consisted of a panzergrenadier battalion, a Stug IV company, a Tiger company (two Tigers) plus an 88mm At battery, and finally a mixed armor battalion consisting of four PZl-VHs and three Panthers.

Some of the reinforcements entry points were on the flanks of the Russian advance, so this should have created a free flow-

BKC2 Battle Report

ing, chaotic meeting engagement, but as always with scenario design, things never quite go how they were planned!

The first game was over before it even started. The Russian players decided on an attack up the Russian right side, which made sense except for one small thing; the only unit that moved on the first turn was the motor rifle battalion! So, sitting a few hundred yards away from the mass of trucks was the German FAO who naturally called for an artillery barrage in that area! The barrage landed right in the middle of the battalion and after several handfuls of die rolls there was nothing left but burning trucks as far as the eye could see! Naturally, without one of their primary units the Russians



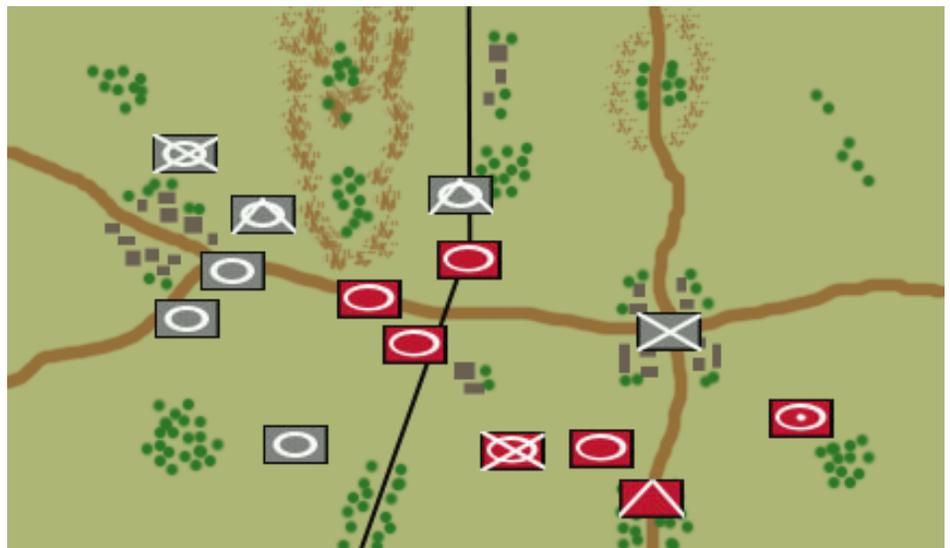
had to call off the attack. So, we reset everything and started the game back on Turn 1.



of 122mm artillery and one battery of BM-13s in direct support. The Russians were allowed to deploy anywhere on their edge of the board including up to a foot on each side, which gave them a variety of entry points.

The Russians had several objectives which included seizing a village crossroads near their entry points, a critical hill towards the end of the board, a rail station, or they could earn points by exiting vehicles off either of the road exits at the far end of the board.

The Germans started with a regular infantry battalion holding the village and crossroads near the Russian entry points. There was also a Stug III company that was deployed in and around the railway



This time the Russians wouldn't take the obvious path across the open ground, but would go up the Russian left side, hoping to force the Germans to have to move to react to their attack. A lot of this would hinge upon where and when the German reinforcements would show up. The Russians thought if they could only hold one flank, then that would free up more units for the main attack up the center. They would screen the village/crossroads, then strike out for the hill objective and getting as many armor units off the board as possible, which should give the edge in points at the end of the game.

The attack began pretty well for the Russians, who quickly moved their armored spearhead towards the middle of the board. The SU-100s took up flanking positions to guard against any German reinforcements coming that way and the SU-76s began to shell the defenders in the village, pinning them in place. The motor rifle battalion moved up, ready to exploit the opening by the

armor and seize any objectives that presented themselves.

The Germans received the two Tigers and the 88mmAT battery and came in on the flank of the Russian spearhead. The T-34s and Tigers began to duel while the Stug company turned around and began to move towards the center of the board. The German artillery began to come into play, suppressing several of the T-34s and creating a traffic jam in the center.

The Russians now began to take the Tigers under fire and moved to engage the Stugs on the other flank. The remaining Russian forces were still waiting to see where the other Germans would come in and the SU-76s knocked out a German infantry unit in the village. The Russian artillery, however, could not find the range and just when it's fire-power could have been useful it was unavailable for several turns.

More German reinforcements began arriving in the form of a panzergrenadier battalion that took up position near the town and on the hill overlooking the town. The Stugs now began to engage the leading elements of the Russian force in the center of the board. This became the pattern for the next few turns with the Stugs and T-34s slugging it out and the German artillery plunging down in between. As long as the Stugs stayed where they were, the T-34s could not break out into the clear as the German opportunity fire was proving to be devastatingly effective. A few turns later it was time for the final act in the game.



The final German reinforcements arrived right near the town and after moving up they created a three sided box where the Russian armor was trapped. The T-34/85 battalion moved up in an effort to salvage the situation, but the traffic jam and number of targets now available to the Germans only increased. The German armor fired into the traffic jam and after a few turns there wasn't much left. The Russians kept pushing forward, but the Stugs refused to yield and there was nowhere for the remaining Russian forces to deploy. A few more turns left even more Russian vehicles burning in the middle of the board. At this point the game was called as the Russians would have to pull back and regroup.



The Russian attack started off well, but through a combination of factors ran out of steam. The stubborn defense by the Stug company, the inability of the Russian artillery to hit anything, and having the German reinforcements all come in the same area contributed to the Russian defeat. Some scheduled artillery and smoke barrages might have helped the Russians, so this is something to try in the near future.

Memoirs of a Miniature & Board Wargamer Pt. 17

Why Did I Do That?

Answer this question honestly. How many times have you thought of a really cool wargaming project, bought a lot of stuff for it, then see it languish due to lack of interest or having second thoughts? If you're like me the number is too high to count!

As gamers we are constantly bombarded by ideas for new projects through ads in magazines, articles or books that we read, and by talking with fellow gamers or watching games down at the local store. This inspiration, while exciting at times, can also be downright costly in both terms of financial resources and time!

For me it started when I decided to do the ACW back in the late 70s with 1/72nd scale plastic Airfix figs. Why? I have no idea. At the time there wasn't a great deal of choice and as a high school student with limited resources it seemed logical. After painting up several hundred of those and playing with them for a few years, I lost interest in doing the same figs over and over, converting the figs, and watching the paint flake off, so I gave them away to a friend. Then I determined that Ros Heroics 6mm ACW was the way to go and ordered in a ton of them. After painting up a thousand of those I again lost interest, especially due to the large numbers you needed, little variety, hard to get, etc., so they were given away as well.

From there I went into the Mexican American War because of the six part series in The Courier and the new Freikorps 15mm range. Not only that, I chose to use The Complete Brigadier as the rules set for the period based off a battle report in The Courier. Years and years later I had enough figs for a battle or two. In that time I spent a considerable amount of cash on terrain, finding figs that the Freikorps range didn't cover, research, etc., only to find out that no one in the area really had any interest in the period or the rules for that matter. They ended up being sold off.

Next up was a crazy idea after read-

ing the book First Clash in the early 80s that my huge collection of GHQ/Enola/Ros Heroics 1/300th modern armies wasn't good enough, so it was time to do it in 1/200th scale! Again, ads showing the new Skytrex range and the chance to use some N scale terrain was just too good to pass up. However, once the figs arrived and seeing the uneven quality, the cost and difficulty of getting the figs, rescaling the rules, etc., the project quickly lost steam and ended up being traded away.

Then CD2/Combined Arms came out and another set of rules (can't remember now!) with units as platoons or companies for modern.

Now after selling off about 500 1/300th vehicles and my failed 1/200th attempt I went back into micro-armor. This lasted through two games and it got sold off due to a lack of interest by everyone.

My on and off again love affair with plastic miniatures then reared its ugly head again. I had just read a series of articles in Savage & Soldier about the French in Central Africa and determined that it would be my new colonial period as I had done all of the Sudan forces I would ever need. Now despite there being good ranges in 25mm and 15mm, what did I do? Exactly, I chose to do them in 1/72nd scale plastic and ordered in some ESCI French Foreign Legion! I painted up a squad or two and then realizing the massive number of conversions I would need to do for the natives, how would I get the artillery, terrain, etc., this project too ended in catastrophic failure.



But what would failed projects be without a little science fiction

thrown in? About ten years ago I decided that Dirtsides was the thing to do and went about creating two huge forces, terrain, etc., and we played a game or two. Although it was fun only about a 1/4 of the group liked sci-fi and this was at a time where Command Decision was losing its

appeal with the group. The problem was that Dirtsides is very similar to CD2, so again I was thwarted by bad timing!

From there it was thinking that Heavy Gear was the next best thing to get into. Cool looking mechs, ground forces, great back story, and plenty of books for scenarios. The problem? The rules were less than inspiring and after a few tries it too went the way of Ebay. This article doesn't even account for my huge WH40K Rogue trader armies I had or the dozen or so titans plus hundreds of vehicles I had for Epic or all three of the Space Hulk boxed sets. The countless rules changes, new items, etc., made me throw my hands up in frustration and I've never gone back to GW since.

Then I decided that Full Thrust was the next best thing and created two fleets for that game system. However, after a few games where only about a third of

the group was interested, these began to gather dust and soon ended up on Ebay as well. This also happened to GHQ sailing ships, N Scale/10mm Vietnam, 1/285th India vs. Pakistan in a future setting, and so on and so on.

Just a few years ago I bought a ton of Foundry's British Home Guard, German paras, terrain, etc., for a Operation Sea Lion game. Well, we had some fun playing a few scenarios with the Home Guard, RAF ground forces, civilians, etc., but the big problem is that there just wasn't enough material for scenarios. After the third game you felt like you've seen it all and yes, it too ended up on Ebay.

In the last few years as I've gotten older, don't seem to have as much time, etc., it seems that logic and experience have finally caught up with me! No longer do I search endlessly for new periods to do, daydream after reading a magazine article about some exotic period, or spend endless hours searching online catalogs for the units I will need to start another project. Now my time is spent improving existing terrain, expanding my forces for staple periods, and focusing on fewer things. The problem? The magic seems to be gone and it's not as much fun as before!



Blast From The Past Pt. 16

Favorite Miniatures

If you're like me then you have this ever growing pile of lead that just seems to take on a life of its own. Sometimes I'll take it all out, sort things into projects, realize everything is just too overwhelming, put it all back, then add more on top of the pile! As I look back through the years and the pile of figs, I started thinking about all of the figures I've seen since the mid-70s and what some of my favorite figs have been. Hopefully others will remember some of these or it jogs your memory about some of your favorites.

Freikorps

By today's standards these figures aren't bad, but they in no way compare to some of the 15mm figures being put out by Eureka, Old Glory, or others. However, at the time they were announced these figures were game changers. No more did 15mm figures have to be the poor sisters to their 25mm brethren, but there were variety in the different packs and each range had command, artillery, etc., so that you could do an entire army with just one range.



Confederates/Napoleonettes

I'm going to lump all of the Empire/Heritage/Ral Partha 15mm figures into this section, but these figures were truly what helped the 15mm scale jump in popularity. Yes, there weren't many poses, but they were good value for the money, looked great after painting, and opened up a whole new realm of gaming.



Ral Partha Fantasy



OK, who can forget going into their local hobby store and seeing rows and rows of Ral Partha's fantasy miniatures? Although Ral Partha did produce many packs of ancients figs, you rarely saw those in stores. The fantasy figs, however, were used for D&D games, fantasy battles, and many of the knights

were used for Crusaders, and so on. These were beautiful figures, true 25s, and consisted of many different kinds of humans and monsters. I can still remember frost giants, sorcerers, paladins, and more to this day as being some of the best figures I ever owned.

These figures aren't going to win any awards, but in the late 70s they were very popular with gamers. Although not officially a "Lord of the Rings" line, the ranges had orcs, wizards, etc., that were used for fantasy armies and a lot of D&D players used them for virtually anything in their settings. I have fond memories of friends who had large fantasy armies of these (they were based for WRG ancients rules) and we had numerous campaigns and battles with them.

Minifigs 25mm Fantasy

Again, not the best miniatures ever designed, but more fond memories of using these for Traveler games and many scenarios of Striker. They were some of the first sci-fi miniatures that could be used for role-playing in 15mm and although crude by today's standards they were all we had "back in the day".



Martian Metals

Again, not the best miniatures ever designed, but more fond memories of using these for Traveler games and many scenarios of Striker. They were some of the first sci-fi miniatures that could be used for role-playing in 15mm and although crude by today's standards they were all we had "back in the day".



McEwan's Starguard

The first metal miniatures I ever owned were from the Starguard range. At the time (late 70s) this was a very popular set of sci-fi ground combat rules and there were several ranges of figures for the game. I fondly remember huge slugfests between various human factions and aliens using these rules and the miniatures for them. It's unfair to compare them to today's miniatures, but it's hard to express the excitement that miniature ranges like this created at the time. Many hours were spent poring over catalogs, planning armies with friends, and letting your imagination run wild with what could be done with miniatures like this.



Ral Partha Colonials



I'm a firm believer that Ral Partha's 25mm Colonials was the range that started the higher quality 25/28mm figs that we have today. Up to that time it could be argued that there were a lot of 25mm figures, but nothing this good. It set a standard for other designers and from that point forward it seemed like everyone was trying to outdo this range. The separation was night and day from most historical miniatures available at that time and they have now been eclipsed by the bigger 28mm "heroic" size figs, but in their day they were way out in front.

Stone Mountain 15mm ACW

While these miniatures are still quite functional today (and popular), they don't hold up well to the newer 15s from Old Glory, Eureka, AB, and others. However, at the time they came out, which coincided with the incredible rise in popularity of Johnny Reb, their catalog was the must have item for ACW gamers. Not only did they have army packs, regiment packs, etc., but they had all kinds of artillery, command sets, flags, terrain, and more.



Most gamers today probably can't understand the nostalgia factor of the figure ranges featured here. After all, today's figures are usually much better sculpted, have better availability, you can see them online before you buy them, and they cover almost every single period of history. However, back in the 70s and 80s these were generally all that you had available, so you had to make do.

Looking back now, I can remember painting many of these figures and using them on the tabletop. They got a lot of use in our games, we had fun, and in the end that's what really counts. Today, when you look at a GW orc from The Lord of the Rings range and compare it to a Minifigs orc people can't understand how you could buy such a thing. But buy them we did and had a lot of fun doing it!



force, but several of the brigades were elite, they had the choice of where to defend, and there were some options due to the terrain to collapse the defense when needed to guard just two of the exits, which was a big advantage. The British, however, were spread thin (a true Thin Red Line!) across the board and had just enough cavalry to contest one flank. The British were hampered by the fact that the artillery had to be placed by Wellington (directly under his command), which would have

Even though we play a lot of games in the Napoleonic era, time and time again we return to Age of Eagles. The Fire & Fury movement system, quick play, and the look of brigades on the tabletop is hard to resist for too long! One of our members had Charles Grant's Programmed Wargame Scenarios book and decided to use one for a fictional encounter set near Busaco in 1810.

The scenario had a British force commanded by Wellington on the roads leading to Busaco in Spain around 1810. The British were deployed anywhere along the length of the board with three road exits that passed through a number of hills. The French needed to secure two of the three road exits to win a victory and would enter from the far edge of the board. We didn't bring enough of the right terrain to make the hills seem more formidable in the pictures, so you'll have to excuse our representation of the terrain in Spain!

The British definitely had the smaller

disastrous consequences late in the game.

The French plan after the first turn's movement was that they were obviously going to try to overwhelm the British right and put pressure on the center. Strong forces, including all of the French cavalry, quickly moved towards the British right. A division of infantry backed by artillery also began to make its way towards the British center.

The French had a few problems getting their units forward then arranged for an attack, so that gave the British some time to reorganize the defenses. The big problem, as noted above, was the artillery, which could have been pretty handy on the right if they could get there. However, Wellington was closely watching the developments in the center and didn't want to commit all of the artillery just yet.

The main action began with a titanic cavalry battle between the French dragoons

and other cavalry against the British cavalry brigades. The British were successful in the first engagement, but not so much in the counterattack that followed. They were forced back with losses and were then struck again before they could get reorganized. The result was that the British cavalry brigade ceased to exist and a huge hole opened up in the British defense.

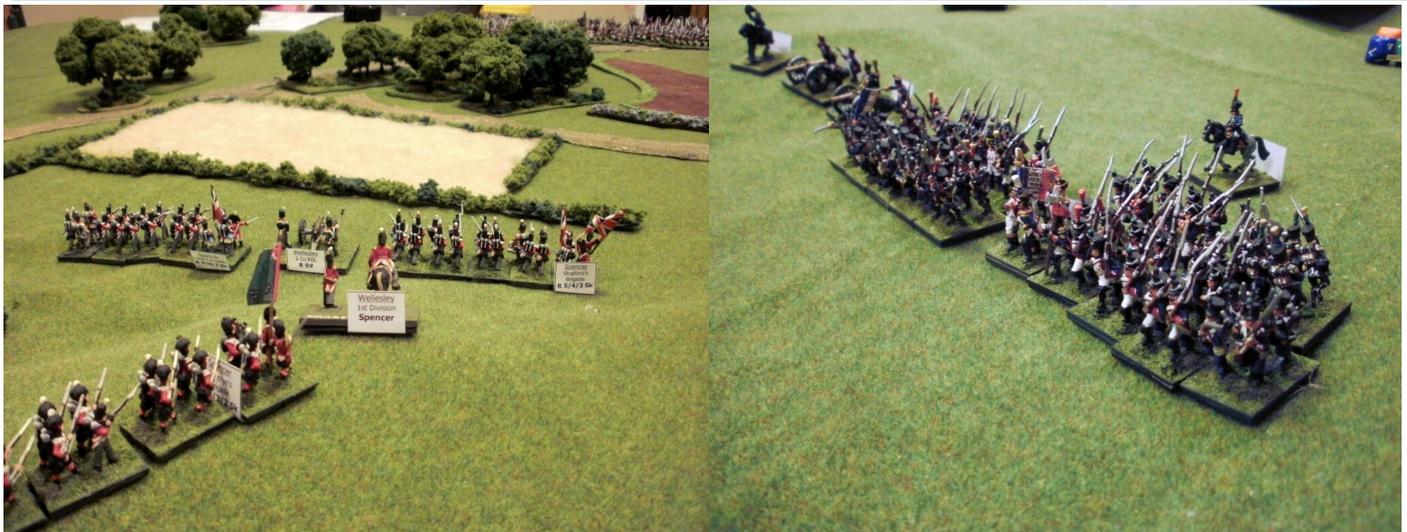
This had the effect of creating a new level of panic for the British players, which included me! Strong French forces were now firmly established on the flank



and the British forces on that side were in deep trouble. Some good movement rolls extricated the infantry that could have been trapped, but the French easily seized the first objective and then turned their attention to the center.

Wellington moved some of the artillery being held in reserve to give cover to the withdrawing British infantry. They arrived just in time to check the advance of the French cavalry which was forced back for the time being. The British in-





fantry fanned out to set up a defense on what remained of the right flank. It wasn't a thing of beauty, but it would protect the center from being hit on two sides in the upcoming battle.

The British began long range artillery fire at the approaching French forces in the center. The British decided to send in their forces from the third objective as the French were clearly going for a win now in the center, so there was no use in maintaining even a small garrison when every man would be needed in the center. The first attack by the French was thrown back by British musket fire and for awhile things looked as if the center might hold after all. There was still one brigade in reserve and if the British could just keep from having any extremely bad

die rolls, then things might turn out OK.

Unfortunately, Mark, who had a string of games recently with some truly awful die rolls (including the one earlier in this game with the British cavalry) now had to roll a few more times. The French launched a sweeping assault against the center and the right. True to form, there were several 1s and 2s (the worst results you can get in AOE melee!) and things went from pretty bad to Titanic level disaster!

The British sent in their last reserve and the Wellington issue with the guns now came into play. Four guns needed to be moved immediately, but he could only get to two of them. This left one of the flanks in trouble and the French rushed in, crushing the remaining defenders and

the British army was put to flight, ending the game as major French victory.

One thing that we need to do better as a group is to improve the terrain in our Peninsula games. The British side of the board should have been more difficult for the French to attack, which historically gave the British an advantage. In our game the three entrances to the passes ended up as low hills which were a mere speed bump for the French onslaught!

Overall, it was a fun scenario and it does show that you don't always have to fight Dresden or Eylau when using Age of Eagles. Most players are fine with a few brigades to command for an evening and this was the perfect type of game for 3-4 players.



We've had a lot of fun with Sharp Practice, even though at times the rules can be a bit maddening when you're trying to find something or figure out how things are supposed to work. The rules, do however, produce a skirmish



game with a lot of excitement and unpredictability. Over the last two years we have played a few French and Indian War skirmishes, but we've never really been happy with the rules that have been tried. So, why not try the variant for Sharp Practice?

Mark from our club decided to do a F&IW scenario using Sharp Practice and spent a lot of time creating the background, unit objectives, and designing cards that were to be used in the scenario. The game was set up for 4-5 players, with each player commanding a unit of 10-12 men. Each officer had their own stats and each player had specific objectives.



To make a long story short, an Indian force loyal to the French was making its way to a clearing along a series of trails. This Indian force had several captives that they were supposed to hand over to a French officer. A second group of Indians loyal to the French and a unit of French troops were coming towards the clearing from separate directions.

The British force consisted of a loyal



force of Indians, a militia unit in hot pursuit of the French Indians with the captives, and a force of British regulars moving towards the clearing. Each side also had some options for deployment which created some unusual situations on the first few

turns.

The game opened with the French Indian force that had the captives entering the board. However, bad die rolls for movement and the luck of the draw put the British Indian force ahead of them. Not only that, but the cards for the second turn placed the British militia

right behind that same Indian force, in effect sandwiching them and cutting them off from reaching the clearing. It looked as if the game would end early and we would need to set it up again!

This was reinforced when on the third turn the British Indians revealed

themselves and fired into the French Indian force. The militia fired on them as well from the rear and it looked as if the rout was on. The fourth turn saw the British Indians charge and drive back the French Indians, who had by now lost 25% of their original force. Just when things looked bleak, the luck of the draw turned for the French Indians. For the next few turns the French Indians got their card first and rolled great on movement while the British Indians and militia didn't get their card drawn for three straight turns! The French Indians didn't need any persuading and they took off towards the clearing, leaving their pursuers in the dust.

Meanwhile, back near the clearing the British regulars had bitten off more than they could chew. They found that there was not just one French force at the clearing, but two! They opened fire on the first force, causing some casualties, but took a few themselves in an exchange of

musketry. There was a brief melee that caused more casualties, including killing the main French officer.

The Indians then joined in the attack on the British and after two consecutive turns of melee they drove the British back off the trail and into a defensive position in the forest with 50% casualties. The

British were hoping that the militia would be up by then to help them, but the card draw meant that they were on their own.

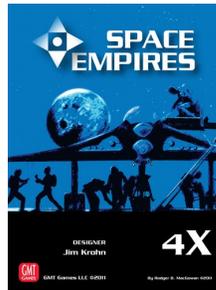


By this time the game was pretty much over. The French Indians were now past the clearing and no one was going to catch them. The British regulars were not capable of any kind of offensive action and the militia were hopelessly too far out to affect the outcome. The French forces, although bloodied, were in sufficient strength to maintain their hold on the clearing and they were declared the winner of the battle.



The game was fun and intense at times, but there were a lot of questions raised about sighting and firing in the forests which we never could seem to get right. Also, anytime you play card driven games there is a chance that units will not get activated and this is what happened here. It's not too much of a problem in a stationary battle, but in this terrain where you needed to move often it crippled the British side at the worst possible times, so we may need some house rules.

If you're an avid sci-fi gamer like me you've probably played several of what are called 4X type games (explore, expand, exploit, and exterminate). Games like Godfire, Stellar Conquest, Twilight Imperium, and others were lengthy affairs with basic components, plenty of rules, and did I mention the length of these games? They were all we had at the time and if you needed your sci-fi empire building fix they were your only choice.



fortunately, while trying to simplify everything the designer forgot that gamers being gamers, they would find an infinite number of loopholes and ways to do crazy things! The scenario book has a variety of 2, 3, and 4 player set ups, plus there is a solitaire scenario vs. doomsday machines and a second scenario with the player against various alien empires. Overall, however, there's nothing seriously wrong with the rules and the recent FAQs on several sites cleared up any problems.

One of the hottest pre-orders for the last year or so has been GMT's Space Empires. So much so in fact, that there was a huge crossover to non-wargamers who wanted to get in on this game. The promise of a 1-4 player sci-fi empire building game with limited record keeping that can be completed in under four hours was just too good to pass up. Most games in this genre and scope have extensive record keeping, take many, many hours to complete, and can be complex at times. Space Empires had lofty goals and expectations from gamers were extremely high. So, does the game deliver?

Each player starts with a homeworld that can produce 20CPs per economic phase (they are used to build ships and research technology), several scouts, a mining ship, and a few colony ships. The rest of a player's area consists of hidden



First, the components are of the usual high quality that one has come to expect from GMT. You get a mounted map board (!), around 700 counters, player's aid cards, player's log sheets, a full color rulebook and a scenario book. The map board is functional, but it won't win any prizes in an art contest. Basically, there's four sectioned off areas for players to start their empires and a few areas in between for deep space. The counters represent colonies, planets, various ships, aliens, and more. Each color combination has its own ship designs which is a nice touch.

counters of the player's color. Once explored, these usually turn out to be planets that can be colonized, minerals, and more. The deep space area is where the fun really begins. Those hidden counters could contain minerals, more planets, alien forces, space wrecks with advanced technology, black holes, and even doomsday machines that can go on a rampage. This is what gives the game very high replay value and the randomness can create quite a challenge for the players.

The rules are good and bad. They are very basic and you can go through them and set the game up very quickly (probably under an hour), then add the optional/advanced rules in afterwards. While the rules are simple, some things really needed to be better clarified. I think the intention was not to produce a wargame with its usual legalese type rules and go after a larger audience. Un-

There are three turns followed by an economic phase, which is repeated during the game. During each turn a player can move his ships, establish colonies, explore hidden markers in space, or fight battles with the opposing players. During the economic phase a player adds up all of his colonies CPs plus any minerals brought in by mining ships. CPs are then spent on additional ships and/or technology.

Now here is where things get very interesting. Building larger ships, in-

creasing the tactics level, attack level, defenses, exploration abilities, etc., all takes CPs to be spent on research. At the same time, however, you need ships to explore, expand, and defend your empire. This creates a range of decisions each turn about what to spend your money on. One player could keep his technology low and go for a mass of smaller ships to overwhelm opponents. Others could try for a small, high-tech force of cloaked ships with advanced weaponry, while still others could choose to research and build carriers with fighters as their main force. The possibilities are endless.

Combat is pretty basic and consists of each side in a hex lining up their ships and firing at each other. Ships are rated for tactics and fire in a certain order by using their attack level and subtracting the defense level of the target, then rolling a D10 to score a hit. Most ships take one or two hits, but the larger ships can take more if they were researched. This is where paying a lot of CPs for weapons and defense technology can pay off. The one problem is that by the time your fleet gets to the combat zone the technology levels of the enemy could have changed (as well as your new ships) and now your force is behind the curve!

Overall, this is a great space conquest/empire building game. The randomness of the set up and exploration will provide plenty of replay value. There are also so many choices in research and building that players can try out multiple strategies each time they play. I think the short play time that is listed is a bit optimistic, especially for beginners, but this is a very good game. Look for additional scenarios, rules, counters, and more that I'm confident will be coming soon!

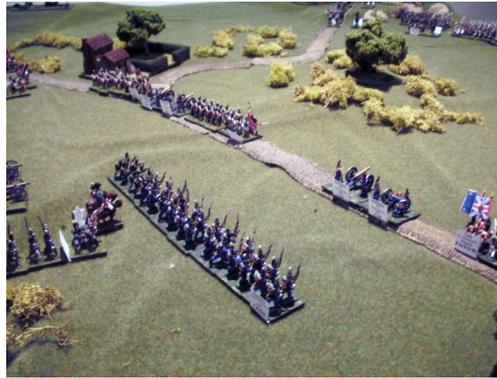


Blocking Action in the Peninsula

AOE Battle Report

We've had a lot of fun doing Peninsula battles using Age of Eagles. I'm not sure if it's the setting or the smaller forces, but the games have been a lot of fun and it's a different feel using the smaller brigades. This is yet another British blocking action where the French forces are trying to turn the main British army out of a position. The British have sent out a force under Wellington to block this latest move.

The British set up first in a good defensive position. Most of the British brigades were on the small side, but there was a Highland brigade and a few Portuguese brigades that had at least eight stands apiece in there as well. The Brit-



ish did not have any cavalry for this action, but had several artillery batteries. However, the artillery could only be placed by Wellington, which would lead to some interesting problems for the British later in the game.

of the table along a road leading to a Spanish village. There were a small series of hills behind the road in the center where the British deployed their reserves and additional artillery. The line was very thin and stretched perhaps a bit too far and with few reserves any hole in the lines could prove fatal.



The French had a similar number of infantry brigades, but a few of them were of higher quality and they did have a light cavalry brigade attached to the force. There were several batteries of artillery that would also come into action during the game. The French deployed from a road in the corner of the board, so the leading brigades would have to march a long way to get to the town.

The French came on with the larger brigades leading the way. They began to work themselves towards the village while the other forces moved on. The first few die rolls for command on the

second turn for the French put the leading brigades a bit behind the plan to coordinate an attack. The lone French cavalry brigade moved out to threaten the British flank while the artillery prepared to come into action in the center.

The British began to shell the leading French brigades which were still in column and having problems moving. After sustaining a few hits they were able to move out of range and continue their attack towards the village at the end of the board. Once there they deployed into line and began to engage the British in that area. For several turns there were firefights and the British charged twice, but were repelled and forced back.

In the center the British artillery broke up the first attack and the French artillery batteries were forced to withdraw out of range. The French cavalry brigade moved to the flank and charged, but was repulsed by a small British brigade posted as a flank guard. So, after four turns the British were holding, in pretty good shape, and at this rate the French casualties would force a withdrawal that would end the game as a British victory. Not so fast...

The British brigades on the far right near the village had done a great job, but were slowly being cut down. Wellington wanted to send some artillery from the reserve, but that meant he would have to go with them to place them and he could be needed in the center. One battery was sent with Wellington and they arrived just as the French launched a devastating attack. This shattered (cont. on p. 25)the





Highland brigade and forced back the other British brigade.

Now the artillery could have been used in the center as just then another French attack overran the two British batteries holding the road. Wellington raced back to grab the remaining battery to place it, but before that a huge melee occurred along the road. The British held for two turns before falling back, beaten in the melee. The Portuguese now began to move up to fill the center that was full of straggling and disjointed British remnants.

On the left the British stubbornly held on. Several French attacks had been repulsed and even though they were stretched quite thin, the line held. The danger was in the center and that is where

the game would be won or lost. The French brigades, victorious after their attacks to gain the road, now piled into the center where the Portuguese tried to hold the line. The first attacks were a draw, but the next ones forces the Portuguese back.

On the far left the French cavalry brigade had rallied and charged again. This time it struck the British brigade and sent it flying. A second British brigade that had moved up as a reserve there was hit during the breakthrough and sent in headlong flight towards the center. With the right and left flanks crushed things were looking bleak for the British side.

The French brigades in the center made one final push and broke the Portuguese line. With only remnants of other

brigades still rallying in the center there were no reserves left. Wellington gathered what forces were still left and fell back, leaving the field to a French major victory.

As noted in the other AOE Peninsula battle report, we need to do a better job of terrain for these battles. The terrain should prove to be more of an obstacle during attacks than it was here. Also, for the British side there is simply no room for error. With smaller brigades any adverse result could end up in disaster. Overall, though, Age of Eagles works well as a 2-4 player game with small forces and it shows that you don't need to play Leipzig or Borodino each time you use this set of rules. We will definitely revisit the Peninsula soon!



Fire & Fury: 2nd Day of Gettysburg-Culp's Hill

Battle Report



For some reason we've been wanting to play a lot more American Civil War scenarios and for that we use Fire & Fury. Although many of us played Johnny Reb for years and years, we switched to F&F in an effort to try to get the games finished in one evening. Not only that, the new charge rules in JR3, the change of scale, etc., had the effect of making everyone feel lukewarm about playing it on a consistent basis.

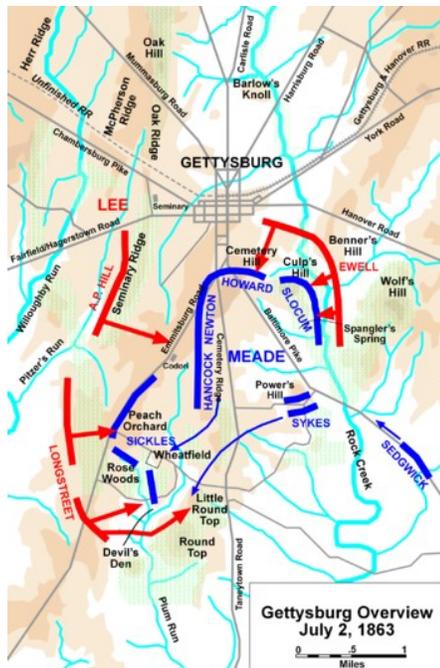
This was one of those rare times where there was actually some preparation for one of our games! Steve had

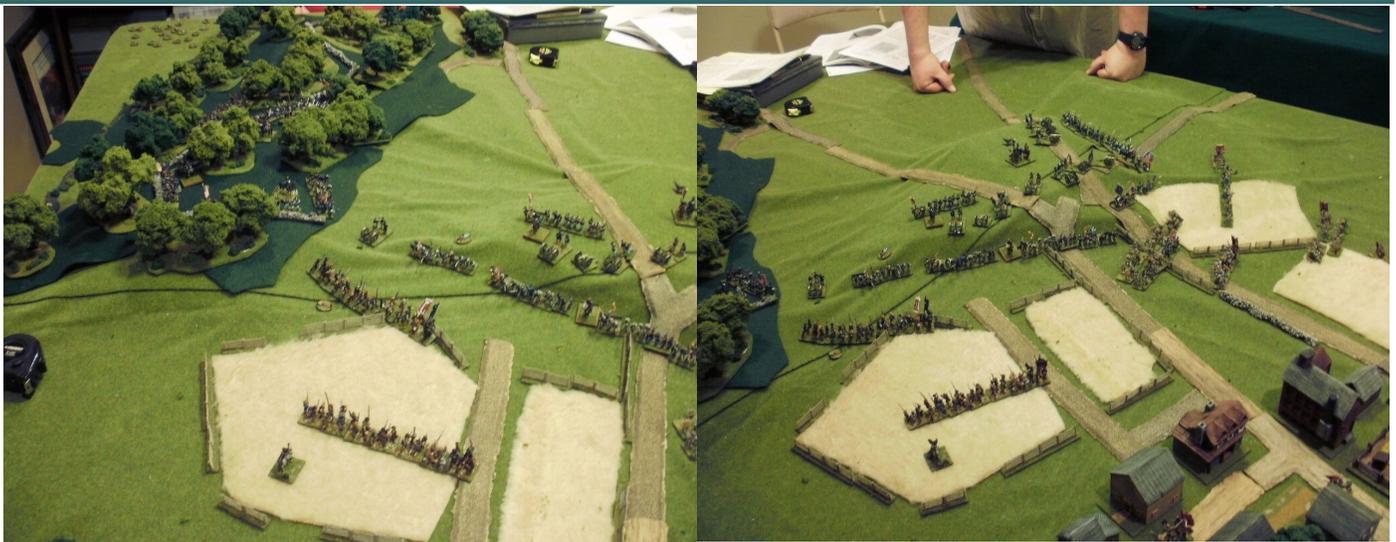
graciously mapped out Culp's Hill from the 2nd day of Gettysburg and created orders of battle along with some special rules for Rodes' deployment and fighting in darkness. We spent about an hour getting the terrain to match up with the map and setting out the forces. Surprisingly, everything fit on a 6x4 table and there weren't that many troops, so it would be ideal for four players, which is how many we had for this evening.

The game focused primarily on Ewell's corps and started out with a division in Gettysburg and a division that would attempt to get through the woods behind Culp's Hill. Rodes' division could possibly arrive (die rolls would decide arrival time) and it would join in the attack on Cemetery Hill. The Confederates had no artillery, so this would be a fast paced assault with the leading brigades trying to brave the gauntlet of fire long enough so that the larger CSA brigades could close to contact with their smaller Union counterparts. As this attack was made late in the evening, there were special rules governing firing and ranges that would get worse each turn. With the forces deployed, Turn One started the game.

Johnson's attack on the hills began well, but the terrain (steep hills and woods) slowed down the attack and it would be another turn or two until an assault could be launched. Early's brigades charged out of the town towards Cemetery Hill and were immediately hammered by Union artillery at the top of the hill. The first brigade was disordered with losses and the third brigade that was in reserve was forced to move up in case it wavered and fell back. After the first two turns the Southern players, including myself, wondered if we would even get within musket range!

The leading brigades in the attack on Culp's Hill reached their objectives and found Union infantry deployed behind breastworks that ran the length of both hills throughout the woods. The first two





attacks were repulsed, but the third brigade was struggling with movement orders (bad rolls) and the terrain, so the Union had time to shift troops to meet this attack that threatened to outflank the position.

In the center Rodes' division came on line much earlier than in the actual battle. The Union was now forced to split its fire against two advancing divisions, which saved Early's brigades from being completely destroyed. The first brigade withdrew with over 70% casualties and the second brigade had been hit hard as well. The remaining brigades pushed on and Rodes began to close on the hill in the center as well.

Back in the woods, the Confederate brigades rallied and charged up the hill

again, but were repulsed a second time. After rallying one more time and with darkness making musket fire fairly ineffective, the Confederate brigades made one final attempt to seize the breastworks. This time they arrived without being disordered and casualties were light in the move up to the breastworks, but once again the Union held and the attack died out.

In the center the first Confederate attacks went in and were met by heavy fire, forcing them to fall back. The leading brigades rallied and went in again in an attack that caved in the Union line. The pursuit hit the second line and guns on the hill, driving them back as well. The Union desperately repositioned the forces on the hill, but the Confederate

brigades were close and the following turn in the last moments of daylight saw the Confederates overrun another line of defense.

Right there it looked as if history would be changed. Three Confederate brigades were on Cemetery Hill and if they could push forward one more time the Union position would be split in half and defeated in detail. However, the last two attacks were barely beaten back and with the battlefield in total darkness the attack was called off.

The Union had won a victory, but by the slimmest of margins. The leading Confederate brigades as in the real battle took frightening losses, but the die rolls evened out and there was a chance at victory right near the end.





WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meets every other Friday night in the SLC, Utah area. We play a wide range of games in all scales, including Age of Eagles, Age of Reason, Age of Discovery, Sharp Practice, BKC 2, Sword and the Flame, Fire & Fury, GDB, Warmaster Ancients, and more..

email: mirsik1@juno.com

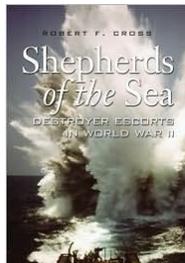
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It's hard to believe that this is the 30th issue of Warning Order, which as I've previously stated, started out as just an "every now and then" type of club newsletter. It has now spread so far that I occasionally get emails about the publication from England, Australia, New Zealand, Eastern Europe, and even Russia! I recall that in the 25th issue I wrote that I was shocked that I had gotten that far and wasn't sure if I would get to #30, but here we are. The last few issues have definitely been a labor of love and much harder to get finished. It could be just pressure at work, children getting married and moving on, or just old age (I'm approaching 50), but I have no idea how much longer this publication will go on. With the massive numbers of new rules that have come out recently, the staggering number of figures and scales, plus all of the blogs, magazines, and web sites, I'm not sure where this publication fits in any more or if gamers are interested in what is written on the pages. The hobby seems to have fractured off into a large number of pieces and trying to write something for everyone is no longer possible. Like many gamers, I too have been cutting back, consolidating down, and are being extremely picky about what, if any, new projects I get into. I will continue to write about the periods, rules, and board games that interest me, but hopefully there are still other gamers out there who will find this interesting as it is their emails of support that help to keep this publication going!

Shepherds of the Sea

Shepherds of the Sea by Robert Cross is one of the most interesting books I've read on naval operations in WW2. While most books focus on carriers, battleships, famous battles, etc., this book details the less glamorous side of operations in the Atlantic and the Pacific.



Destroyer escorts were the workhorses of the U.S. Navy from late 1942 until the end of the war. They did everything, from hunting subs, escorting convoys, rescuing downed pilots, and more. This book does a great job of describing the ships, the crews, and the various missions that they undertook throughout the war.

One of the more interesting sections of the book describes how the destroyer escort program came about. The politics of the inter-war years is explained in mostly economic/military purchasing terms, so the reader isn't bored. What emerges is a fascinating look at the de-

sign, construction, and deployment process which saw the program go from a few WW1 era four stackers to a large, modern escort force.

The book then details the lives of the sailors and commanders on various ships. These are often taken from letters and provides an interesting look into the era, society, and how these men came to serve on these dangerous vessels. The stories revolving around Roosevelt's son, who commanded a DE are definitely worth the reader's time.

It is the missions, however, that are the backbone of the book. Most of these deal with anti-submarine operations in the Atlantic. These range from one on one confrontations to multiple DE's hunting German U-boats. The book goes over the losses of the various DE's and the known



Book Review

kills in the Atlantic area. This is a theme that generally runs throughout the book as most of the action and stories take place in the Atlantic, with the Pacific theater being mentioned only a few times.

Two of the more fascinating parts of the books were the boarding actions against German submarines and the testing of new equipment that blocked the first German "cruise missiles".

If I had any complaints against the book it would be that everything is not in chronological order. The stories, combat actions, ship history, etc., jump all over the place, particularly from 1941-43. It wasn't a huge inconvenience, but a bit annoying after awhile.

Overall, this is a good read on an unusual aspect of WW2 naval combat and is highly recommended for anyone interested in ASW operations.