

Warning Order

Issue #32

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AOE Peninsula Battle
Sunken Road at Antietam
GDB Prussian Counterattack**



Issue #32

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WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Warning Order

Northwest Frontier Clash The Making of a TSATF Mega-Game



We are blessed in this area with a really, really good gaming store. Located in the Sandy, Utah area (a suburb of SLC), GAJO not only sells tens of thousands of painted historical miniatures, it carries Osprey books, rules, terrain, Warlord, Victrix, FOW, magazines, and almost anything else a historical miniatures gamer would want.

So, it should come as no surprise that several

gaming groups use GAJO as their main place to game. Once a month, there is a huge game put on that can be any one of two dozen periods that attracts a sizeable crowd. For the March 2012 game it was going to be a huge Northwest Frontier game using *The Sword and the Flame* rules.

I was contacted by the event organizer, Dennis Hilton, about three weeks before the event as I had a

large contingent of British and Indian troops, plus Pathans. We decided to have slots for eight participants as with any skirmish game that gets taken to this level would probably bog down if there were more players. A basic scenario was discussed as well as what forces we would use, what was still needed, who had additional figures that could be asked to play, etc. At the end of the first conversation we at least had an idea about (cont. on p3)

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Special points of interest:

- Battle reports featuring *Age of Eagles*, *Warmaster Ancients*, *Fire & Fury*, *Blitzkrieg Commander 2*, and *General de Brigade* rules.
- Several boardgame reviews, including *GMT's Nightfighter*.
- All of the regular features, including a look back at some old SPI science-fiction games.

Northwest Frontier Clash (cont.)



25mm Pathans from Old Glory emerge from the village to attack the Indian forces moving up in support of the main attack on the fort. We organized all of the Pathan commands into three 20 man units where possible with an overall leader.

(cont. from p2) where we were going with this.

Over the next week or so we ironed out who would be playing, what forces would be available, and got into the details about the scenario. This was going to be a big game with close to 200 British and Indian figures along with close to 400 Pathans! The centerpiece of the game would be a hill fort built by Jim Cornell. This terrain masterpiece was entirely scratch built and features lift off roofs, interiors, and it can hold up to 100 figs if needed. It's presence dominated the large terrain board that was to be used for the game.

At this time I was still struggling to get my first unit of Bengal Lancers done plus the dismounts in case they were needed. On top of that we needed a Pathan artillery crew for a gun that would be placed in the hill fort. I quickly searched around and found some Pathan swordsmen that I quickly converted into

Bengal Lancers, Gurkhas, and the Mountain Gun battery move forward to engage the approaching Pathans.

an artillery crew. Meanwhile, I was busy re-reading the TSATF rules as we had not played in quite some time. I also had received the TSATF event decks and the action decks, including one for the North-



west Frontier, so I was busy going through those to see if they were suitable for the big game.

After a few more calls and emails we figured we were ready. The scenario had been agreed upon, the eight slots were full, we had more than enough figs, my Bengal Lancers were done just in time, and it looked like things were going to go exactly as planned.

Not so fast. The first hint of trouble was when I got texted a few images of the table that had been set up at the store the night before. It looked really, really good, but I began to be concerned about the placement of the hill fort and how that would affect the scenario. Usually these games run from 2pm to 8pm and we were already going to be starting late at 4pm so some of the people that wanted to play could make it. Naturally, this meant we needed to start opposing forces closer to get into action, so this terrain change would just make us start a little closer than we had planned.

When the big day came Jim and I drove up from Northern Utah about an hour early where we learned that the game wouldn't start until 5pm. Three hours for 550+ figs? Probably not going to get the game done in time, so did we need to make changes?. (cont. on p4).

Northwest Frontier Clash (cont.)



Indians deployed for the attack on the hill fort. This company would take severe casualties from both the fort and advancing Pathans.

(cont. from p3) Instead of having a British assaulting force and a separate blocking force to hold off a large horde of Pathans intent on relieving the fort, the scenario changed into more of a linear battle. I think that most people started to suspect as soon as they saw the set up that it was going to be tough going for the British, especially with the entrance to the fort placed on the opposite side of the table!

It was too late to do much about it, so we went with the original forces planned



The Indian Mountain Gun battery loads canister to stop the charging Pathan hordes. This battery started off well, but a series of bad die rolls allowed the Pathans to get into melee and overrun the battery.

and hoped that the game would turn out pretty good anyway. Once all the players arrived commands were handed out and the setup began.

The British definitely had the fire-power advantage, but the terrain and large numbers of Pathans were going to be a problem. On the British right there was a squadron of Bengal Lancers, an Indian mountain gun battery of two sections, and a platoon of Gurkhas.

There was a slight hill and a farm complex in the area, which would make for good defensive positions to protect the flank of the main assaulting force. The British left would have two platoons of British infantry with two more platoons that could either support the assault or assist with keeping the Pathans at bay.

The main assaulting force was two platoons of Indians supported by two more platoons of British infantry. There were also two sections of machine guns on either side of the main axis of attack in support. All together, it was an impressive array of fire-power.

However, the Pathans had 80 men and a gun in the fort, which commanded the center of the battlefield. Add to that the fact that there would be close to 100 or more Pathans in three separate forces coming

down the left, center, and right of the fort in support. Again, because of the terrain being already set up, the idea of having the Pathans in the fort being relieved by a second Pathan force was scrapped. The Pathans were essentially relieved on the first turn, so the game morphed into a straight on assault and whether or not the British could cut their way through to the fort to scale the walls.

The British attack didn't exactly get off to a flying start. The Indians rolled a 4 and 3 respectively for both platoons, barley moving up the slope. The remaining British forces started to move up. This was followed by the startling sight if you were a British player of literally hundreds of Pathans swarming towards the British lines. To say things didn't look



Bengal Lancers receiving a charge from Pathan horsemen. In their first game this newly painted unit of Indian cavalry fled the field!

good on the first turn was an understatement! Not to mention on the game's first volley a Pathan unit in the fort killed the officer and sergeant of the leading Indian unit!

The mountain gun battery unlimbered on the hill and began to shell the approaching Pathan masses while the Gurkhas moved into a walled field for cover with the Bengal Lancers in support. The Indians again rolled badly for movement and were barely up the slope when the Pathans launched their own counterattack.

At first there were (cont. on p5)

Northwest Frontier Clash (cont.)



(cont. from p4) several exchanges of rifle and musket fire, with the Pathans coming out the worst for it. The machine guns opened up and along with the mountain guns they poured a deadly fire into the Pathan horde. Even then, the Pathans kept coming and on one turn where the British rolled poorly they were soon in position to launch their charges.

The first few charges were repulsed with large numbers of dead and wounded Pathans lying about, but with each charge the British and Indian forces grew weaker. Finally, a charge by Pathan horsemen defeated the Bengal lancer squadron and sent it routing off the board, opening the way for the Pathans on that flank. Another series of charges hit the Indians, with one incredible instance of four or five surviving Pathans in a unit defeating a larger Indian force. All of a sudden there were two holes in the line and what looked like a British victory through superior firepower now turned into a desperate fight.

The Indian artillery crews died to a man defending their guns, which were soon overrun. Another British infantry unit defeated two separate Pathan charges, but was cut down to almost a quarter of its strength. After surveying the carnage it was determined that the British would have to

pull back and regroup, leaving the field and the fort to the victorious Pathans.

All in all, the game provided some exciting moments and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, which is naturally a good thing. The game looked impressive and was certainly the centerpiece of the store for that day. The scene of massed Pathans charging into the well formed ranks of the British and Indians was certainly the sort of thing that gamers dream about, especially episodes like the Indian mountain gun battery defending their guns to the last man!

Were there some issues? Yes, the delayed start time meant that there was no way the game would be finished,

which always leaves me with that half empty feeling. Also, once the terrain had been set up there was no way to do the scenario that we originally had intended to set up. The British clearly had little chance to win and by the third hour that was readily apparent to even the most casual observer. The only other problem is that when you are playing a skirmish game of this size, melee brings the game for a halt for the other players. If there are several melees a turn, you may be sitting around for 15-20 minutes with nothing to do. Still, it was an impressive and fun to play colonial game.

Finally, a word about the new action decks from TVAG. I used the Northwest Frontier deck for this game with mixed results. First, the background pictures are too bright and interfere with the text on the cards. The background images definitely need to be washed out or lightened more so the text can really stand out. We used the two Halt cards which did alter the game somewhat as they bring whatever phase your currently in to a screeching halt. I did like the fact that you could use the cards for movement, firing, and determining hits, so that was a plus. Overall, I'll give them a second try soon.



Age of Eagles: Peninsula Battle

Battle Report

As we continue to expand our collection of forces for Age of Eagles, particularly as the British get new units added here and there, we like to find ourselves doing Peninsula battles every now and then. This scenario was a replay of one that was reported in an earlier issues with a few changes. Based off of a CS Grant scenario, it features a strong French attack against a thinly held series of Ridges by the British army during the 1810 period.

This would also be the first time that we would be using the British properly based for Age of Eagles. Up to this time

the line being overwhelmed, so we were very curious as to how the new basing would affect game play, if any.

The French had two divisions of infantry, each consisting of three brigades backed by artillery and a brigade of light cavalry. The French plan was to hold on both flanks and drive for the center. Hopefully the British would not be able to reinforce this area quick enough



the British units had been based for multiple sets of rules, but the owner of the figures, Mark, finally decided that he would base everything for AOE, then make adjustments for any other set of rules he played. In the first playing of this scenario the British line got stretched too thin and could not cover all of the gaps in the defense. This led to parts of

and the combined weight of around four large infantry brigades would punch through and split the British army in half.

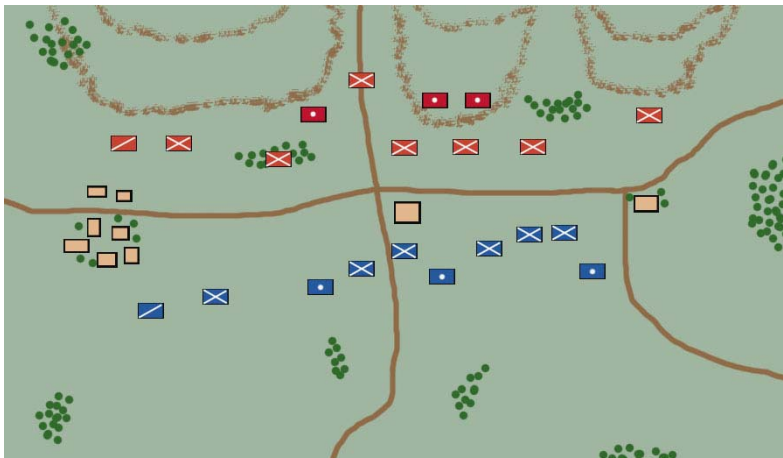
The British were in the unenviable position of having to defend a lot of territory with few units. There was a light cavalry brigade, several batteries of artillery and several infantry brigades. However, most of those were quite smaller than their French counterparts. Also, the British were further handicapped in that Wellington needed to place the artillery batteries, meaning that the British either had to concentrate them in one location or spread them out and deal with the fact that they might never move again!

The game started out well for the French in that they were able to quickly move up and begin deploying into line.

There were a few exchanges of artillery fire, but casualties were pretty light at this stage. The French began to move closer to the British main line while the British for their part tried to readjust their lines to better meet the expected French attack.

The action started on the French right-center where the first attack went in. Despite some initial success a British counterattack forced the French brigade back to its starting position. A second attack with two brigades pushed the British brigades back again and then both sides settled into a series of firefights. The other French brigades in the center advanced and began some long range firefights with the defending British brigades in that area.

The French attack near the center-right was definitely where all the action was. A sharp attack from a French brigade blew a hole in the British lines and the way to the enemy rear looked clear. The British sent forward their (cont. on p7)



Age of Eagles: Peninsula Battle (cont.)

Battle Report

(cont. from p6) last reserve and it counterattacked the French breakthrough, driving the French brigade back. By this time both sides had several seriously depleted brigades after this extended fight.

On the extreme French left the cavalry and an infantry brigade were finally in position to launch their attack. The cavalry went in first, crashing into the British cavalry and forcing them back. The British cavalry counterattacked, but they were in turn defeated and sent routing off the board. However, the French cavalry had lost severely due to melee and infantry fire, so they were finished as an effective fighting force. The French infantry attacked and made excellent progress, pushing back the British in the area and opening a massive hole.

However, they too failed several critical die rolls and were forced back. This was the second time during the game that the French had victory in their grasp and could not capitalize on it. The French on that flank were finished, but the British were in no position to counterattack as they had suffered heavily as well.

The final action occurred in the center where the last two fresh French bri-



gades finally went in. After a few charges, counterattacks, and firefights, it was apparent that this attack would not dislodge the British from the ridges overlooking the road. Another final barrage of artillery and it was obvious the British weren't going to budge from their lines.

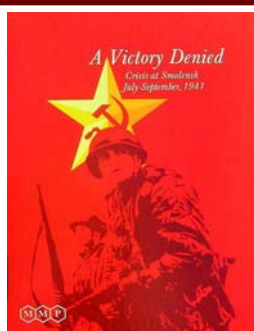
The French players discussed the results so far and looked at the status of their troops where there were no fresh units available, and decided to withdraw. In a reversal of the first battle the British had won.

Certainly, the basing change had helped the British. In the first game the British players could see that they had no chance to stop the French everywhere and sure enough, the French poured through at places of their choosing. No so here. The British brigades were able to stretch further to cover all of the critical areas, plus keep one or two brigades in reserve for critical moments. Although they were spread very thin, the brigades covered far more ground. We found it very interesting how just a few more cm's of stands can change the game!

Overall, it was fun and interesting battle. From set up to conclusion it had taken just over three hours long. Using Age of Eagles for Peninsula battles is ideal for shorter games or where there are time constraints on the players. The system seems to do well with simulating the unique challenges of that theater and we will definitely revisit this period again.



Two Roads to Smolensk



The German Drive on Moscow in 1941 has been a favorite period of gamers for a long while. Whether it is with board or miniatures games, the excitement of the panzer divisions trying to break through the masses of Russians who are desperately seeking to slow the German advance generates plenty of interest for this particular period. There have been a large number of games on Operation Barbarossa over the last three or so decades and many, many more on specific battles during the 1941-1945 period, but many of those that focus on the Battle for Moscow tend to overlook the action at Smolensk.

There could be a number of reasons for this, the chief one being that Panzergruppe Guderian (lovingly referred to as PGG) from SPI (and later Avalon Hill) covered it so well that nothing more needed to be designed! The other is that Operation Typhoon generates far more interest with its “Gates of Moscow” approach and masses of units in a series of desperate battles. For whatever reason, the action at Smolensk and the surrounding area, while itself a critical moment in the campaign, gets little notice in the



wargaming world.

One game, however, *A Victory Denied* by MMP, is challenging the hold on this battle that Panzergruppe Guderian has maintained for decades. This article hopes to highlight both games and delve into which game portrays the battle best.

We'll start with Panzergruppe Guderian which began as a magazine game in *Strategy & Tactics* back in the 70s by SPI. The game was referred to as an “instant classic” even back then and generated quite a few articles about gameplay and strategy. Whenever gamers talk about *Strategy & Tactics* magazines, this one almost always appears at the top of the list. Whether it was the use of untried units, the challenge of breaking through the Russian defenses, finding the perfect way to stop the panzer thrusts, or just the interesting nature of the battle, Panzergruppe Guderian has evolved into an iconic game.

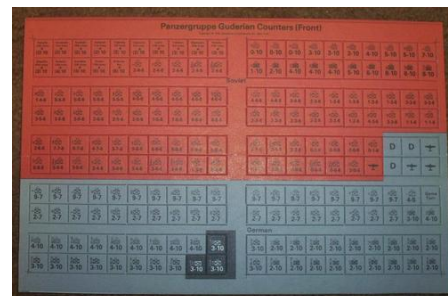
When first produced by SPI it came with the standard size map with a few colors, 200 counters, and the rules. The map and counters are nothing spectacular, the rules are easily digestible, set up goes pretty quickly, and getting a game going takes very little effort. However, it was the untried units which gives this game a very high replay value. The possibilities for attack and defense are numerous, plus not knowing what you are facing if you're the German player or how good your defenses are if you're the Russian definitely add to the mix.

Adding to the gameplay is that the situation is very, very fluid, with the panzers cutting and thrusting through the Russian defenses, but never with enough punch to end the battle once and for all. The Germans have a serious lack of infantry strength, which leaves their flanks exposed and you never know when the Russian counterattacks are coming or how effec-

Game Comparison

tive they will be. I've played this several times and have yet to see a blowout one way or the other. There seems to be several swings of fortune during the game, then a few tense turns at the end.

Although SPI did issue a deluxe version the game got another chance at exposure when Avalon Hill produced a boxed version in 1984. This version had higher quality counters and a mounted



mapboard, but left the rules largely unchanged. Later games that used this system allowed units to disengage from zones of control, but in PGG this is one of the things that makes things more challenging for both players. There were plans for a reprint from L2 as they have reworked a number of Avalon Hill games, but this one appears to have fallen apart and it's now doubtful if the game will ever be produced again.

So, some three plus decades later there is a new game about the operations around Smolensk in 1941 called *A Victory Denied* by MMP (AVD). This game followed up quickly the success that *A Victory Lost* had a few years prior and uses a similar system. As stated in the designer notes, doing a game about this battle brings up the inevitable comparison to Panzergruppe Guderian, which may seem unfair to AVD, but that's how it goes.

I had owned and played *A Victory Lost* multiple times, so I had a good idea what the box for AVD would have and how it would play, but (cont. on p.5)



Two Roads to Smolensk (cont.)

(cont. from p4) there are major changes in the rules and the chit pull system. First, the map is a thing of beauty, covering a much larger to the west than PGG does. The counters are color coded for the Germans to correspond to the activation chits for the German formations and the reverse sides have reduced values for step losses.

The rules are in color as well, with numerous examples going over supply, command & control, etc., which greatly aid in learning the game quickly. The major change from AVL was in the chit pulls, different types of dice for combat, and some special rules for Russian reinforcements, plus there is a section on the Minsk pocket forces for both sides.

Where PGG used untried units for the Russians to add uncertainty and chaos, in AVD it is handled with a chit pull activation system. What makes it even more challenging is that both sides cannot put all of their chits in a cup each turn. Instead, each side must choose which formations to activate, with a good average being three. If you're the Russians you must pick the HQs near to where you think the Germans will strike that turn and if you're the Germans you need to select the formations that you think will have the best chance of keeping the Russians off balance. Other chits can be added into the cup during the reinforcement phase depending upon certain situations, so this makes it a real cat and mouse affair at times.

The game begins with the German player being able to launch a series of attacks, then moving and attacking with the panzer groups. This usually results in some gaping holes appearing in the Russian lines and the game actually begins at this point. From here it becomes a question of which player pulls which critical chit first. If the Rus-

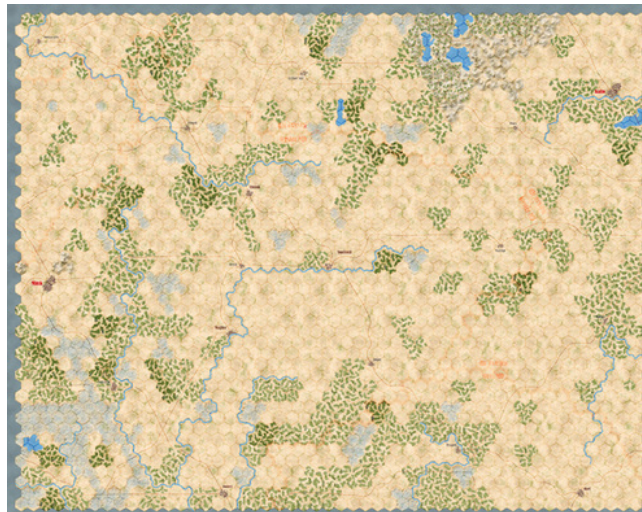
A VICTORY DENIED TABLES														
Combat Results Table														
Attacker	Defender	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-18	19-20	21-22	23-24	25-26
1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4
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25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26	25-26

sians get a good series of chit pulls they can reform the lines while if the Germans get their chits next you could see the panzer groups really do some serious damage.

Russian reinforcements continue to arrive in large numbers (this occurs in both games), but where they are placed can be critical to the Russian defense. The Germans also suffer from supply issues where a number of their units can

be put out of supply by the Russian player, which can, depending upon the chits pulled, really bog down any offensive plans the Germans had for that turn.

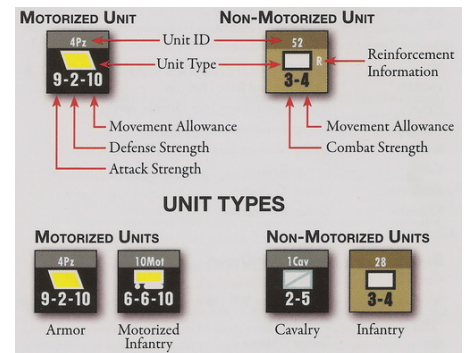
There are a large number of victory point chits placed in various locations on the map and this is what gives AVD great replay value in that both sides have no idea which objectives are worth the most. A little past the halfway point in the game the German player rolls a dice to see if the German High Command decides to go for Moscow, continue with the current campaign, or let the player decide. Again, this gives AVD very good replay value as there are advantages and disadvantages to both options. This means that the game could end on turn 8 or if the Moscow option is selected it goes until turn 10, but getting to Moscow is difficult if not impossible. There is usually a final few turns series of desperation attacks by



Game Comparison

the Germans to achieve a victory in both games.

Both games offer very good gameplay and have high replay values. PGG because of the untried Russian units and AVD because of the chit pulls, Minsk pocket, and options for the end game. My one big problem with PGG is the locking zones of control, which make it difficult for both sides to disengage and strike elsewhere or reform the defense.



My big problem with AVD was understanding the colors used for the various groups for command activation, which I think could have been done better.

I think if I had to choose one game to simulate this battle I would probably choose AVD. My opinion is that the chit pull mechanism adds a lot of uncertainty and tension to a desperate battle by both sides. The map, color rulebook, and counters definitely give AVD an edge in the components comparison. As more games come out in this series any gamer familiar with one of these games can quickly get immersed in others. I also think that the historicity is a little bit better than PGG, but both games offer the gamer very good game play and are competitive to the final turn.

Overall, you can't really go wrong with either game. Both offer high replay value, panzer drives across Central Russia, masses of Russians, and lots of gaming hours spent trying to reach Smolensk and other victory point locations. L2 was supposed to give PGG a facelift, but sadly that plan seems to have collapsed recently.

Memoirs of a Miniature & Board Wargamer Pt. 19

The Rebasing Compulsion

I can't remember when the first time it happened, but it has been a recurring theme throughout my time in the hobby. Yes, I'm talking about rebasing. At one time or the other every gamer comes face to face with this dilemma and some more than once. A new set of rules, moving to a different city where everyone bases their figs not the same as yours, and endless other reasons.

Is this a necessary evil in the hobby? I think it used to be, but maybe not so much anymore. "Back in the day", the primary rules that everyone based figs for were WRG Ancients and Empire. You could go from city to city across the globe and chances were that you would find at least someone who had based their ancients or Napoleonic armies the same as yours. If you wanted to try some other rules or met up with gamers who used different rules, then you would probably need to rebase as very, very few rules tried to use any kind of similar basing measurements. In fact, I think rules designers thought they scored extra points by making their bases as different as possible back then!

Rebasing wasn't much of a problem back then as well. Look at most of the pictures in an old issue of Battle, Wargamers Digest, Military Modelling, or others and what do you see? Usually, a plywood or balsa wood base that's painted some shade of green with the figures on it. Some gamers would really go all out and maybe put some railroad grass on the bases, but that was the limit. It wasn't until the first issues of Miniatures Wargames that gamers really started to pay attention to their bases and tried to do better.

So, rebasing wasn't much of an issue. Cut the figs off the old bases, glue them onto the different, but same colored bases, and you were ready to go. I can remember all night rebasing projects with other gamers (we did this first when

Johnny Reb came out) fueled by cases of Coke and M&Ms. Not only that, we had something that is in short supply these days; time.

I can remember rebasing my ACW figs not once, but three times so far! I also rebased a ton of sci-fi, fantasy, ancients, and more through the years, usually because a new set of rules that was sweeping the continent had just come out. There was no discussion if we should rebase, can't we cut new bases and glue the old figures on them, let's just use them the way they are, etc. No, if a set of rules used different bases, then we must change! This really hit home when Johnny Reb 3 came out as it used a different basing convention than the second edition did. We rebased everything, but after playing with JR3 for a year or so we decided that we didn't really like it that much and wanted to go back to JR2. Too late! The group really lost interest in the ACW for quite some time over this fiasco.

Fortunately, this really only ever applied to most land based games. WW2 naval, modern naval, age of sail, and almost every single WW2 game I've ever played, from skirmishing in 28mm to 1/285 never required rebasing. If it had, I think I would have thrown in the towel long ago! As the years went by more and more rules began using similar basing conventions, which made trying out different rules a little bit easier.

The last major rebasing project I did was when we had enough of Empire and From Valmy to Waterloo. The endless arguments over the rules, melees taking all night to resolve, etc., gave us the opportunity to be on the Age of Eagles playtest team and we rebased all of our miniatures to that system. It was a long, laborious project, but worth it. The time element definitely came into play, whereas in the 70s and 80s we had plenty of time, today, because of job and family pressures, it took much longer.

At other times it is simply a matter of visual appeal. I have huge forces for the Sudan in 15mm where we use the Battles

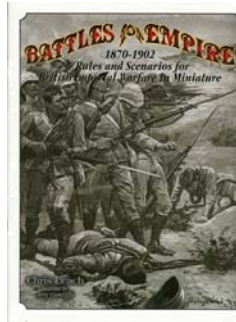
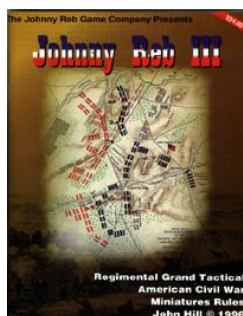
For Empire rules. I used the 25mm basing sizes as I wanted to pack a lot of figs onto each base, using 24 figs for the infantry units and 16 for the cavalry. After a few years of playing I noticed that something wasn't right and it was the cavalry basing. So, after much deliberation I went to 24 figs for each cavalry unit and rebased the units. I had to purchase a lot of extra figs, but it was worth it and the units look very impressive now.

But do you really need to rebase? That has been one of the most controversial subjects in the hobby for a long, long time and it greatly depends upon your gaming group. I think if you're playing a skirmish game then the base size matters very little or if both sides have their figs based similarly it shouldn't be too much of a problem.

It can create issues, however, when you're playing rules such as FOGH or any set of rules that have really tight basing specifications. This is where in the rules a cm or two could be crucial in determining support, a unit's ability to get into combat, number of figs that can melee, etc., so it would really depend upon the rules that are being used. I've played in several games where both armies were based differently and it has created some problems from time to time.

In this issue there is an AOE battle report that is almost a duplicate of a battle we fought a few issues back. In that game the British forces were based differently and they got stretched too thin, then overrun. During the time between games the owner of the figs rebased them to the suggested size bases and guess what, they were able to cover more area in the defense and held off the French!

Rebasing will always be one of those issues that will stay with the hobby forever. No matter how many rules try to match base sizes, there will always be "the next best thing" which will coerce gamers into rebasing. Unfortunately, I'm one of those weak willed gamers who will fall for it and immediately start rebasing right after the rules arrive!



Blast From The Past pt.18: SPI Sci-Fi Games

With the release of GMT's Space Empires I have been going back and reacquainting many of the older sci-fi games that I use to own "back in the day". I've mentioned in past articles games such as GDW's Imperium, Task Force Games' Godfire, or Avalon Hill's Stellar Conquest, but this time I'm going to turn my attention to some of the old SPI sci-fi games.

Starforce and Starsoldier are definitely 1970s era SPI games. My versions both came in the standard SPI flat tray with the counter trays and plastic covers. There was a boxed version of Starforce and these two games along with Outreach were sold as a boxed trilogy set that still fetches a pretty good price on Ebay.

Starsoldier has a map that is about as generic as generic gets. There is some terrain here and there, but it's basically



just enough to provide some cover during the scenarios for the combatants. The counters also have that 1970s SPI feel towards them along with the usual SPI legalese type rules. Having said all that, however, there is a pretty good game despite the extraordinarily average components.

Starsoldier has been called "Sniper in Space" because of its similarities to another of SPI's more popular games on man to man warfare called Sniper. Both games are on the upper end of the complexity scale and it will take some time to learn the game. Starsoldier uses pre-plotted movement, making it pretty much impossible to play solitaire. Each side plots the movement of their individual soldiers and how many actions they will do each turn, then both sides execute their orders, which can lead to some pretty wild games.

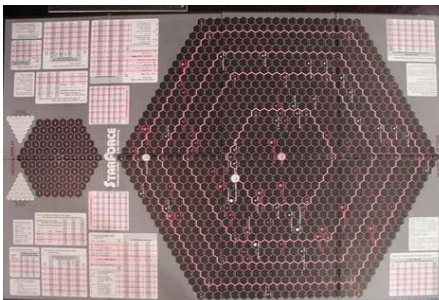
Starsoldier has one thing going for it



that many sci-fi games fail in, and that is it does a good job of trying to simulate futuristic ground combat. Each soldier carries a wide variety of powerful weapons, can fly over terrain, there's planetary bombardment, and more. Considering how deadly one soldier in today's armed forces can be with GPS abilities, calling in drone strikes, sharing data with units, etc., SPI's game is pretty remarkable showing the trend that in the future one soldier will be able to do what a platoon can do today.

Starforce is the space combat companion to Starsoldier and in fact, there are scenarios in Starsoldier to link both games. Starforce has an interesting mapboard showing a stellar display along with many charts, tables, and a tactical combat display for the advanced game. Again, there are few counters with minimal artwork that essentially portray the various starforces, stargates, and some randomization chits for hex locations.

Wrapping your head around the Starforce system isn't easy and it will take a few readings of the rules along with a game or two to grasp it. Essentially, it was the designer's idea that future starships (four ships in a group is termed a starforce) will "shift" to other locations in known space along with assistance by stargates and the telekinetic abilities of the ship's crews. The history at the back



of the rules is definitely interesting reading and no worse than most other sci-fi plots.

This game is three dimensional, so players have to plot coordinates for their shifts, leading to both sides hunting and searching for their opponents. When each side occupies the same cell in a hex, combat ensues, which again, is an unusual look from one designer's perspective at what space combat will be like. There are scenarios for civil wars, contact with alien races, and a solitaire rescue scenario, although playing this game solitaire (outside of the one scenario) would be very tough to do.

Overall, both games are not much to look at, but they do offer good and interesting gameplay. Both are on the medium to high

side of the complexity scale, but a few plays definitely speeds up the turns. Today's gamer will have a hard time spending the effort required to learn these games, but when I first learned them they were pretty exciting at the time. Also, when these games came out there weren't many sci-fi boardgames, so for gamers like myself who wanted futuristic combat they were appreciated.

Could these games still be popular today? I highly doubt it. They are both on the Decision Games (who holds many of the SPI game rights) Pledge system for pre-orders, but there has been little to no movement on them in quite some time. I think that the simultaneous movement would have to be dropped and some kind of chit draw system would need to be added. Today's gamers need interactive games that play fast with fancy components and that can be completed in a 2-4 hour time slot. That's not going to happen with these games, especially with your first game. Still, there are some good ideas here and a new interpretation, updated components, and a few changes to the system could generate some interest. For me, they are still good games with a lot of play still left in them.

Fire & Fury: Sunken Road at Antietam

Battle Report

It's always hard to keep a historical battle secret from gamers on the tabletop as once they find out what it is that you're trying to recreate, the inevitable comparisons to the real thing begin to come out quickly. Likewise, the comments that it was impossible, they never had a chance, why are we doing this, etc., invariably seem to emerge. One of the ways around this is to play a scenario and only reveal the true nature of the battle once the gamers are halfway into it.

This is precisely what happened at one of our regular gaming nights recently. We had decided to play another Fire & Fury game as we had been slowly adding to our collection of 15mm ACW figs, so naturally we wanted to use them on the tabletop as soon as possible!

only revealed to the CSA players during their briefing. The Union side, however, knew that other forces had attacked to the right of them that morning and that their attack was going in now. Confederates appeared to be weak in this area, but there were always the possibility that reinforcements would arrive. The sunken road was not even really laid out, so as far as the Union players knew, there was just green fields on the other side of the hill.



forces on the flank my forces hit them head on and a desperate fight began.

On the other side of the board the Union forces crested the final hill and the sunken road was revealed, packed with Confederate infantry. The Antietam scenario now unfolded and the Union players were now forced to go forward with the attack, much like their historical counterparts.

Without hesitation, the first Union brigades charged in, beginning a fierce struggle that would go on for several turns. The Union forces gave as good as they got for the first few (cont. on p13)



During the set up everyone thought it was just a fictional scenario pulled from some magazine or made up at the last second. Actually, Steve had done a very good job on the layout and the secret was

The Union attack went in more or less as planned. The few CSA artillery batteries in the area gave little opposition and were forced to withdraw. The infantry in this sector had no real chance of stopping the Union steamroller with many of the over strength brigades well over ten stands apiece. The Union players seemed to be enjoying themselves as they easily took over 3/4 of the board just by advancing forward!

It was at this point where they began to suspect that things might not be as rosy as they appeared. First, a mass of Confederate infantry emerged from off board and plowed into the forest on the Union right to engage the leading Union elements. In fact, the next turn revealed more Confederate infantry moving onto the board and heading straight towards the Union forces. Historically, this force hit the flank of the Union, shattered several formations, and sent them reeling back. I was the CSA player on that side of the board and I misunderstood the deployment instructions, so instead of hitting the Union





(cont. from p12) turns, almost breaking through the sunken road position twice. More Union troops arrived and then a few Confederate brigades arrived as reinforcements and the fight continued.

Back in the forest the Confederates had run into some serious problems. First, the traffic jam of arriving units made it difficult to deploy, there were no fields of fire for the newly arrived artillery, and the big Union brigades were difficult to drive back. The first few fire-fights and charges did not go well, then the Union counterattacks shattered two CSA brigades. Fresh troops moved up to plug the gap, but for a time it looked as if the Union would drive the Confederates out of the forests and win the day.

Back at the sunken road the Union

forces were now spent, unable to crack the position. The CSA forces now counterattacked and drove the Union back to the hill overlooking the sunken road.

Although the Union forces had been checked at the sunken road, finally halted in the forests (but not before they had made significant gains), and were looking pretty good, there was one glaring problem. That problem was the center of the Union line with a few brigades and two batteries that linked the larger two Union attack forces.

Because of the traffic jam in the forests, the Confederate brigades that couldn't fit in there finally emerged on the road leading through the center of the Union position. Although it had taken several turns to navigate the forests and traffic

jams, this fresh force now emerged at the opportune time and launched an attack. The attack drove the Union forces back in the center and continual pounding wore down the few brigades that were in that area. After a few turns of attacks and counterattacks, the Union force broke, separating the two wings and opening a large hole where more CSA forces began to move towards to exploit the opportunity. At this point the Union attack had clearly failed and they would have to go back towards their starting positions.

Not quite like the historical battle, but with the same results! Everyone had fun with the game and it was certainly a surprise for the Union players. All in all, it was a cleverly run scenario that produced a good game.

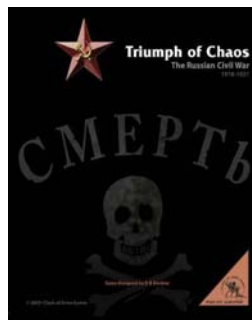


The Russian Civil War is one of those eras where there seems to be few games on the subject. While SPI's treatment is thought of as the best of the bunch, the others that have come out on this fascinating era of history haven't garnered much attention. The reasons for this are many, with the primary one being that it was difficult just trying to determine who was on which side!

Finally, a game that could prove to be the definitive word on the subject is Triumph of Chaos from Clash of Arms games. The emphasis should be on the "Chaos" part of the title because that is exactly what you are going to get. The box is full of high quality components that gamers have come to expect from COA.

First, there is the map. It is breathtakingly beautiful and covers all of Russia down to the Turkish regions and all the way west to Poland and the Baltic States. Then there are several counter sheets that cover all of the major combatants, including the USA, France, Britain, Czech Legion, and many, many more. The counter sheets are the first indication that this could get complicated in a hurry and it does. Next are the cards which come in three distinct flavors; political cards which are drawn from turns 1-9, leader cards which can be an optional item, and finally the event cards that are used each turn and broken down into the various years from 1918-1920. The components are fantastic and you can spend hours going over the various cards, map locations, counters of interesting units, and so on.

Now we get to the rules and they come in two books. Yes, two books. The first book deals with the game system, which is remarkably similar to Paths of Glory and Shifting Sands. If you've played either of those two games you



will be well ahead of most gamers as the systems will be familiar. Armies, corps, strategic reserves, playing cards for reinforcements, etc., are lifted just about rule by rule from those games. This is a card driven game, so knowing what you can and cannot use the cards for is of paramount importance. The second book deals with the politics and factions, which adds multiple layers of complexity. There are rules for each faction's entry, armed forces set up, special rules, etc., and it can get very confusing at times. My suggestion is to print off the latest set of rules that have some major clarifications in several sections.

So, the game is set up, everything looks beautiful, so what do you do? Well, here lies the major problem with



the game and one that I saw in my one solitaire run through and in a face to face game. The game starts with the Red forces in some bad positions and this is where the White player needs to strike while the chance is there. After the first few turns, however, things can get quite complex as different factions began to enter the

game, the Central Powers leave, and the Red forces begin to grow stronger.

Now I haven't even dived into the political phase, which is a fascinating game unto itself.

Each turn each player can acquire several political cards by using event cards to bid for them. The cards are matched up to create a number of shifts that can influence factions to get involved or stay out of the fighting.

Yes, this means a flank that you thought was secure all of a sudden has a hostile faction with fresh armies!

I've seen some chaotic games, but this one takes the prize. Between the

political phase, foreign factions, the Greens coming out of nowhere, revolts, factions changing sides, etc., planning is difficult if not impossible. Add to that the fact that a lot of the cards for your side have things on them that can end up being disastrous for your side! There are times during the game that you literally sit there and stare at your cards, board, and the faction sheet, wondering what to do next or where the next disaster will occur. There are so many options and strategies that you could play the game multiple times with all of the games being very different.

By the end of 1919 the political phase is gone from the game, there are more cards to use, the pre-requisite cards have all been played, and the sides are fairly well determined. At this point Triumph of Chaos turns into a Paths of Glory type wargame with front lines, offensives with clear objectives, etc., but it's getting to this point that will tax you.

Overall, the only thing I can think of saying is that this is totally unlike any game you will ever play. Expect the first game to have a lot of errors as things are scattered all over the place in the rules and players will be continually reacting to events. This is NOT a game for beginners! You will need to invest some time into learning the system and it will be challenging. I thought it was a beautiful, rewarding game, and definitely out of the ordinary. I'm not sure how many times I will play it, but I'm happy I got to try it. And yes, there is plenty of chaos!



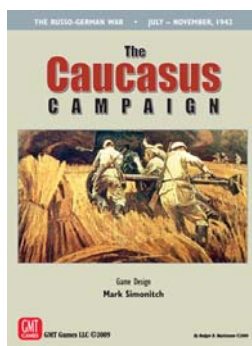
The Caucasus Campaign

Game Review

Definitely one of the forgotten campaigns of WW2 is the German drive to seize the oil rich areas of the Caucasus. There are literally hundreds of books and games about the Stalingrad campaign that took place directly to the north of this campaign, but hardly any interest in what happened south of Stalingrad. Most other games like Russian Campaign, Proud Monster, Third Reich, and more have this area on the game map, but it's not even a primary focus for gamers.

With The Caucasus Campaign, GMT is trying to remedy that and shed some light on this interesting, but often forgotten part of WW2. First, you get a beautiful and very functional map of the Caucasus region with large hexes. The game tracks, reinforcements, etc., have been laid out well and do not detract from the playing area. It's easy to see from first glance that the top area is going to be difficult to defend for the Russians, but the mountains and coastline offers numerous defensive positions.

The counters are of the larger variety and are very good, but not exceptional, sticking to the tried and true NATO symbols. You also notice that there are very few German, Italian, and Romanian counters in comparison to the masses of Russians on the counter sheets! The rule book is pretty easy to get through with several well placed illustrations about play including a complete two turn sample of play, which was very helpful in learning the game.



While the game is on one map, there's not many combat units, and the rules aren't that difficult to grasp, it will take you awhile to get through the first few turns. The reason for this is that the turn sequence is unusual and you will need to refer to the rules the first few times that each side does their movement and combat. The turns

begin with a German Primary phase where everything gets to move and attack. There is then a Russian Secondary Phase where mech units can move/attack along with infantry forces that can either move one hex or attack. This is followed by the German Secondary phase similar to the Russian phase above, then you move to the Russian turn which only has a Primary phase. Nothing too hard to understand, but it takes a few turns to get use to it.

Units can leave ZOCs at the start of their turn, there is extended movement, rail movement, naval movement, and during the Secondary phases mech units can pay 3MPs to attack adjacent units. Keeping this straight took me a few turns, but by the third or fourth turn you start to get into the flow of the game and what the designer was trying to accomplish.

Both sides get reinforcements, but the Russians definitely begin to receive more and more, leading to the situation at the end of the game where the Russians could possibly deliver some strong counterattacks. Replacements are variable and the Russians also roll for events which could see the Black Sea fleet sortie out for a turn, the arrival of naval brigades, or replacement points. This is one of the strong points of the game as it gives players very good

replay value as there are a large number of variations that can occur during a game.

The Germans are also tasked with achieving so many victory points by seizing locations on the map by certain turns. Failure to hit the minimum during any one turn results in defeat, so there's no sitting back and waiting for opportunities to develop. The combat system is designed to cause serious step losses to both sides and managing your units losses, particularly for the Germans, will be important to maintain the offensive.

The game will usually begin with German mechanized and mountain units breaking through the Russian defenses, followed by the Russians desperately trying to form a defensive line. On turn 2 and 3 more German forces arrive, but already Russian reinforcements are showing up at the front. The Germans need to push the advantage as long as possible, especially since some of their air support gets withdrawn and the weather can turn bad in the second half of the game.

At this point the Germans need to determine which route they need to take to victory. Drive down the center and then to Grozny? Veer west to the coast and then drive down to seize all of the ports? There are several options here and all of them will be challenging. Again, there is very good replay value here for the money and the events, replacements, unpredictable nature of the combat results table, etc, will make each game a little different.

Overall, this is a very good game on an unusual topic. Once you've figured out the unusual turn sequence and movement, it's not that hard. There are a large number of special rules for various units and functions, but most of these are one time events and quickly taken care of. If you're looking for panzers driving deep into Russia, challenging terrain, desperate defenses, and unusual units, then this is the game for you!

Once again, Friday night was approaching fast and as usual, we weren't sure what we were going to play or how many were coming! Yes, this is generally the status quo for our gaming group! Steve, who had been teaching a friend how to play General de Brigade offered to have us finish the second half of a battle that was already ongoing. As is our theme, we naturally chose the path of least resistance and accepted!

Since we came in on the second night of what was going to be a two or possibly three night game we needed a lot of the scenario explained to us to understand what was going on, what had already transpired, current objectives, etc., so that took up some time.

the Italians had been thrown back and were trying to regroup near the center of the board. The French cavalry were moving up in preparation for an attack, plus both the French and Prussians had very strong columns of fresh troops arriving and advancing towards the middle of the battlefield.

The Prussians on the left were having problems changing orders and moving through the terrain. There were skirmishers deployed forward with several regiments in column trying to advance as fast as possible to take pressure off of the Prussian center where the greater threat was. The Prussians moved their cavalry from a reserve position to the threatened right flank in case the French made another effort in that area.

Sure enough, the first French moves were towards the Prussian center and right. French and Italian

infantry supported by artillery in the center made a fresh attack on the Prussian forces in that area. The French made some initial gains, but then a Prussian counterattack forced the leading elements



back. The French cavalry then made an appearance, running over a Prussian infantry battalion, but then they were checked by the Prussian cavalry who arrived just in time to prevent a complete collapse of that flank.

What followed next was a series of charge and countercharge, which seriously depleted the strength of both sides. The French and Prussian infantry continued a series of firefights and in the end the French were forced back to their starting point. The victorious Prussians surged forward only to be met by strong artillery fire from French positions in the center of the board.

On the Prussian left the long columns of Prussian infantry had finally received orders and cleared the stream and surrounding terrain. They made for the French right, trying to get their before the approaching French. (cont. on p. 17)



Basically, there was a major French attack along with some Italian allies against a strong Prussian position. The French had begun the assault on the Prussian right and at the end of the first night



GDB: Prussian Counterattack (cont.)

Battle Report



ever, there were numerous casualties and this was quickly turning into a battle of attrition. Both sides attacked and counterattacked, creating a swirling melee that kept pulling in more and more units.

On the rest of the battlefield the Prussians slowly advanced. Both sides had sustained serious casualties in the center and Prussian right, so there weren't too many forces to advance, but neither were there too many forces available to either side to oppose any kind of advance!

Unfortunately, we had run out of time for this game and it needed to be picked up. At this point it looked as if the Prussians were carrying the day, but at a relatively high cost. The French still had several fresh units that were yet to be committed, so there was still the chance the game

could have ended up in at least a draw for the French. I found it to be very interesting that most of us arrived halfway during the game, so we had to quickly size up the situation and proceed. I thought it represented as closely as possible replacement commanders being assigned commands during a battle. Certainly, it was a good experience and I think that I will start using this sometimes when designing scenarios.

(cont. from p. 16) The French reached the middle of the board first and began to deploy, just as the first Prussian battalions surged forward. The initial Prussian attacks in column were repulsed, but artillery support and several firefights slowly pushed the French back.

One Prussian brigade changed orders and made for the hill with the French artillery on it. Although initially hit hard

by the French fire they kept coming on and the French were forced to bring up reinforcements to prevent the hill from falling into Prussian hands.

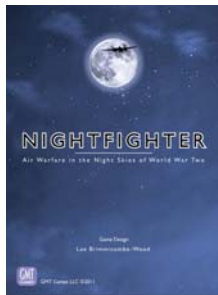
The main action now began to take place on the Prussian left. The Prussian infantry were now deployed and began to make a series of charges into the main French defenses. Slowly, and surely, the Prussians were making headway. How-



Nightfighter

Game Review

GMT has released another air combat game with the title of Nightfighter. Designed by Lee Brimicombe-Wood, you would think it would go along in the series of his other air combat games that include Downtown, The Burning Blue, and Elusive Victory. However, that is not the case as Nightfighter is a stand alone game and very much a tactical affair while the other games are operational in nature.



ment, visibility, combat, etc., then steadily add sections about searchlights, radar, intruders, bomber response, and more. Even with all of the rules added in, the game is very manageable and after a few tries the turns should really speed up.

Most games involve a lone nightfighter going up against three bombers. The entry points of the bombers are randomly determined by the umpire by drawing chits with entry hexes on them. This keeps the night-fighter player guessing as to where the bombers are coming in at. The night-fighter player will usually have searchlights or radar assistance to aid them in searching for the bombers. This may sound easy in practice, but if you miss on a few searches you are literally stumbling around in the dark looking for clues!

The umpire controls the flight of the bombers and the results of searches. Even though you get a radar contact, you don't get the exact position, especially with the earlier radar systems. However, this will get your fighter into position to at least start visually searching for a bomber. At some point you will get a contact and can pounce on the bomber. The combat system is very easy to use and can be resolved with the roll of a few dice. The advanced rules add some detail to the aerial dog-fighting, but

it is still very easy to figure out.

Later scenarios add air search radar carried by the nightfighters, homing systems for other nightfighters to counter an enemy's nightfighters, and nightfighters termed "intruders" which are usually Mosquitos that are inter-

persed among the bombers acting as an escort and that can hunt down enemy nightfighters.

There are Pacific scenarios as well, including night attacks on task forces that look very interesting. You can also download a solitaire system that will allow you to play pretty much all of the scenarios in the game. The solitaire system is definitely rules and system heavy (as are all solitaire games) and it will take few turns to get the hang of it. I've tried it a few times and it works pretty well if you do not have a face to face opponent.

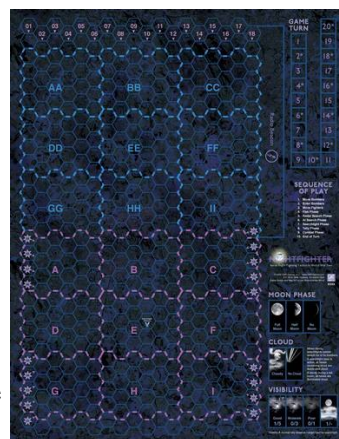
I've played Nightfighter several times, both face to face and solitaire. I think that the system is pretty intuitive, works well with an umpire or solitaire, and offers a unique perspective on this often neglected area of WW2.

Having said that, however, I'm not sure

how many more times it will hit the table in the future. Yes, there is massive replay potential here with dozens of variants on the scenarios using different aircraft along with the campaign game, but after you've played a few times you feel as if you've been playing the system for years and have seen everything it has to offer. This may sound a bit unfair, but once you figure out the system, the game does start to get slightly repetitive and I can't see myself playing this week after week or even more than once a year.

Overall, the designer is to be commended for creating an interesting game on an unusual topic. It is a very good game with well done components, but

I think it can get old quickly, even though the games are usually short, meaning under an hour for some and averaging under two hours for others.



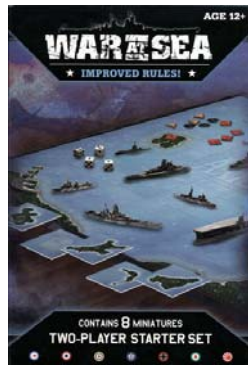
Surprisingly, the rules are not that difficult or complicated. Anytime I see player and umpire discussed, I immediately think back to my days of playing SPI's NATO Division Commander and how complex that was. The rules are in an easy to learn format, covering move-

For those of us who have been gaming for quite some time, gaming vs. simulation arguments have been going on for as long as I can remember. Then it became an argument between complexity and simplified game mechanisms. There seems to be no end to the various options on these arguments, basically whether or not rules are historical, do complex systems better simulate certain aspects of warfare, and so on.

But now there seems to be a new problem arising which is creating a different set of arguments and that is, should history even be included in miniatures gaming? Now this is not as far fetched as it seems and if you've been in the hobby for awhile you probably saw it coming years ago. Essentially, as the hobby has continued to diverge and with the introduction of so many rules sets, this does seem to be the logical direction that the arguments would go in. Even if you're the most die hard grognard in your club, you have to admit that the trend over the last decade is towards simpler rules that can attract as much of the GW crowd as possible.

"Back in the day" we all knew gamers who would only use the Imperial Guard in their Napoleonic battles or only Tiger battalions in their Eastern Front WW2 battles. There were those who had to have every Elephant or Nashorn produced by Germany during the war in each scenario or who would only fly rare variants of aircraft in air combat games. These were usually tolerated to some extent because the rest of the group would usually bring some sanity to the game in terms of historical orders of battle.

At one point or another most gamers, including myself, have substituted a ship of the wrong class for a scenario or used a battalion of troops from the wrong theater to make a game work. Usually, but not always, they were used as filler until the correct unit could be ordered and painted up. We delved into some fantasy type campaigns, but the difference was



that everyone knew they were fantasy!

Now, however, the game is the most important thing and history is for grumpy old gamers or people who take things too seriously. Research your army? Why? Everything you need is right here in a list and if says I can have two Tigers for every one truck, then that's how it must have been in WW2! I've watched WW2 fleet battles with Japanese, German, and French ships up against British, Italian, and U.S. ships. I've seen Napoleonic games where the units look more like pike phalanx blocks than the traditional column, line, and square that were used during that period. Scenario design? Are you kidding? That's for grognards who now have no place in gaming. Just give a points total and let's get the game going! I get that gaming is just that, a game, but shouldn't there be some element of history in it if we're calling it historical miniatures gaming?

The difference between back then and today is that today not many gamers care. Either through a combination of history not being taught in schools, laziness, no interest or time to research a period, etc., it's quickly reached a point where anything goes and it's accepted. If you try to point things out to a group, even in a polite manner or offer to help, you just get shrugs and looks that essentially tell you to get lost. Yes, on gaming forums all over the Internet, there are the wise sages who say that we need to shepherd the new gamers along, gently help them with research, help them to paint uniforms, show them that there's more to gaming than point driven scenarios, etc., The problem? THEY DON'T WANT YOUR HELP!

Somewhere along the line, in the transition from Tractics to Command Decision to Flames of War, or from WRG Ancients to Warhammer Ancient Battles to Hail Caesar we're losing the history part of historical miniatures gaming. This is not one of those interminable arguments over playability, time constraints for today's gamer, or using new systems to do in 3-4 hours what older rules did in a two day battle. No, this is whether or not we should even bother painting Napo-

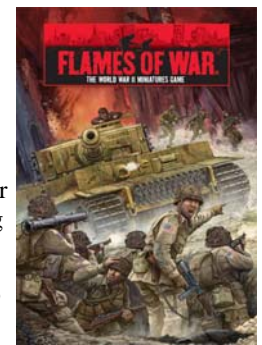
leonic units in the correct colors.

Part of what got me into the historical miniatures gaming hobby was the research and painting aspect to it. I've always found it interesting that when I start a new period or expand upon one I'm already involved in to read about new battles, units, or commanders from that era. Looking through uniform guides and doing online research to get the colors or flags right was just what gamers did, or so I assumed. Apparently, I was mistaken. What I should have been doing is spending all of my time building a killer army list and devising tactics that will get as many dice rolled in the first round of whatever combat I'm going to be involved in.

Flanks? Who cares. Reserves? Why? You say I have more Companions than the Greeks ever had in any century? So what. Why are they arranged four wide by forty deep? Well, that's how I'm going to deliver my 100 combat dice thermonuclear death charge! You get the picture.

Is this representative of the entire hobby? Fortunately, no. There are still thousands of gamers who do research, do their best with painting (not always the most popular thing), and use scenarios for their games. They along many others try to help new gamers and you must applaud their efforts. On the down side, they seem to be an ever shrinking minority.

Will the hobby come full circle and go back to the way it was? Probably not. Will we ever see new gamers saying, "I'm looking for a complex set of WW2 rules along the lines of Tractics along with historical orders of battle." Nope. I'm not sure what to make of many of the current gaming trends. I find myself drifting more and more back into board wargames as I do enjoy the historical discussions on many of those forums. It seems to be missing from miniatures...



Revenge of the Successors!

We've had several Romans vs. Successors battles over the last few years and they always end up being hard hitting slugfests that go down to the very last turn. Whenever we have an opening, as such for this night, we usually turn to Warmaster Ancients as it's fun to play, easy to set up, and plays fast, especially since all of us know the rules pretty well.

The Romans this time went with a pretty standard force. This consisted of several legions backed by light cavalry, skirmishers, a few units of archers, and some auxiliary units along with artillery. Overall, a well balanced force that although it was short on cavalry, had a lot of striking power, especially in the first round of combat.

The Successors, who have about a billion choices from the army lists went with a pike-heavy cavalry type force. This consisted of several phalanx units, some imitation Romans, and four units of heavy cavalry, including one unit of late period cataphracts. There were also the usual skirmishers, archers, light cavalry, and one unit of elephants.

I was on the Successor side and we debated taking the elephants or not, since they've had a very sketchy combat record in our games. For one thing, they are expensive and you have to weight that against possibly getting three good units



of something else as compared to one unit of elephants. However, if they charge into contact they can be devastating and obliterate entire opposing units in single combat phase.

We decided to

keep them and give them one more chance to prove their worth! The Successors also chose a unit of scythed chariots, which would be the first time we've ever used them.

The Romans deployed in their usual set up (we've played about a dozen games with them so far) which is several legions across the front covered by archers and skirmishers, with auxiliary units behind the legions for support. Light and heavy cavalry were positioned on the flanks with the intent of holding their own in time for the legions to get in and do their dirty work, which is usually how the Romans win!

The Successors went with a holding on the left strategy, then having the pike and heavy cavalry move slowly to the right and crush that flank, followed by a mopping up of the center. A good strategy in theory, but the command system in WMA tends to make short work of long, complex strategies with multiple moving parts!

WMA Battle Report

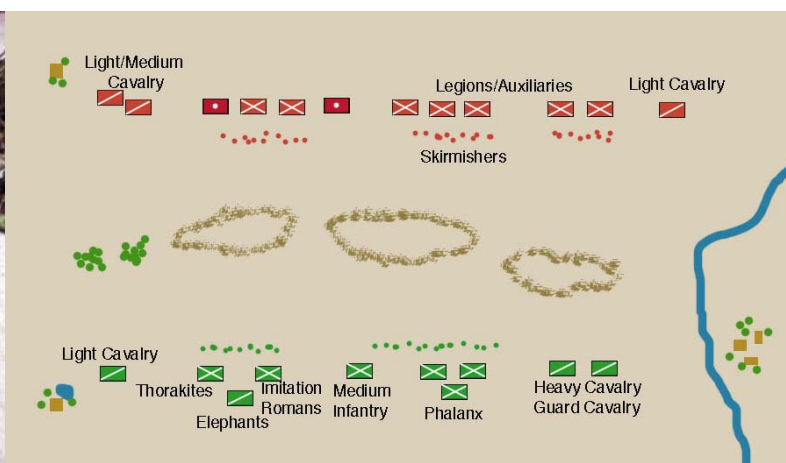
The Romans barely moved in the first turn which gave the jump to the Successors, who rolled pretty well and the army surged forward. The second turn followed the same script as the first with only a few Roman units moving and the Successors moving almost everyone. The exception to this was a lone cataphract unit that refused to move for most of the game.

By the third turn we started to see archery exchanges along the front lines and a few mounted skirmisher melees on the left flank. The Successor heavy cavalry had moved up and was ready to



charge, but there were several legions trying to close in as well, so it looked as if the decisive action would be on the Successor right flank.

The Successors launched two cavalry charges that broke through the Roman lines on the Successor right flank. The cavalry were counterattacked, but then crashed into fresh Roman units the following turn, causing more (cont. on p.21)





(cont. from p.20) casualties and driving the Roman lines back with more fresh cavalry units arriving.

The Romans sent in a major attack of their own on the Successor left-center. At first it achieved great success, wiping out the Imitation Romans who rolled very badly and then carrying into the medium infantry that were in a second supporting line. At this time it looked bleak for the Successor army, even though things were progressing very well on the right flank. In the center there were only a few fresh units and the mass of pike units still had not made contact.

The Successor elephants, which over the last few years have had a checkered performance, now demonstrated why they can be a game changer. They crashed into several Roman units and ran

them down to a man, finishing the Roman threat in that sector. However, there were only a few elephant stands still left, a unit of fresh cataphracts, and some half-strength medium plus light infantry still left. On the positive side the Romans in that area were finished as an offensive force and were nearing their break point.

What followed for the next two turns were several skirmisher melees, which is quite unusual in our games. The one thing it did, however, was clear the way for the remaining Successor cavalry to set up a deciding series of charges. By this time the Romans were dangerously near their break point while the Successors were barely halfway to theirs.

The two fresh units of Successor cavalry and the remaining Guard cavalry units piled into the Romans who were

busy trying to shore up their battered lines. For the first turn both sides gave as good as they got and it looked as if the pike units would be called in to finish things off. However, several series of bad die rolls left the Romans shattered and they were forced to withdraw, ceding the field to the victorious Successors.

This was one of the few WMA games we've played where the battle did not go down to the final turn, but it didn't feel like it was a slaughter. Also, it was notable in that not a single pike phalanx got into combat! Still, it was a very hard fought game and it should not give the impression that the Romans weren't trying, because they threw everything they had at the Successors, but bad die rolls and a lack of cavalry in a series of swirling melees ultimately doomed them.



Normandy: British Armored Assault

BKC2 Battle Report

After playing a few BKC2 scenarios on the Easter Front, it was back to the Normandy campaign. This scenario was set during July of 1944 where the British are desperately trying to break out in the area around Caen. As with most of our games the scenario came together pretty fast, did not use points, and we had no idea how many players there would be until the last moment! Despite all of that, it turned out pretty good!

The game would begin with a British force spearheaded by two armored battalions trying to break through the initial defenses, then hopefully exploiting off board via two road exits at the far end.



talion and (1) kampfguppe with a company of Panthers and an understrength company of Tigers.

- (1) battery of 105mm howitzers and (1) battery of nebelwerfers.

The Germans were allowed to set up anywhere from the rail line back with the Stug IIIs on alert in the village where they had to roll a 5 or a 6 each turn to activate. The reserves were deployed off table and had to roll 2D6 to enter each turn with an 11 or 12 needed on the first turn, then decreasing by one each turn thereafter.

The terrain would prove to be an obstacle for the British during the initial phase of the attack. The far left of the

rail line had deep cuts and effectively acted like an anti-tank ditch. The center had a series of track building with only a few gaps, while the right flank was held by German defenders in a series of entrenchments.

The British attack started out well, with all commands moving up quickly. The Germans rolled well on the Stug III company and it was activated on the first turn which allowed it to move up and take up a position covering the main road. The next turn then saw the majority of the British armor move out in front and trying to get past the rail line, which is where the action started.

A fierce firefight broke out between the Stugs and the Shermans, with a 75mm AT battery from the entrenchments joining in. Within a few turns there were several Cromwells and Shermans burning in the center of the board. The mech battalions had a series of bad command rolls and were unable to come up to the front to help out.

However, the British artillery then intervened, suppressing some of the Stugs and making life miserable in the entrenchments for the German defenders. One mech infantry battalion dismounted and began engaging the Germans in the entrenchments, but (cont. on p. 23)



The Germans initially had a weak front line defense, but there were several reserve units that could move up.

British OOB

- (1) Battalion M-4 Shermans and Fireflies
- (1) Battalion Cromwells and Fireflies
- (2) mech infantry battalions-1st battalion in M3s and the 2nd battalion in Bren Carriers
- (1) Churchill company attached
- (3) batteries 25lb. Artillery w/3 scheduled assets.

German OOB

- (1) Battalion regular infantry
- (1) Stug III company
- (1) PzIVH company
- (1) 88mm AT battery
- Reserves: (1) panzergrenadier bat-



Normandy: British Armored Assault (cont.) BKC2 Battle Report



(cont. from p.24) coming off the worst for it. The Churchills, which should have been supporting the infantry, had several bad command rolls and could not keep up.

In the center the Shermans were gaining the upper hand. The Stugs were taking a beating and then finally the PZIVH company, which had been sitting idle for several turns, finally showed up. Unfortunately, they were caught in an artillery barrage coupled with some outstanding fire from the Cromwells. At the end of the turn there was on PZIVH remaining! So much for the German counterattack!

The mech infantry battalion in Bren Carriers now moved through the rail line area and began to move towards the road exits. The Germans were still holding on

the British right, but the left was melting away quickly. The few defenders were pulled back to cover the road, but ran into a company of Shermans which started a several turn mini-battle. The Cromwells, which had been decimated crossing the rail line, now finished off the Germans in the center and began to engage the defenders in the entrenchments. The German 75mm AT battery, which had caused so much havoc for several turns, was finally put out of action.

The British Sherman battalion now moved through the center road junction and began to exploit into the rear areas. The Germans simply did not have enough defenders to stop everyone from getting through. Finally,, on turn 6 the Germans rolled well and got both reserve groups

which would have been an interesting fight, but we were out of time and had to call the game.

Certainly, the British had broken through and were still in good shape. The German reserves that were coming on board were powerful units and there would have been a tough fight to see if the British could have made it to the road exits.

This was a fun, entertaining, and fast moving scenario. The Germans had terrible command rolls for the PZIVHs and their artillery access, which definitely affected the course of the game. The British also had several opportunities to break the game wide open, but could not get a good series of command rolls during the entire game.





WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meets every other Friday night in the SLC, Utah area. We play a wide variety of games in 1/300th, 10mm, 15mm, and 25mm, including Age of Reason, Age of Discovery, Age of Eagles, Fire & Fury, General de Brigade, Warmaster Ancients, TSATF, Phantoms, Mustangs, BKC2, and more...

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A few of our gaming group were talking at dinner before one of our gaming nights and we were discussing how lately we've been scrolling down the news stories and message boards on TMP and haven't seen anything that generated interest. It certainly isn't TMP's fault as there are hundreds of news stories, forthcoming products, and threads about gaming, so the hobby is alive and well. I think it is a sense that 99% of what is discussed has nothing to do with the rules, figures, or periods that we are interested in. When someone starts a thread that goes something like, "Interview with Robert So & So about his new rule system for Antarctic warfare", my first question is "Who is that?" and "Who cares about that period?". But yet, it's as if you're expected to know who he is and why his designs are important to the hobby. Just go through the list of message board threads over the last few months and most get few responses. I think there are so many rules, figs, systems, sub-systems, etc., that finding a thread that may interest you or something you can help a fellow gamer with are increasingly becoming few and far between. "Back in the day", if someone asked, "What period should I get into next?", you would get a few answers. Ask that today on TMP and you could get 100 different answers! However, too much choice can have it's disadvantages as well. The last time I was in our local store a gamer was looking at a beautiful new boxed set of plastic miniatures and asked what medieval rules he should use. After a flurry of answers from several other gamers that must have covered two dozen sets of rules and seeing that no one system had more than one person playing it, he put it back!

Hexwar Tank Battle 1944

I've been frankly surprised that more wargame type apps have not come out for mobile devices in the last few years. Although several companies are working on this (and have been for quite some time), there hasn't been that much progress so far.

However, recently I came across a pretty good little app called Tank Battle:1944 from HexWar.com. I have always been a big fan of the Panzer General series of computer/game console games and this is about as close as there is so far to those. I paid \$1.99 for the app and you get about a half dozen training scenarios along with the American campaign of 12 scenarios. You can download a German campaign of another dozen scenarios and there is a forthcoming Ba-



stogne campaign.

There are three difficulty levels, so you can replay the scenarios and the campaign against increasing AI effectiveness. Each scenario has a mission with objectives where the player usually has to succeed in at least one or two of these. You get a certain amount of starting units plus you can receive various reinforcements that are released when you seize objectives or hit certain time requirements.

The Americans have Shermans, M-10s, mech infantry, regular infantry, and artillery while the Germans have a variety of tanks and infantry as well. There are also minefields, fortifications, built up areas, and more on the terrain maps. Units can either fire or move, which makes coordinating actions pretty tough and some thought needs to be given to your attacks and defensive positions.

App Review



Overall, this is a great little game and you definitely get your money's worth. I thought most of the scenarios were challenging and can be played in 15-30 minutes. The graphics are good and it feels like a simplified version of Panzer General. There are a few problems such as not being able to change your moves if you screw up on the small screen, enemy units appearing at weird places, LOS is strange at times, etc., but these are small complaints against an otherwise pretty fun game.