



# *Warning Order*

ISSUE #33

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**WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY**





# Warning Order

## IABSM3: A Review

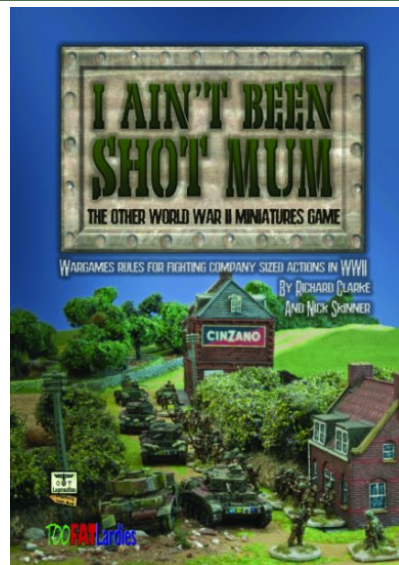
For one reason or another I've had a fascination with WW2 skirmish games. It started back in the 70s when I used my Airfix and Atlantic 1/72nd scale figures/vehicles with Angriff rules. From there it progressed to the WRG 1925-50 skirmish rules (does anyone still remember those?) and over the last two decades I've tried various other sets. These were very clockwork like rules with an IGOUGO system and pretty straightforward.

The rules sets in the late 80s and 90s included Arc of Fire, Battleground, and more that added complexity, but with a large group bogged down. They were good rules, but playing with 7-8 players and a few squads each could easily take 6-8 hours per game! We needed to find something fast playing, produced some chaos, and that would allow us to use vehicles without bogging the game down into too much detail.

I purchased a set of I Ain't Been Shot Mum (IABSM) from a company called Too Fat Lardies, or TFL as they are affectionately known. The rules at that time were pretty basic and despite a few questions

here and there, they were easy to figure out. Our first game was a huge success and with only three of us playing we couldn't wait to try it out with the rest of the group. However, when we played it with our full group it was met with less than enthusiastic success. The reasons for this were probably many, but they included a wide variety of gamers who had differing ideas about WW2 skirmishing, wanted more detail, Flames of War was just getting popular so why try something new, and so on.

From there we moved on to other sets, but when we played Sharp Practice, which uses a similar system to IABSM, we noticed that some things had been changed and for the better. So, when IABSM3 recently came out I figured it was time to get back into WW2 skirmish actions and armed with several boxes of Plastic Soldier Company WW2 Russians, I ordered the IABSM3 package which included the cards and tokens for the game.



Since I have access to a good color printer I chose the PDF route, then had a local print shop add a comb binding along with vinyl covers. In my opinion this definitely saves on costs, plus you have a PDF of the rules for quick access or if you have to print off any charts and/or tables.

The first question naturally is, "What exactly is IABSM3?" It definitely is a set of rules for WW2 skirmish actions, but at the high end. By that I mean you're not talking about two squads attacking a position defended by a fire team and two MGs, but rather a large (cont. on p3)

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### Special points of interest:

- Review of the new IABSM3 rules.
- Several reviews of plastic figure sets as well as some 1/48th armor kits.
- Battle reports for GDB, BKC2, WMA, and F&F games.
- Editorial on new rules sets and regular features.

# IABSM3: A Review (cont.)

(cont. from p.2) battle with multiple platoons of infantry and armor. In fact, going through one of the scenario books (sold separately) for the early Eastern Front shows many scenarios with upwards of 70-80 infantry and 6-10 vehicles a side! This is definitely a change from the earliest version of the rules that I originally tried and almost at the operational end of the skirmishing spectrum. It may also explain why there are so many pictures of 15mm figures and vehicles throughout the rules as in 25mm playing some of the scenarios isn't going to be cheap!

The good thing for the gamer is that these rules can be used with any figure scale and whatever basing you are currently using. You can lose single figures if they are based that way, or just mark the casualties on a stand if you have multiple figures based on one stand. Vehicles should be individually based and most of the scenarios operate with platoons of 3-5 vehicles, so once again, 15mm scale would seem to be the ideal choice, but it will play just as well in any other scale.

For your money you do get a quite sizeable book. Checking in at 106 pages for the PDF version it certainly isn't trying to short change the buyer! The rules are very easy to read and the layout really helps with learning the system. There is nothing here that many gamers haven't already seen before, so complexity is definitely not an issue. There are numerous examples in this version, so they've learned their lessons well and these are of immense help to the gamer. I would go so far to say that if you just went through the book and only read the examples of play you would probably get a good idea of how the system works.

The rules are written in an easy to understand style. Not quite as old fashioned/folksy as Black Powder/Hail Caesar, but it's obvious that these guys are gamers and are talking to gamers, so don't expect any type of SPI case by case



rulings in the book. My biggest complaint is that the drop shadow on some pages and objects on the examples of play have a lot of bleed/fuzziness to them. I'm not sure if was just that they were trying to be too clever, too artistic, or it didn't come out right in the end, but in future versions it needs to be dropped. It doesn't detract from the ideas that are presented, but it's just one of those little annoying things that gets to you after awhile.

The other annoying little thing is that yes, another set of rules that focuses on Normandy for the orders of battle that come with the rules. No, there's no Russians, North Africa, early war French, but there are Americans, Germans, and British orders of battle in this set of rules. I realize that there was a lot of fighting in the Normandy area and it was one of the few times in 1944-5 where German units were close to their actual TO&E strength, but what if you wanted these rules to play early Eastern Front with your Germans and Russians? Yup, you're in trouble. You'll need to buy one of the scenario books (only a few have been converted to the IABSM3 format), so there will be an additional cost to those gamers who don't want to play Normandy battles. Again, I don't understand why rules designers can't include just generic OBs for other nations' units so that gamers can at least use the rules once they've bought them instead of having to wait for additional supplements or purchase extra products.

OK, on to the rules themselves and an analysis of the systems that they use. IASBM is a card driven game with basically one card put into a deck per platoon along with one card per Big Man. If you're familiar with any of the

TFL rules they use a concept called Big Men where one figure can activate a number of units when their card is drawn or the unit can activate when its own card is drawn. This essentially gives the player/side two chances to get their units activated during a turn. Big Men can get units to move, direct fire, remove Shock points (another central theme to the rules-explained later), and should be seen as the heroes of WW2 movies that you often see in film! Additional cards can be added per scenario for armor platoons, forward observers, anti-tank units, human waves, and much, much more. Gamers can tailor certain cards to scenario objectives or to represent a higher quality force, so there is basically no limit to what can be done with scenarios.

Basically, cards are drawn until you hit a Tea Break card, which ends the turn. Our group uses two of these cards, so when the second Tea Break card is drawn that ends the turn. The drawing of the first one tends to provide some anxiety for the players to get as much done as possible as they know the end of the turn could be just around the corner!

Another concept you see in several TFL rules is Blinds. Blinds are markers (usually 3-4 inch ovals) that mark where a unit or dummy unit may be on the board. It's a simple and very effective way to simulate hidden movement without a lot of record keeping. There is a card for the Blinds and the spotting rules, while pretty thorough, are easy to use. We've found that the Blinds add greatly to the game without taking up any extra time.

Firing is pretty straightforward, with each unit rolling a number of dice corresponding to how many actions they wish to use for firing, the cover of the enemy unit, what weapons they're using, etc., then roll on a table checking it against the three range bands. This produces a number result along with possible pin or suppression effects. The firer then rolls a number of D6s equal to (cont. on p.22)



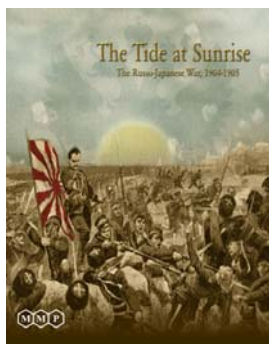


If you're looking for interesting games on unusual topics, then *The Tide at Sunrise* from MMP will definitely suit you. The game covers the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, from the initial Japanese incursions to where Russian reinforcements have built up to a point that there will probably be a massive battle towards the end of the game near Mukden as it was historically.

In terms of components you get a beautiful 22 x 34 map with several of the necessary tables and record tracks in the unused corners of the map. The counters are also well done, with graphics of infantry, artillery, and cavalry for the combat units along with well drawn ships for the ship counters. If you've seen any of the counters for the Avalanche Press naval series of games then these will compare favorably to those. The rules are in full color with several examples, so again, MMP has produced a quality product and the last several games I have purchased from them have been at this high level.

The one thing that was truly baffling, however, is that you get 40+ beautiful ship counters, markers for maneuver, hits, spotting, etc., but there were no naval rules in the game! Yes, I was as amazed as I'm sure a lot of gamers were when they flipped through the rules trying to figure out what to do with the ships and assorted accompanying counters. MMP did release an optional set of naval rules, but I cannot ever recall seeing anything like this in the 35+ years I've been in the hobby.

The rules are pretty standard in terms of movement and combat, although the combat



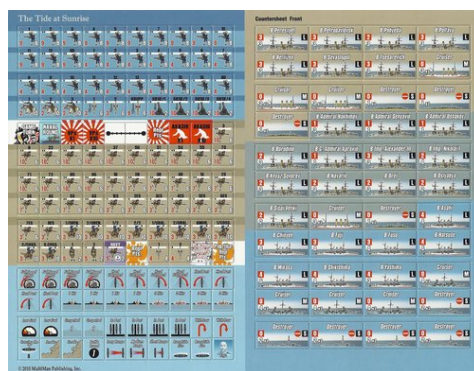
results table can be bloody at times. The sequence of play is pretty easy to understand and gamers should be able to set up a game pretty quickly. The first turn or two will take some getting use to, especially the replacement/reinforcement phase, but after that the turns fly by.

In the basic game the siege of Port Arthur and the naval rules are done with a few dice rolls at the beginning of the turn. This will determine if the Russian fleet sorties, how many transport points the Japanese can spend that turn to bring in reinforcements, and where the Japanese can land or ship their forces. If you play with the optional naval rules then you actually fight a fleet battle, which may add or subtract from the Japanese victory point total. My advice is that for the first game or two use the simplified/abstract naval system as using the optional naval system will add at least another hour to the length of time it takes to play the game.

In my opinion the crux of the game is the use of reinforcement points (for the Russians) or transport points (for the Japanese). In both cases this determines what units will be able to come into the game as reinforcements. You also need to set aside points for units that become disrupted (basically having lost a step) to bring them back up to full strength. This can be a real balancing act and will probably take a few plays to get it right. The Russians have some tough choices on the

first few turns in that they need to set aside points for the Port Arthur area as once it gets cut off you cannot allocate any replacements to units there. Each unit has a cost printed on a table on the map, so bringing in two brigades instead of a division will be one of the choices that needs to be made each turn.

In the first turn the Japanese begin with a short blitzkrieg against the Russian defenders, followed by on the second turn cutting off Port Arthur from the main rail line. From there it becomes a race to see



if the Japanese can take Port Arthur and hold off the Russian forces that are shipping in via Siberia and the Far East. Both sides have so many options in terms of where to defend, what types of units should be brought in, etc., that the game should have very good replay value. I've played face to face once and solitaire twice, with both games going around just over three hours, so it's ideal for a one night gaming session.

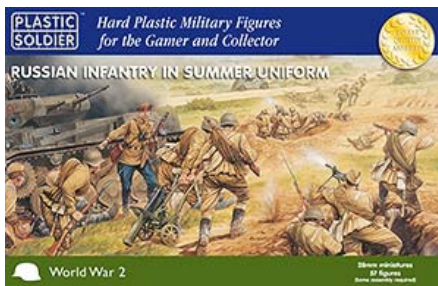
Overall, this is a pretty good game on an unusual topic. Even if you know nothing about the period it is pretty easy to get into and see what is going on with the era and the system itself. The rules are pretty basic, there are some interesting concepts, and by adding in the optional naval rules you can add more detail and complexity. For a 3-4 hour two player game it is surprisingly fast playing and there's not much down time. I think MMP did a good job here, but the missing naval rules is still a mystery to me on how that happened. Still, try this game if you get a chance.





# Plastic Soldier Company 28mm Russians

# Miniatures Review



When we decided to get back into WW2 skirmish gaming with IABSM3, we were looking for a new period as the 1944-5 U.S. vs. Germans was getting a little stale. Since I still had a load of 1/48th early war German armor the most obvious opponent would be 1941-2 Russians. I looked around for deals on 28mm Russian WW2 figs and while there are quite a few available, the cost to do several platoons with heavy weapons would be prohibitive.

I then came across some threads on TMP for some new 15mm plastic kits/figs so I went to the Plastic Soldier Company site. Not only do they have an ever growing line of 15mm plastics, they have several offerings in 28mm. I saw that they had three Russian boxed sets; infantry, heavy weapons, and anti-tank guns. I ordered the anti-tank gun set and decided I would try this small set before buying any of the others.

The anti-tank boxed set is very interesting in that you get a variety of parts to make either two 45mm anti-tank guns or two 76mm infantry guns. The set also comes with eight crew in a variety of poses. The figures are hard plastic, sculpted reasonably well with average faces, and need very little assembly. The guns were quick to put together although I had to do an online search for some 45mm AT gun images to determine where one of the parts actually went as the instructions were a bit unclear.

All in all, it was a very good little boxed set that produced two good looking 45mm At guns with eight crew. The figures and guns painted up quickly, so this whetted my appetite to try some of their other offerings.



The next set I ordered was the Russian infantry boxed set. You get 57 hard plastic miniatures on several sprues. There is a wide assortment of officers, infantry in helmets, infantry in soft hats, figures with SMGs, and several LMG teams. As with the 45mm AT gun set, the assembly required for most of the figures is minimal, with a few optional heads, rifle poses, etc., that have to be glued to various figures. These are in no way, shape, or form similar to the Victrix plastic figures where it could take 15-20 minutes per figure, but some figures might only need a head glued on while others need the arms attached.

You do get three LMGs with one figure firing and one loading, plus you get



the same figures standing up carrying the weapon/ammo, which was a nice touch. The figures are carrying the standard Russian "sack of stuff" rather than a backpack that most countries had and a few have blanket rolls. All figures have belts and canteens, but beyond that the equipment is kept to a minimum, which in my opinion makes these figures very easy to paint up.

As with most plastic boxed sets in any scale you do get some weird poses or figures that you probably won't use, but there are enough of them to make several squads anyway, so it's not as if these poses will prevent you from quickly crating a platoon of 40-50 men. Overall I thought that these figs were great



bang for the buck and painted up quickly. Not as detailed or impressive as comparable metal figs, but they look great on the tabletop.

Finally, I bought the Russian heavy weapons boxed set. This set has a wide variety of things in it that feature two anti-tank rifles, two HMGs, two 50mm mortars, and two 81mm mortars. As with the LMGs in the infantry set, the HMGs and ATRs come with firing and travelling figures, which is naturally a great idea for skirmish games.

The HMGs are a bit fiddly to assemble, but as with the other boxed sets there is nothing here that will take longer than a few minutes. There is a wide variety of crew poses that can be used with most of the weapons.

Overall, there isn't too much to complain about. The sculpting on the faces, inability to exchange arms/weapons, and lack of "personality" type figures are nuisances, but they don't detract from the overall value. So, for basically \$80-85 (depending upon where you buy these) I was able to build two 45mm AT guns w/ crews, two HMGs w/crews, two 50mm mortars w/crews, two 81mm mortars w/ crews, two ATR teams, plus about five infantry squads with some leftover figs. Not too bad!





## BKC2: Arnhem Area

## Battle Report

One of the complaints we sometimes get in our group is that we don't focus on infantry during our WW2 BKC2 battles. Mark set out to remedy this by setting up a scenario that would not only focus on the infantry, but one side would have no vehicles whatsoever!

The setting was in the Arnhem area during Operation Market Garden. A British para battalion has seized a village, but German forces control the village on the other side of the board. A second British para battalion would be coming on in a randomly determined area and try to seize control of the second village. The Germans started with an understrength infantry battalion holding one of the villages

and inexperienced forces. The Germans would definitely have the edge in numbers, mobility, and being able to determine where they would attack. The British paras had the huge advantage of being in good defensive positions on one end of the board. However, they would have to attack across some open ground to take the second village.

The game started out well for the British as the second para battalion moved onto the board quickly and towards the village, taking up shelter in a large wooded area. The Germans moved on some infantry and started slowly moving towards the woods towards the British held village. The Germans also brought up some infantry guns and positioned them to support the attack towards the woods. Seeing the numbers coming at the woods, the British pulled back into the town and hunkered down, waiting for the attack.

Here's where things started to fall apart for the British attack on the second village. There was a series of command rolls that were failed by the British paras when they tried to launch a major assault. Instead of the entire battalion plus its support units going in at the same time, the units went in piecemeal

and were hit hard by the German defenders. After a few turns the British were right back where they started.

On the other side of the board the Germans moved into the woods and began to engage the paras. Several fire-fights erupted on the outskirts of the village, but for the time being the British were holding on pretty easily.

Then the Germans brought on their mech forces and decided to attack the British held village. The panzergrenadiers rolled up and dismounted to begin their attack while the Stugs and other armor set up support positions. The British began shifting around their reserves to meet this new threat. Two of the 6lb. AT guns began to engage the German armor as the Germans began to set up their attack. This prompted the other British para battalion to try a second attack on the German held town. (cont. on p.7)

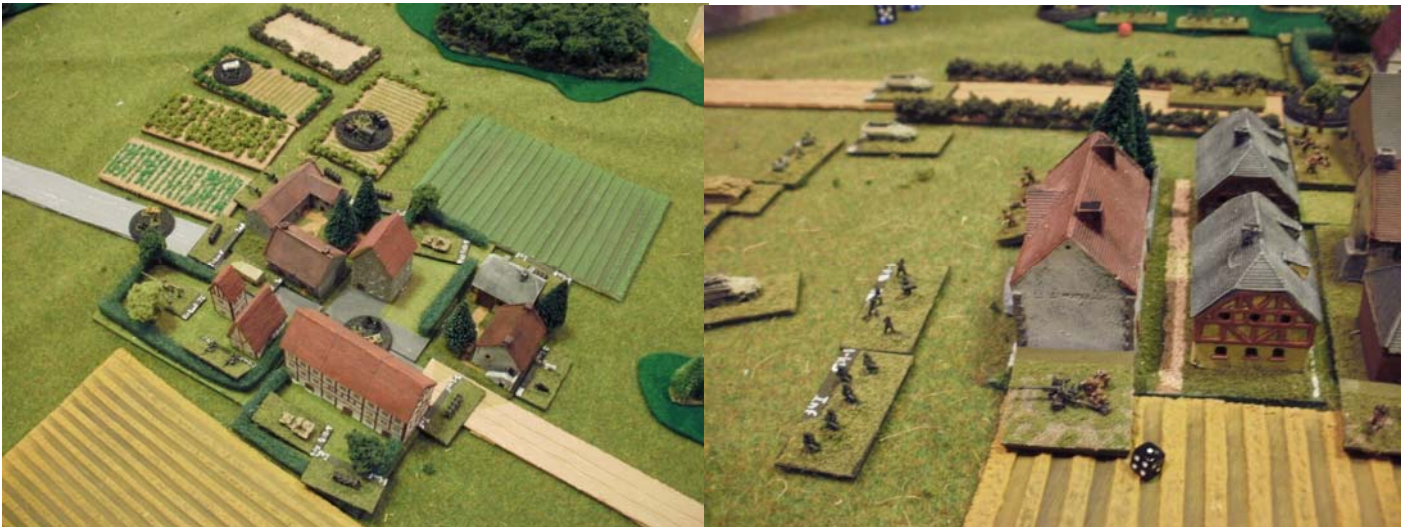


and they would have some mechanized forces coming on later.

The British paras were rated as very good troops with an above average command rating. The Germans, however, were a mixed lot, consisting of some SS troops, but also a lot of training battalions







The British once again tried to emerge from the woods and were met by an artillery barrage and the fire from the German defenders. The attack quickly bogged down as the British command rolls failed several times with the flanking forces. The British paras, however, continued the attack and actually started to make some headway.

On the other side of the board, the British had knocked out some of the German armor and scores some successes on the panzergrenadiers. However, the British were slowly being cut down and had to abandon a section of the village. Three of the four British AT guns were knocked out, but the Germans failed several command rolls at crucial times, saving the British defenders from coordinated at-

tacks. The Germans finally got into some close combat and cleared the approaches to the village and the outer section of buildings, but at a heavy cost.

Back to the other side where the British paras, despite heavy odds, were now on the outskirts of the village and pushing to actually take it from the Germans. There were a series of desperate attacks by both sides with some critical die rolls that were watched with interest by all players, which shows you how important they were in the game! In the end the Germans held onto the village and the British paras fell back once again. Both sides were nearing the 50% loss threshold and had been worn down by the fighting.

The Germans were gaining the upper hand in the other village as well. They

had cleared two sides of the village and were making moves to bring overwhelming firepower down on the remaining defenders. The British moved to consolidate positions as they still held half of the village, but the end was in sight. With half of the village now in German hands and with no hope of seizing the other village the game was declared a German victory.

A great scenario with lots of action, that proves you don't need a lot of armor to have fun with WW2 gaming. Also, keeping the forces fairly small makes everyone focus on what they have, learn the rules for infantry combat, and players are less likely to "throw away" units. It was so much fun that we are now thinking of doing a Market Garden campaign!



# Red Dragon/Green Crescent

## Game Review

I have always had a love-hate relationship with magazine wargames. They always sound so appealing in the ads, but once they arrive, get set up and played, they usually end up going on Ebay or in the trade pile. That's usually because they are under-developed, there's not much time for play-

testing, and because of the limitations on counters/maps, things that the game needs have a tendency to get left out. Over the last ten years I've probably purchased well over thirty magazine games and have kept only a handful. One of those I did keep was a modern warfare offering called Red Dragon Rising. Despite the garish colors of the map and a few rules problems, it was a fun game that had fantastic replay value. I was pleasantly surprised that there would be a newer version that would include the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf areas called Red Dragon/Green Crescent that would be the first issue in a new magazine/game series called Modern War.

### Overview

Red Dragon/Green Crescent (RDGC) is a theater level game focusing on naval and air operations from the Persian Gulf to the Western Pacific. The game assumes an attack by the People's Republic of China (PRC) along with Pakistan and Iran (depending upon scenario) on the United States and its allies. There are ground units, but they are usually marine brigades, special forces, etc., that would be used to seize control of islands or port areas. Major ground combat, such as a second Korean War, is handled abstractly. The players are in the role of commanding a wide variety of naval and air assets, from carriers to surface action groups to squadrons of aircraft across vast expanses of the world's seas. The game features an interesting sequence



of play that focuses on random events and the "Op" or Operations, where players get to choose from a list of actions. This definitely enhances the replay value of the game and produces enough chaos where the players need to not only react to their opponent's moves, but to a constantly changing global situation.

### Components

The single map of East Asia that was in Red Dragon has been expanded to two maps with the second map reaching all the way to the Persian Gulf. Also, the Red Dragon map has been turned ninety degrees to fit both maps together. The color choices for the map are interesting, but they work and the sea areas, islands, etc., are clearly marked. I do take issue with the large holding boxes (could have been used for random event listings), the colors used for the Op lists (kind of annoying to read), and the set up listings again should have been replaced by the random event listings. Random Events and Ops drive the game, so they should have been clearly listed on the map if there was room. Failing that, why not use the extra room for a turn track and/or victory point track? Also, the stacking numbers for some island groups are missing and there's a box with what the numbers on the counters mean, but it looks like there was space for a counter graphic to go in the middle, but there's nothing there.



The counters are well done, with units representing CVs, groups of surface ships, squadrons of aircraft, and ground forces that would be used in this setting. My set of counters was difficult to punch and in the end I ended up using an X-Acto knife to cut the strips, then clipped them. Each

counter is rated for anti-ground, anti-ship, ASW, and anti-air with nice silhouettes for the aircraft. A large number of counters have 2016 or 2021 listed on the backs of the counters and they are used for the future scenarios set in those years. My only complaint with the counters is that some shouldn't be in there such as the UK CVL (there are no British light carriers left) and Australian F-111 (they're now in reserve). Also, where are the Saudi MRCA Tornados, US F-22s, and Australian F-18s? There's actually quite a few questions about the orders of battle, but for game purposes the counters supplied work.



Now we get to the rules. If you've played Red Dragon then getting into RDGC will be pretty easy. There are some new Ops, a variety of different scenarios for the Persian Gulf, India-Pakistani wars, Indian Ocean campaigns, and then the combined campaign. About 30 minutes of reading will get you up to speed, then you can set up units and begin play. If you're new to the system, I think you could be in trouble. The rules are pretty haphazard and spread out all over the place. Many of them are in the Ops or random events explanations, so you'll need to look through quite a few at times to figure out what's going on for things like special forces, mines, long-range intercepts, etc. Some examples of play would really help here such as a first turn run through and this game is crying out for professionally done set-up cards for the scenarios as well as a reference card for combat/special situations.

### Game Play

Probably the greatest praise for wargame designers is saying that their game works, and in this case it is true. RDGC works...as a game, not as a simulation of modern combat. Each turn begins with the player rolling to see if there is a random event. On a 1 or a 2 the player rolls





fleet in from another to conduct a joint operation against enemy forces during that turn with air-strikes coming in from Okinawa or another base you are sadly mistaken. Likewise, if you have a carrier that's damaged and spends two turns moving to a base and one turn getting repaired, all of your forces in the theater sit around for three turns doing nothing. You can argue that players

again and consults the event listings for the effect. These range from countries dropping out of the war, reinforcements needing to be sent elsewhere, revolts, and much more. This is one of the strong points in the game that keeps players guessing and increases the replay value of the game. Then players choose an Op from the list as their action for the turn. Ops can be moving a group of units from a land base out to sea, long range strikes by TU-22s or B-2s, air attacks on enemy bases, calling for reinforcements, hyper war chit draws, and much, much more. In fact, this new version has added even more Op actions than the original Red Dragon Rising so that choosing one can be difficult. Movement and combat are done by areas with forces being able to usually move one area per Op. This is also one of them main challenges for players in that they can only choose one Op per turn. You have so many units, tasks, needs, etc., that choosing just one is difficult to say the least.

I think at this point I need to clarify what I think is one of the huge problems with the game in terms of simulating modern warfare. The problem is being able to only choose one Op per turn. That's right. If you are expecting to move a Japanese fleet into a sea area while moving a US

that, but then that means a damaged carrier just sits around in the same sea area waiting to be finished off? This problem becomes even more apparent when playing the combined game. Some forces literally just sit in the same sea area for the entire game as you get only one Op per side (or one Op per map in the combined game). Also, it looks weird that the U.S. can't move forces around the globe all at the same time. I've had games where carrier battle groups haven't moved the entire game as there were too many other pressing needs for the ops during my turn. My guess is that in real life the U.S. and its allies could probably do ten Ops per turn every turn (however, it wouldn't be much of a game), but the one Op that you do get creates some unusual situations.

Fortunately, the one Op per turn works on the game level. It drives the decision making process and constantly forces both players to reassess their actions. Setting up a combined fleet operation or amphibious assault can take several Ops,

so you might need to give up the initiative somewhere else on the board. There are a bewildering array of Op choices, which again, gives the game tremen-



dous replay value. Combat is done by having each player match up their units and rolling a D6, needing the listed number or under for each strength. Combat is simultaneous, quick, and deadly. Units die off in large numbers and its not uncommon in some games to see little left of the Taiwanese and Chinese forces, with quite a few units from other nations in the dead pile.



## Scenarios & Campaigns

Having played all of the various scenarios and campaigns, I thought it would be of interest to other gamers to list my thoughts on each. There are three force levels for each scenario or campaign; Current, 2016, and 2021.

**Persian Gulf:** This would be a good training scenario as there are no random events and it is only ten Ops long. The Iranians only chance is to get hot with the dice as they are hopelessly outclassed, particularly in the Current scenario.

**India-Pakistani:** Again, probably good for training scenarios or teaching new players the system. The Pakistanis are outclassed in the air and at sea, even with the 2021 force levels. Their only chance as with the above scenario is to get some good dice rolls and hope for the best.

**Red Dragon Rising:** In my opinion this is the best game in the package. The action starts with a massive pre-game Chinese strike on Taiwan and things go fast and furious from there. The Chinese side has



## Red Dragon/Green Crescent (cont.)

## Game Review

several paths to victory, so different options can be tried out and each Op can mean victory or defeat.

**Green Crescent campaign:** This campaign covers the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. Because of logistical constraints the Chinese can never have more than eight units total on this map. The campaign basically comes down to how fast can the Chinese player get the Iranians and Pakistanis on their side. If they can't (and I had several games where they did nothing) then the U.S. side will simply overwhelm any opposition on the Indian Ocean map. The scenarios and campaign on this map are hard to judge as so much depends on getting the right random events. At times it feels like the system is going beyond its limits as the Chinese side only seems to have a chance if certain things break their way.

**Red Dragon/Green Crescent campaign:** This actually qualifies as a two-map "mini-monster" as there are a lot of units on the table. Unfortunately, this campaign has the same problems that the Green Crescent campaign has, except now it's complicated by the fact that each side only gets one Op per turn per map for use across two maps with many, many



### Replay Value

Simply put, off the charts. With the large number of random events, multiple Ops to choose from, and several paths to victory for the Chinese player, this is a game that can be played over and over. One of my friends and I once did three games in just under three hours! Once you know the system you can get through the turns pretty quickly. Not only that, certain events can end the game well short of the 30 Op limit. I've played about a dozen games of Red Dragon Rising along with several of the others in the combined game and there's been numerous surprises along the way, ranging from Taiwan dropping out on the first two turns (makes things really difficult for the U.S. player) to a massive Russian-Japanese sea battle that saw both fleets get cut down to almost nothing. The great thing about RDGC is that you never know what's just around the corner.

### Summary

Despite some small issues with components and the rules, this game is worth playing. The Red Dragon side of the

game is what you're spending the money for and it is a very good game. Both sides have a ton of options, there's a lot of action, and if things go really wrong you can quickly set it up and play it again. We've had some tremendous battles and a lot of fun along the way. However, when you add in the second map and units, I'm not sure what it is adding to the overall game. Because of the op limitations expressed above, you simply have too many units that need to do too many things, but the players are limited to doing just one thing per turn. Something is not right here and while it succeeds as a game, I'm not sure that it succeeds as an accurate portrayal of modern naval and air combat. I'm sure many players are going to think at some point, "So, I'm moving some heavy U.S. ground units from the holding box in a convoy to help Taiwan, so for the next several turns everything else I own across that map has to sit still?" Yes, it does and that is a problem that may be too high of



a hurdle for some gamers to get over. Again, however, RDGC succeeds in its game play. The random events, chaotic nature of combat, and large number of choices through Ops and various units that you can use each turn makes this into a challenging game. I think more effort, development, and playtesting needed to go into the combined game as there are a number of issues for the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf map. Overall, a good, but not great start for Modern War magazine.



units! In the end it seems like you're playing the Red Dragon Rising scenario with a bunch of nice looking units sitting around on another map.





Fireforge Games is a relatively new entrant into the plastic miniatures arena. Their first releases have focused on mounted knights and sergeants with promises of more releases that will deal with foot troops. With all of the current releases by Warlord, Perrys, Wargames

era, so I decided to do a unit of Hospitallers. After reading up on the subject the flowing cloaks and armor would do nicely for a Hospitaller force in the all black clothing worn during the Crusades.

The horses come as a four piece affair with two separate halves, a head, and a tail. This gives some flexibility in the poses and on the positive side all of the horses in the unit won't look the same as with some manufacturers. If you have the time there are some opportunities for kit bashing to make some unique poses if you so desire. The horses come with full barding, although a few of the horse heads have no barding, which again gives some variety to the finished unit.



The figures themselves also offer a variety of helmets and weapons. They are simple figures, with a torso, separate heads, one separate arm with a weapon, heads, and shields. You will actually spend more time cutting them from the sprue and cleaning any excess plastic from the sprue than you will assembling them. Assembly is pretty basic and you can create several knights in no time at all. The cloaks can be a bit tricky to look right on the

ished. The horses have that same problem that most plastic figure sets have and that is it is hard to tell where the folds on the barding ends and where the actual horse begins. However, most of that is on the underside of the horse or in areas that you won't notice, so it is a small problem.

Overall, this is a very good boxed set. The figures look good, assemble quickly, and any complaints are so small that it really isn't worth discussing. I'm looking forward to more releases by this company and hope for their continued success!



Factory, Victrix, and more, you would think that there might not be much room for more plastic boxed sets, especially for an era such as medieval where there is a massive selection of metal figures.

Depending upon where you purchase the Teutonic Knights boxed set you'll probably end up paying around \$35-40. For this you get twelve mounted knights on several sprues. The knights definitely have a Teutonic flavor suited for the wars in Eastern Europe, especially with the horned helmets. However, the variety of heads and a few cuts of the knife will produce a heavily armored mounted force for most medieval settings.

I had to paint up a few units for a playtest of some forthcoming medieval rules and we had chosen the Crusades

figure, but it's just a few extra moments of your time.

There are a large variety of weapons that include swords, maces, flails, axes, and spears/lances. Coupled with the various sized shields you can create a unit that will definitely not have that "everything is the same" look. I painted the shields separately then glued them on to the finished figures.

The figures paint up quickly and look very good once fin-

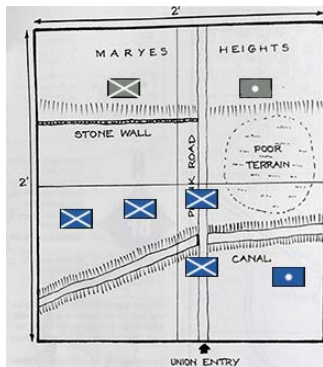




# VI Corps at Chancellorsville

# Battle Report

I was going through some of my old Battlefields magazines and found a three part Fire & fury mini-campaign focusing on Sedgewick's VI Corps at Chancellorsville. The VI Corps held the extreme flank of the army and was definitely one of the better led for-



The campaign is pretty reasonable in that only about a corps of infantry and several batteries are needed for both sides, making this an attainable project even for smaller gaming groups. It's ideal for 3-4 players and we were able to finish in two, four hour gaming sessions.



The action begins at Maryes Heights with one Confederate brigade and some artillery trying to hold back a massive tide of blue coming down the road. The objective is for the Confederates to hold on as long as possible, which for the game would take a good deal of luck! The scenario is played on a 2x2 board, so setting up and play time is just under an hour.

mations at that time of the war. VI Corps did cross the river and attack the Confederate positions in an attempt to distract or draw off forces that could be used against the main Union army. When utter disaster hit the Union army it was forced to withdraw back across the river under pressure which ended the campaign.

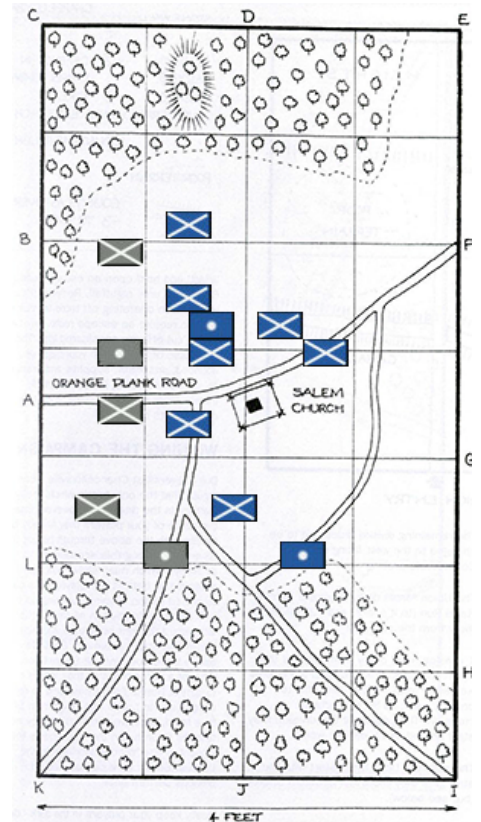
This mini-campaign was basically three scenarios in a row where the results of each one influenced the next scenario.

In our refight the Confederates held for a few turns, but were then overwhelmed. How quick the victory is, however, influenced the next battle which was at Salem Church. The Confederates had two infantry brigades deployed plus some artillery near the center of the board. Part of a division with three brigades would be entering in several turns behind them as reinforcements. The position wasn't the best for defensive purposes, but it wasn't that bad either. The Union forces would have to come down the road, then spend time deploying for the attack.

Again, time was of the essence. The Confederates were trying to hold out until nightfall if possible. The longer that they held out meant a few more turns for them to attack in the third and final scenario. The Union was pretty much right on schedule after the first battle and started their first division down the road at

the start of the game. A few hours later the second division showed up and the battle was on.

The first division drove in on the waiting Confederate forces. The Union artillery rolled great on their first few shots and forced the Confederate artillery to retreat. The first few assaults, however, did not fare as well, despite one of the Confederate brigades rolling a low on ammo result. By the end of the first few hours the Confederates were holding their position, but trouble was definitely brewing in the shape of more (cont. on p.13)





## VI Corps at Chancellorsville (cont.)

## Battle Report



(cont. from p.12) Union reinforcements coming down the road. The Confederates slowly gave ground, trying to not end up being driven from the field too early and awaiting reinforcements..

The first crisis came when after holding the church area against repeated assaults, one Union attack finally succeeded and drove the Confederate brigade holding that area back. On the other flank trying to hold off the two attacking Union brigades for several turns was finally wearing down the other Confederate brigade and it began to give ground as well. Both brigades had lost several stands and things were looking bleak when the third Union division arrived.

Just as the Union gained control of the church and the surrounding area and the Confederate brigades were down to half strength, three fresh Confederate infantry brigades with two batteries of artillery arrived to bolster the defense. They set up guarding the road exit and then pushed forward. They were immediately met by the advancing Union troops and a second full fledged battle erupted.

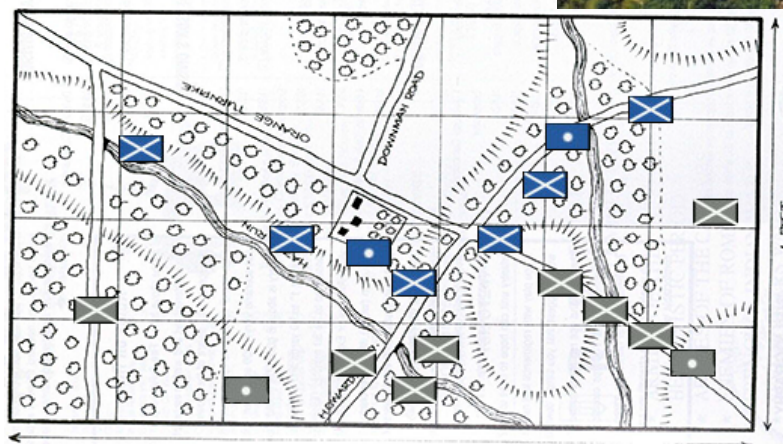
The Confederates were trying to hold out for as long as possible to give themselves more time for the third scenario, but the pressure was just too

great. The Union players did a great job of cycling fresh units forward and then massed their guns for an attack on the center. The Confederate forces did some damage, but in the end it was only a matter of time. First one brigade broke followed quickly by another. The road exit was cleared and the Union had their second victory.

The Union in this scenario did slightly better than average, which meant for the final scenario which occurred near Bank's Ford the Confederates would be pressed for time. Each side was able to choose two divisions for the final scenario. The third Union division was assumed to be guarding one of the flanks and was off board. The third Confederate division was also assumed to be off board. We quickly set up the board, put the forces out,

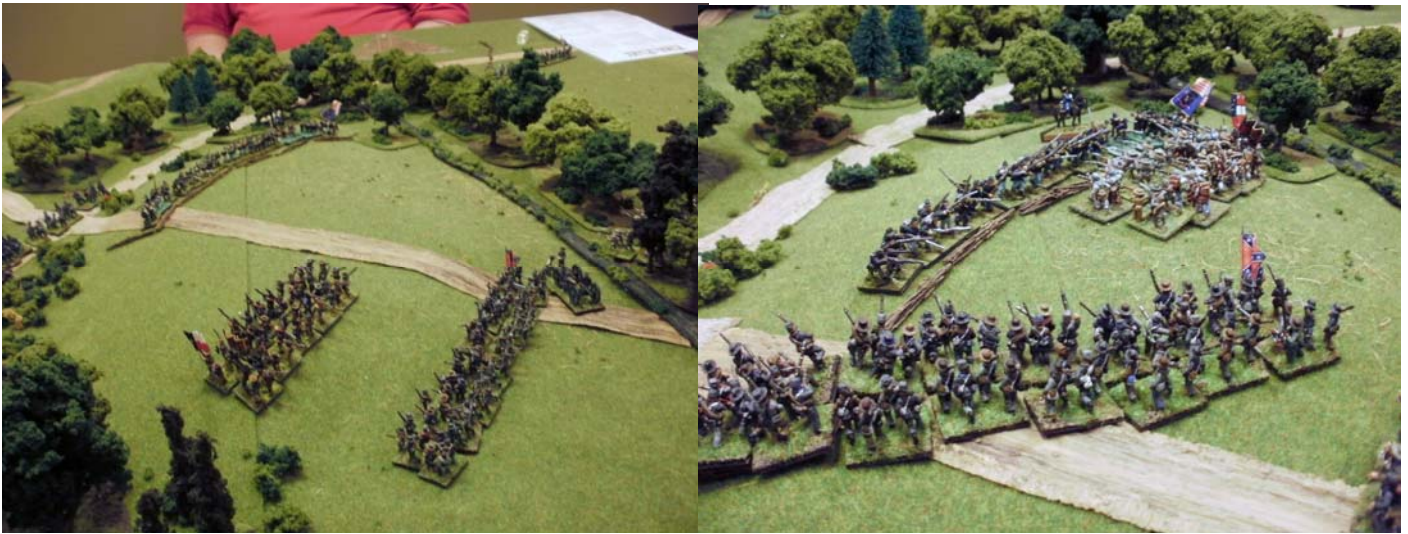
checked the OBs one more time, read the special rules for the scenario, and then started the first turn.

It was only during the approach march where the Confederate players, me included, saw how difficult this was going to be. The terrain was brutal, with the streams and roads covered by hills and forests, setting up definite avenues of



approach that the Union forces had covered well. Although the Confederates had numbers, time was against them as the game began at 3pm and darkness would fall at 8:30, ending the campaign. At the start of the game it looked like it would take the Confederate forces until 8:30 to get to the crossroads even without any enemy forces on the board! (cont. on p.14)





(cont. from p.13) The attack went in on two flanks and was immediately met by artillery fire from three batteries well positioned on the plantation in the middle of the board. The Confederate artillery was silenced for several turns in a row and was eventually forced back. The Confederate columns desperately tried to close the distance, but a series of traffic jams emerged as they tried to deploy in the rough terrain for an attack.

Two Union brigades that were positioned on the flanks moved forward for a counterattack and became engaged for several turns. In the end this helped the Confederate attack as it removed two enemy brigades that could potentially be used as reserves or fresh units for the defense in the middle of the board. With the terrain being as difficult as it was to move through, these two brigades were

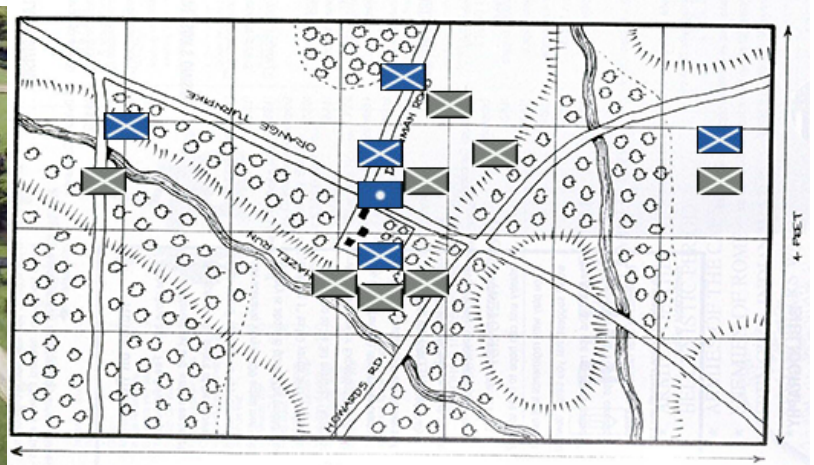
effectively taken out of the game.

Seeing that the defenders were now outnumbered the Confederates, particularly Early's division with its huge brigades, surged forward. They hit the Union brigade in the center and collapsed it after a brief battle, then surged forward to the base of the hill near the plantation. A second Confederate attack on the plantation itself was thrown back with the Southern forces taking several stand losses. A second attack in that area failed as well, then there was a series of bad command rolls that brought the entire attack on that flank to a standstill.

In the end it wasn't needed as Early's troops continued to roll forward. A desperate stand by some artillery batteries slowed the attack down for a turn, but they were then overwhelmed. The Union was now pulling troops out of the planta-

tion area and trying to reorganize the defenses. The problem was that the terrain that was holding up the attack was now preventing them from reinforcing threatened areas. One more push from Early's division saw the end for the Union position and the Confederate forces seized the crossroads and the road, cutting off the rest of the VI Corps and winning the mini-campaign.

Three battles in two nights was great! The fact that each battle influenced the next was also very well received by the group and we had a lot of fun with this. I think it also inspired us to paint more forces for this period and to dust off some older campaigns for future attempts. We also used some optional rules such as 2D6 instead of a D10 and limiting the out of ammo rules which worked out very well. All in all, a great mini-campaign!





I was asked the other day if I was going to get the new WW2 rules from Warlord Games? When I said, "Why?", there was an uncomfortable moment of silence. I fully expected statements about how it was designed by Warlord Games, the same people who produced Black Powder/Hail Caesar, it's a professionally done book, or just that it's new. That anyone would question why a gamer wouldn't want to buy the newest set of rules was never seen as a possibility. The question really should be, however, does it contain anything that you haven't seen before?

I've discussed the proliferation of rules and what I've termed the fracturing of the hobby, but now we seem to have entered into a new era. This era has at its core a solid base of gamers who will only play the newest set of rules. There's always been the gamers who have had to buy the latest things and we've all known them, but recently it has started to dictate what they and others actually play. After all Flames of War is now ancient history, correct? Time to move on. Playing a set of rules that is only a few years old is unheard of. Or how about Disposable Heroes? Who plays that set of rules anymore? Yes, it seems like it came out just yesterday, but our group got its copies about two years ago and it seems like they were produced in the 18th century! We must move forward into the gaming unknown and relish the cult of the new!

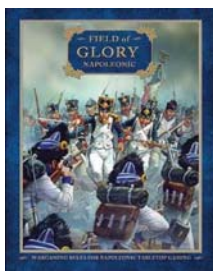
However, take a step back and look at things objectively. Yes, it's great that another company can afford to produce and put out another set of rules, but do I really need them? What is in them that is so innovative, so fresh and unique that I should put all of my other WW2 rules up on Ebay and focus on this one new set of rules? I've been in the hobby for well over three decades and have seen every kind of activation system, IGOUGO set up, modifiers for firing, etc., so what is there that could possibly be new? How many times can you reinvent gaming systems for anti-tank fire? A Sherman or Tiger is just that, both should have basically relative stats in game terms com-



pared to history and other games. Are they giving the Shermans thicker armor or better guns than Tigers? Of course not, so what is so innovative that you need these rules?

The answer of course is that they are new. The current trend in gaming is that you should only play new rules.

Any gaming system over two years old is "dead" and shouldn't be paid any attention to. If it's new they have to be good, right? Why would a company waste time, energy, and financial resources to produce a set of rules if they weren't innovative or good? Yes, that is what passes for critical thinking in the hobby today.



The same applies for other eras as well. People have tried to get me to look at Field of Glory Napoleonic, saying it revolutionizes the era and it will get you playing the period again. I'm already playing the period with Age of Eagles and most recently we did some Napoleonic skirmishing with Sharp Practice. I've played FOG and have watched a few games of FOG Ancients, so I know what their approach is. A mind numbing rulebook with a billion exceptions, modifiers, etc., based off of a set of ancient rules that owes its heritage to the old WRG sets. Some people love that kind of thing and I can tolerate it, but just because it's new or recently released doesn't mean I have to fall down on my knees and worship the authors for enlightening my Napoleonic gaming!

Has it ever occurred to anyone that there are some really, really good sets of rules that are older than one or two years? If you say yes then you probably belong to that group of gamers referred to as grognards. Yes, those people actually still play The Sword and the Flame, Fire & Fury, General de Brigade, Age of Eagles, and other relics of rules that should be entombed in museums. There's no room in this new world of gaming for those kinds of people! Cast them out! How can these other companies survive if

we all don't conform and buy every new set of rules that comes out and blindly cheer them on?

Basically, the historical gaming hobby is rapidly running out of ideas. Now that's not to say that there aren't any great miniatures (the quality and availability continue to astound me), or that the quality of rules has not improved, because they continue to impress. Rather, how many ways can you simulate a Napoleonic square at 1:20, 1:33, or 1:50 scales? How many ways can you set up a firing chart for a Sherman to shoot at a Tiger? D6? D10? D20? Or how about a novel concept of 2D6? Yes, they've all been tried before. I also play boardgames and frankly, a lot of the games that have recently come out (Combat Commander and Fighting Formations are two examples) are far more innovative than most miniatures rules I've seen lately.

Technology is definitely one of the culprits here. Companies can get rules from the concept stage to fully published in record time. Add to it the ability to get the info out to forums, blogs, web pages, etc., in a few minutes and the gamer faces an unrelenting barrage of new rules, figures, terrain, and accessories. While this is great for the gamer I think that sometimes gamers need to step back and reassess things. Are the rules any good? Do you really need those new French fusiliers even though you have 500 unpainted ones sitting on a shelf? How many times will you use that \$250 model of the Alamo? Instead, everyone jumps right in and declares whatever set of rules or figure lines that have just come out the next greatest thing for the hobby.

Recently a gamer on TMP was bemoaning the fact that there weren't enough games like Flames of War that had dedicated web sites, forums, and he could go anywhere in the country and find opponents. Well, guess what? It's only going to get worse! Rule sets are coming out faster than ever and the odds of you finding someone in your same town/city, let alone the country who plays the same set of rules you have is getting slimmer by the moment. As for me, I'm back to painting units for Fire & Fury and The Sword and the Flame!



# Field Commander: Rommel

# Game Review

When you're a boardgamer as I am it can be tough to find opponents at times, so you spend a lot of time playing games solitaire. Since I'm also a miniatures gamer I usually have a board game set up somewhere for when I need a break from painting figures. Although

there have been a number of solitaire board wargames over the years, they usually fall into two categories. The first is that they are so simple that they end up as a 50/50 dice fest that just blows an hour of your time. The second, for games like Victory Games' Carrier is that they are so complex that you have to devote a part of your life to learning how to play them!

Dan Verssen Games has a number of solitaire offerings, so I had the chance to play two of them recently. The first is Field Commander: Rommel, which is part of the Field Commander series of



that you can set up one of the campaigns, briefly skim through the rules, then play a sample turn to get the hang of things. In this way you can quickly figure out how the system works and then you're off and running. The one thing that I've found about playing solitaire specific games is that it is usually about repetition. You do the same things over and over again as these types of games usually have a "system" to simulate an opponent. Once you figure that out the turns can go by pretty fast.

FC Rommel follows such a system. The player refits German units, conducts battles, then acquires supply, then brings on reinforcements. After that the player conducts the Allied side of the turn which follows a similar sequence, then checks the victory conditions.

Supply in this game is everything and we're not talking supply lines as in most games. Supply here refers to the ability to have units move more than one area, refit damaged units, purchase additional battle plans, and bring in reinforcement and/or units back from the dead pile. The Germans get their supplies in several ways while the Allies obtain theirs through rolls on a table that can result in supplies and/or additional units.

The movement system is by area and more than likely units will not be moving long distances. The battle system is where you get to see the solitaire system for this game at work. Both sides get a variable number of what are called battle plans. These consists of airstrikes, AT guns, artillery, etc., and are basically extra die rolls to inflict damage on enemy units, take away hits, offset other plans, and more. They cost anywhere from 1-4 points each per plan, so the player needs to choose carefully while the Allies plans are randomly drawn. Combat is then done by a series of die rolls which can be modified by certain battle plans. Units can take two hits before being eliminated

and combat lasts for one round unless certain battle plans are selected.

In my experience combat is pretty bloody, especially when you are dealing with multiple units in the same area or each side gets a large number of battle plans. Surviving units then get to draw chits for experience, which increases their attack and defense strengths, or gives their side extra battle plans. Several elite units in one area for combat can inflict some serious damage on an enemy force.

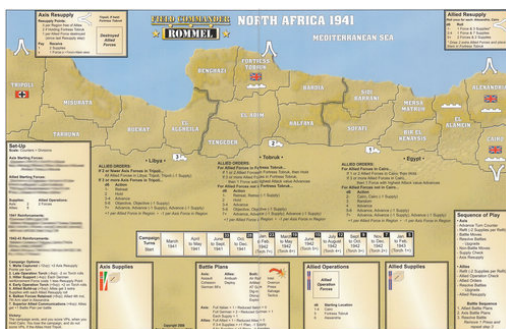
Naturally, the Allies, being played by the system, have to have some kind of artificial intelligence for movement.

Each turn an operations chit is drawn and either an operation (think of an offensive) is launched or more units get added to the pool for a future operation. Then, units are designed to either stay in areas to defend them or they must move forward. In my view, this is the weak link in the game system and can create

some suicidal attacks by the Allies at times and units can move in a haphazard way. Still, it works for a solitaire game and realistically speaking, there's only so many ways that you can do this.

The campaigns are difficult to win and the system is unrelenting in that at least in my plays Allied units continue to reappear from the dead pile and it gets to a point where you can see the Germans have no chance. At times it's hard to tell if you're playing the system or the system is playing you. There are some novel concepts in this game such as the battle system, but the Allied movement and randomness of the reinforcements/supplies for the Allies keeps the game moving up and down in wild swings at times.

Overall, this is a solitaire game that delivers several hours of good gameplay. With three campaigns there is some variety and the combat system definitely adds another level of randomness to the game. I'm not sure if it will see a lot of plays in the future for me, but it is one of the better solitaire games that I own.



games. This game features three of Rommel's campaigns, from France 1940 to defending Normandy in 1944 from the Allied invasion.

Inside the box you get three small maps, a rule book, and counters for all three games. The rules are easier to comprehend than most solitaire games of this scale and the maps are well done. I will admit that I am not a fan of the counters, however. All of them, Germans, British, French, and U.S. are all done in white. There are national colors on the side of the counter, but I found this to be annoying during play.

The good thing about this game is



I was always a fan of GMT's Thunderbolt/Apache Leader, which was a solitaire system of modern combat where the player commanded a force of AH-64s and A-10s. The game was very challenging and took some time to get right as the rules weren't the easiest to navigate. I eventually sold it as it seemed I had played the game out and had exhausted the randomness that can sometimes make solitaire games fun.

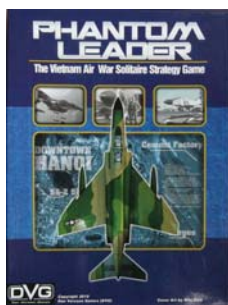
Phantom Leader is one of a series of games that is very similar to Thunderbolt/Apache Leader. Published by Dan Versen Games, the Leader series are solitaire games based off of several historical and near-future conflicts. Phantom Leader focuses on the air campaigns over Vietnam in the late 60s and early 70s.



The components are pretty good, with several campaign cards for USN and USAF forces for operations such as Rolling Thunder. There is also a tactical display card where the target is set, plus room for

the defenders and attacking aircraft that is divided up into zones that regulate movement during combat. The cards are broken down into three types; target cards which show an illustration of the target, types of defenses, victory points, etc., plus event cards and aircraft cards. The cards are well done and you get a wide variety of aircraft to conduct the campaigns with. There are also numerous counters for keeping track of things during games, including aircraft counters, armament, campaign status, etc. Finally, there is a color rule book that is fairly easy to use and fortunately it includes a sample turn of play which is very helpful.

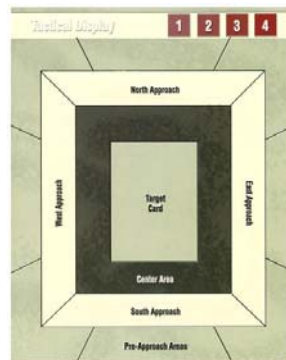
As I've mentioned before when reviewing solitaire games is that it seems easier to just get one set up and work through the sequence of play to figure out the



system. Solitaire games usually feature a lot of repetition, so once you figure out how things work the turns go by pretty fast. Thankfully, the rule book was written in just this kind of format, so the best option is to follow the steps in the rules while playing your first game.

You first start by choosing a campaign and the length of the campaign. This can be as short as four days (playable in a few hours) to long campaigns that could take you weeks to play out. You select the campaign map, choose your aircraft and pilot quality, then you can also enter this information on a log sheet to keep track of your squadron's progress through the campaign. I use the term squadron loosely as you get to choose from a variety of aircraft. It's not unusual to have several F-4s, some A-7s, and maybe a few A-4s as your campaign force.

Next you select a random target card and place the defenders, which are randomly drawn. These can consist of everything from infantry units all the way up to SA-2 sites. Then comes the fun part which is arming your aircraft and there are counters for AIM-7s, CBU, guided weapons, AGM-45s, and more. The aircraft are then positioned on the tactical display and the combat phase is then ready to begin. You also draw three event cards for each mission that can affect the defenses, the coordination of your attack,

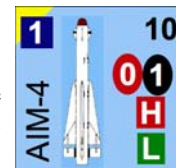


and more. One is drawn after takeoff, one while over the target, and then a final card when egressing back home.

As with any solitaire game combat is often the most complicated phase of the game and this applies for Phantom Leader. It's not too difficult, but you must go through a number of steps for air combat, defenders firing, moving closer to the target, suppression, and then dropping ordnance. This is also definitely where the randomness of solitaire games can bite you. Several good rolls by the NVA defenders and you may as well start your campaign all over again!

After combat pilots accumulate stress, the player gets victory points, pilots can go up in experience, and you prepare for the next mission. Phantom Leader does a good job in having the player manage their assets, assigning certain aircraft to missions, and arming aircraft for the variety of missions.

Overall, this is far superior to most solitaire games in that the players get a lot of choices in how to perform their missions. There is a wide variety of targets, length of campaigns, and the event cards give the game very high replay value which means that the solitaire player can keep coming back to this game time and time again. There is a lot of randomness and at times you don't feel like you're in control of anything, but this is better than most solitaire games.



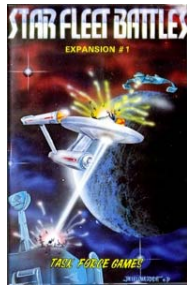


# Memoirs of a Miniatures & Board Wargamer Pt. 20

At some point in every gamer's life you will probably be asked to participate in a "big" game. By that I mean more than five or six players, double to triple the number of figures that you regularly would use, and it generally takes some planning as well as preparation to pull the game off. Over the last three and a half decades I've been involved with a number of these "big" games. Some have been spectacular successes while others turned into dismal failures. The importance, however, regardless if they were good or not, is that the memories of these types of games seem to live forever.

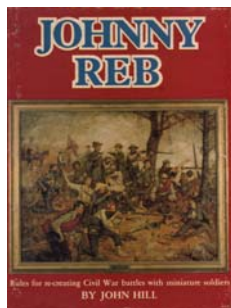
If you were gaming back in the early 80s then you certainly know about Starfleet Battles. Not only did it consume all of our gaming time for several years, but I made a lot of friends and had some great memories. Yes, with all of the supplements it became a nightmare, but we did manage to pull off several campaigns. In one of the biggest battles that I ever saw, we had 36 Kzinti ships go up against 40+ Klingon ships and we used miniatures! We put together enough maps for a 6x10 board, got out all the ship control sheets, organized sides, and got down to playing.

We had about ten players as I remember and when both forces got into the middle of the board it was pure chaos. All I recall is after eight hours of playing time both sides withdrew with heavy losses. It was around 3AM when we quit and then we went out to get something to eat afterwards. It was a huge battle, there were lots of rules questions, and it took a long time to prepare and play, but it was one of the best things I will remember about the game.



Quite a few of us loved GW's Space Hulk and when it first came out we played the hell out of it. At one of the only gaming conventions that we've had here in SLC, Utah, I ran (with help) a monster sized Space Hulk game. Using map boards from six sets of games we formed a giant ship and then set out a few hundred painted miniatures for a series of battles that ran for a few days. The game played pretty fast, even at this scale and a good time was had by all. I do remember that it took forever to get the miniatures painted and trying to coordinate the painting to be done in time for the con almost gave me a heart attack!

Back in the 80s as well I participated in a massive Johnny Reb game of Antietam. Even though we broke it apart into three different battles it was still a massive undertaking. Each battle would be on a 5x8 and events would influence the other battles where necessary. Although we had a lot of 15mm ACW figs, we were short several hundred. So, we ordered a ton of figs from Stone Mountain and set up painting nights that went on for quite some time. When we were finally ready we had figs to represent each regiment and battery for all three campaigns.

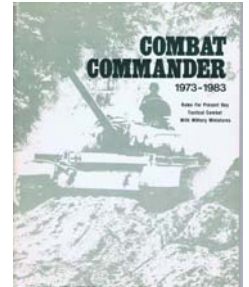


The games were well planned out and fortunately they ended up being very close run affairs. Even though the South lost the sunken road in the center, they won on the flanks and held on for a victory. I think this monster game was memorable because it was one of those rare occurrences where everyone pitched in with buying figs, painting, creating terrain, and helping with the set up.

I've mentioned this several times, but like most gamers in the 70s and early 80s I was obsessed by the NATO vs. Warsaw Pact theme. Not only did I have a huge stack of boardgames, books, magazines, etc., but I had several hundred GHQ and Enola Games miniatures. Naturally after playing a few campaigns and battles we wanted to do a really big game.

Fortunately, one of the members of

our group had access to their family's big living room for a few days, so we set up a massive 6x18 table and got everything ready the night before as we had set aside a full Saturday for play. At that time I was using Enola Games Combat Commander rules and I had prepared a series of charts for everyone according to their commands.



We had obtained a series of US Army maps of an area in West Germany, so we mirrored the terrain as best we could to match it, which looked fantastic to see it fully set up. The scenario was for a full Russian armored division with support to attack a U.S. brigade. It may not sound like much, but on a one to one scale it was huge with literally hundreds of vehicles, choppers, infantry stands, etc., all over the tabletop. Fire support was coordinated by one player on each side who also controlled air support. We used an article out of a wargaming magazine for the air battle with both sides allocating assets each turn.

With a dozen players and starting at noon on a Saturday, the game went until 2AM. It was a wild affair that saw the Russians stopped just short of their goal near the end of the table. Everyone was exhausted, but it had been a good game and it was talked about for months. I think we also set a record for the most snacks consumed at a game!

Most of these really big games were "back in the day" when many of us had more time for the hobby than we do now. I think it would be difficult to pull off these kinds of games today as many gamers don't have the time, can't focus on one subject for that long, too many distractions, and you just don't see many gamers pooling their resources. It's a shame because these games have given me many fond memories over the years. If you do get a chance to play in a "big" game please take the time to help out with painting, organizing, etc. as it's an experience that should not be missed.





# Blast From The Past pt.19: Older Skirmish Rules

If you call yourself a wargamer then at some point in your gaming life you've played in a skirmish game. Despite the thousands of rules sets for big battles for ACW, Ancients, Medieval, WW2, and so on, at some point everyone likes to see combat at the tactical level. I thought it would be interesting to revisit a few sets of skirmish rules that I've played over the decades and that I'm sure many of you have as well. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but rather just a small selection that stood out when I started thinking about this article.

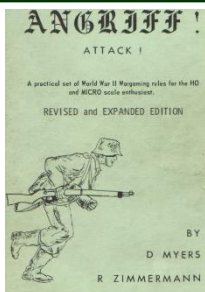
When I got into the board game/miniatures hobby back in 1976 there were of course Airfix figures and soon plenty of releases by Atlantic in 1/72nd scale. Thinking that there surely must be war-game rules for miniatures similar to the few SPI board games I owned I went to the local store and sure enough, there was a copy of Angriff. I seem to recall it was a choice between Tractics and this, but the length of the rules in Tractics scared me off.

I got home, read the rules and played a game or two. It was far different than the SPI board games I had, so it took me awhile to get the hang of things. Luckily, I met up with a gaming group that played miniatures and they took me in, showing me other sets of rules and that the miniatures hobby was far larger than just



WW2! I continued to play Angriff for several years, but with the introduction of other sets of rules it swiftly faded from view except as a memory of my first rules set.

At my first two gaming clubs I was fortunate enough to have friends who had massive medieval armies that were based singly. Both of them used Chainmail, so we had a ton of fun fighting sieges, raids, and even a campaign or two. The rules were easy to use, the games played fast, and most of



all, were a lot of fun. You don't see too many Chainmail games anymore as Warhammer Fantasy and Ancients seem to have taken over those eras, but in its time it was a very popular and well thought of set of rules. Not the most realistic, but it was fun!

If you wanted realistic medieval skirmishes then Battle Lust was the set for you. At the time it came out, a fantasy series called Harn-World was the current craze. It's hard to explain now, but in the 70s Dungeons & Dragons was at the top of the gaming spectrum. Many of the fantasy RPG supplements that were coming out such as adventures, character sheets, maps, etc., were not exactly published with the highest graphical standards. So, when the first Harn supplement came out it was a tremendous shock. As each new release followed a new found awe for this company and their products grew.

At some point during all of this they released their battle system called Battle Lust. Although it had a map of Harn, background material for some of the races, and standard sheets for units from that world, it was easily adaptable to other eras. We instantly took to the rules and fought several good sized battles. The interesting thing was that the rules were very, very good and I think many historical gamers missed out on this as they didn't want to get contaminated by the fantasy element! Sadly, once the D&D craze started to die down and everyone went off in search of other games this set of rules got left behind. I still take out my set and look it over from time to time as there are some good ideas in there.

As many of you know I've always been a big Colonial era gamer and have had armies in multiple scales for quite some time. I went through a phase back in the 80s where I couldn't decide if The Sword and the Flame was going to be my preferred set of colonial rules or not. After reading the

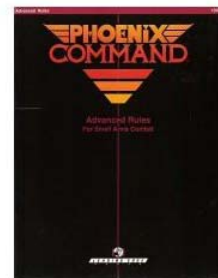


excellent Sudan series in The Courier and the article on rules, I ordered a set of Colonial Skirmish Rules, or the "blue book colonial rules" as they are more affectionately known as. This set of rules was radically different than TSATF as they were true man to man combat, with something like three seconds a turn and it took several turns to load a rifle!

We played several very memorable games, but they did take awhile to play. They were designed for 3-5 figures per player, but we were using around 10 per player with 7-8 players! As we got older and time became more critical, these rules were pushed to the back of the pack and TSATF became our standard set for this era. Still, they were unique and a lot of fun.

Finally, we come to combat for the modern era. I can't remember clearly, but at the time we had some modern skirmish troops, mercenaries, etc., and were looking for a set of skirmish rules. We liked the Avalon Hill Firepower game, but translating to the tabletop was going to be a lot of work. A new set of rules had arrived at the local store called Phoenix Command, so several of us bought a few sets and tried them out.

Now, this was in the era where we played a lot of SPI's Air War, Harpoon, and Starfleet Battles, but the complexity here frightened even us! It was a VERY realistic set of skirmish rules, but a five minute firefight took our group the better part of eight hours! Again, in the interest of time these rules faded from use.



It is funny how things come full circle. I started out with simple skirmish rules, went down the complexity road and now have come back to simple sets again. I think that when you're doing skirmish games the idea is to have fun and the realism aspect can get in the way of that at times!





## Yet Again, Successors vs. Romans

## WMA Battle Report

If you've been reading this magazine for awhile, then our love for Warmaster Ancients is well known. The game is easy to set up, so if we have no idea who is coming to our meetings or where we're going to play, WMA is a good stand by. Once again we needed a quick game for a variety of reasons and yet again, we turned to a Successors vs. Romans WMA battle.

Although we have several armies available for use, the Successors always seems to be a popular choice. Whether it's the pikes, elephants, weird units, or that it is just a colorful army, we seem to use them a lot. The Romans seem to be a good opponent for them as they can take the pike charges and still keep fighting.

The Romans went with what is now their standard set up; namely legions backed by auxiliary infantry covered by a few units of archers and then several units of average cavalry. The idea is to maintain parity on the flanks until the legions can take out the middle of the opposing army. Not too exciting, but it works pretty good when everything goes according to plan!

The Successors went with a heavier than usual option with cataphracts, elephants, and several pike units. There were the usual skirmishers, warbands,



Thorakites, etc., attached to soak up casualties and keep the enemy honest until the pikes and heavy cavalry can get close enough to do their dirty work.

The game started out well for both sides as the command rolls ensured that everyone's units got to move at least once. The Successors did well until the second turn where a command blunder

put a permanent -1 modifier on the best cavalry unit! The Romans blundered as well, so the second turn came to a screeching halt. From that point forward it was a series of starts and stops for both sides where coordination became a huge problem. There was some skirmishing on the Roman right where several cavalry and foot skirmish troops traded shots and a few close combats.

On the right the Successors were having a hard time doing anything right. Some of the cavalry got into a fight with some archers and Roman cavalry, but they simply could not coordinate their charges. The flank was there for the Successors to seize, but they could not finish the fight. Instead, the Romans continued the archery fire, brought up fresh units, and fought the Successor heavy cavalry to a standstill. Both sides took horrific casualties, but that flank degenerated into a stalemate, which in the end is exactly what the Romans needed.

All of a sudden the Successors on the Roman right failed miserably. The running series of skirmish fights abruptly came to an end when several close combats saw bad die rolling by the Successors and their units evaporated. This opened the flank to the Successor center and the Romans exploited (cont. on p.21)







(cont. from p.20) it to the fullest.

The legions advanced in the center and caught the Successor pikes standing still. The Successor elephants launched a charge that again saw some poor die rolling. What was supposed to be a grand charge that obliterated a few units saw the elephants pushed back, outflanked, and wiped out. The pike units were then faced with enemies on two sides and things began looking grim. The Roman artillery and archers continued to fire, disrupting the center and preventing any kind of a counterattack.

The legions came on and despite less than stellar results on the first series of combats, pushed the pike units back. The Successors again failed a series of command rolls that would have brought up more fresh units. The legions attacked again, wiping out unit after unit. The Successors tried to form a new defense line and recall the heavy cavalry, but you guessed it, the command rolls failed again! The legions then advanced and once again after a series of average die rolls, followed up with a devastating series of secondary attacks. By this time the Successors were running on fumes and after another series of combats broke, ending the game.

This was a beating the likes of which we had never seen in WMA, despite playing in well over 30 games using these rules. What makes it even worse is that a Roman battlegroup consisting of two legions, two auxiliary infantry units and one unit of archers only moved on the first turn! If they had reached the front lines the game would have been over even faster!

The failed command rolls, pike units unable to charge, the elephants getting flanked, etc., contributed to one of the worst beatings we've ever seen. Usually a 1500 point game like this will take at least three hours. This was over in less than two!

As the Successor commander I have resolved to go back to the drawing board and re-think my 1500 point force. The slower, heavily armored cataphracts may have to be discarded and more "throw away" troops may be needed to guard the flanks until the pikes can charge. This is part of what makes WMA fun in that you can tinker with the army lists!



*Several images from the battle showing the Successor pike units running into trouble with the Roman legions. The pike units don't do well when on the defense and several got flanked.*



## IABSM3: A Review (cont.)

(cont. from p. 3) the number on the chart with 1s and 2s being misses, 3s and 4s producing shock points, and 5s and 6s being kills where you remove figures. It's much simpler in practice and after a few tries it becomes second nature.

Shock points are a unique feature for IABSM3 and they are in my opinion, a driving force behind the mid and end game tactics. Once units get into contact and start blazing away at each other, your squads and weapons teams start accumulating shock points, which can be almost as bad as actually taking kills. Shock points reduce your actions, firing, etc., so when you reach a large number of shock points it gets so bad that your squad can't do anything but cower behind cover and there's a good chance that they will break.

So now here is where the beauty of the system really comes into play. You already have a number of decisions to make each turn, such as who to activate, how many dice to use for movement, firing, spotting, etc., but now you have to deal with shock points. Should you keep a big man around to clean up shock points or move him to a threatened sector to direct fire there? Should you keep fighting with a unit that is loaded with shock or retire them to safety until they recover and take a chance that the enemy won't exploit the vacated part of the line? All of a sudden you have even more decisions that need to be made and in a skirmish game this is a good thing.

Anti-vehicle fire is just as interesting. You roll 2D6 with modifiers to see if you score a hit. If you do the firer then rolls a number of "strike" dice while the defender rolls a number of dice equal to their armor to cancel any hits. The resulting number is cross referenced on a chart to see what happens to the vehicle. Again,

it sounds convoluted and time consuming, but it's pretty fast in theory, plus it keeps the game interactive by having the non-firing player doing something during an opponent's turn.

There are rules for artillery,

flamethrowers, support weapons, die hard troops, snipers, and much, much more. In fact, you would be hard pressed to find something that the rules don't cover! The interesting thing is that the additional rules really add very little complexity. You can just check the section, find the rule, and implement it as the authors solutions are usually pretty quick and easy.

Close combat is decisive, but getting there can be one of the game's longest procedures. In

this case the system seems simple, but running through the myriad of modifiers to get to the result can take longer than pretty much any other mechanism in the rules. We've had some great house clearing firefights/melees that were fun and really felt like WW2 house to house battles, but figuring out what to roll each time and how it works always seems to slow the game down.

If you're thinking that this game produces a lot of chaos, then you're right! From the card draw to the firing systems, there is a lot of randomness. If you are someone who likes clockwork type games with a strict sequence of play, then these rules should definitely be avoided by you. However, if you enjoy games where things don't always go as planned, there's a good chance of surprises just around the corner, and

combat can be unpredictable at best, then these rules are for you.

Overall, the third version of these rules is a marked improvement over previous sets. The rules are professionally laid out, there's good examples of play, lots of color, and you can see that there's been some thinking towards making the games system easy to understand. Game play is very interactive due to the card draw system, so this is suitable for group games with a large number of figures/vehicles.

So, are there any problems? Yes, but mostly they're a matter of taste and/or game play style. As stated before, the drop shadow on the font makes anything larger than normal sized text blurry. Lists just for the Normandy period are another pet peeve of mine, but quite a few rules sets are guilty of this. The Tea Break card(s) if they come early can leave a lot of units inactive or taking the bare minimum of actions, which if it happens over and over can be a big turnoff for some gamers. Also, the large number of dice that you roll can produce wild swings of fortune and unusual results. Fortunately, most of these are small problems and in the end it comes down to whether or not your gaming group likes card driven, chaotic skirmish games

I did order the deluxe package with the deck of cards and setoff tokens. The cards are a good deal, although much bigger than the average card deck. The tokens I'm not sold on. There was no

explanation for what they were until someone sent me a link from TMP and my personal view is that they could have been designed better and more obvious as to what they're used for.

In the end the rules are a good value and fun to play. Once the other lists get converted to IABSM3 status that will help out the situation as well. You can't go wrong adding this set to your collection of WW2 skirmish rules.





## Hobby Boss 1/48th KV-1 & KV-2

## Kit Reviews

OK, I admit it. I'm one of those gamers who thinks that 1/48th scale vehicles look better than the large ranges of 1/56th stuff that are out right now. For some reason, whether it's the "heroic" figure proportions, bases on the figures, etc., the 1/56th stuff just doesn't look right for 28mm WW2 skirmish games. Not only that, resin kits, while very easy to build and paint, lack a tremendous amount of detail that really becomes noticeable when compared to the same scale of plastic models.

Unfortunately, the selection for 1/48th is limited compared to 1/56th. Tamiya has an ever growing catalog and there's a few odds and ends, but recently a Chinese firm called Hobby Boss has been converting some of their 1/35th scale kits to 1/48th scale. I bought a KV-1 and a KV-2 to try them out. Fortunately, they are almost the exact same kit

except for the turrets and guns, so the lessons I learned on building the KV-2 made the KV-1 go much faster.

First, there are a LOT of parts, so patience will be needed. Fortunately, things go together quickly and you can have one of these built in a long afternoon. They do use brass etched parts for the fenders and the tracks are in many pieces, but they provide a jig to glue the track parts around which ensures a good fit. I painted the tracks, fenders, turret, hull, etc., separately, then did the final assembly. Getting the cables that run from the front of the tanks to hooks on the fenders was a challenge, but looks good in the end.

Overall, the kits look great completed



and appear to be the hulking monsters that they actually were in real life. The level of detail is apparent when viewed with figures on the tabletop and why anyone would not want detailed 1/48th models to go with their figures is beyond me. I

got these for around \$15 each on the Squadron site and while they took time to assemble it was worth every minute of it when you see the final result.



## Fireforge Games Mounted Sergeants

## Figure Review



This boxed set is very similar to the Teutonic Knights set reviewed earlier in this issue. You get the same sprues for twelve horses, only there aren't any horses with barding, so these will be much simpler to paint. The figures themselves are basically the knight bodies, but the heads do not have any fully enclosed helmets.

Weapons are again the same set that you got in the boxes of knights along

with capes and a cross standard. The figures go together quickly and with a wide variety of weapons you can certainly create a unit that will have some unique individual features. For my first box of these I chose some with cloaks, half with spears, and the rest with a variety of hand weapons.

Overall, these are again good value for the money and go together quite nicely. They can certainly be used for more periods than just the Crusades and the wide variety of

weapons, shields, and heads gives the gamer the opportunity to customize units. Highly recommended.





## BKC2: East Front Convoy

## Battle Report

I've been working on a 1944-5 Russian Tank Corps this past year and thought it might be a good time to do another BKC2 East Front scenario as that always seems to provide incentive to do more painting! So, back to the East Front it was and after just reading a book about the campaigns in East Prussia late in the war I thought it would be good to try out a common situation from the book.

It is late 1944 and the Russians are attempting to cut off a German held city. Naturally, Hitler has declared it to be a festung, or fortress, so it is to be held to the last man. Russian forces have enclosed a ring around the city, but in many places it is very thin in units, which gives the Germans a chance to run convoys in and out of the city. The city was represented as only partly on board and placed in the corner. There is a bridge that is still open as well as a pontoon bridge that leads back to the German lines. Several groups of Russians have already taken up positions outside of this part of the city, but more are moving up at what would be randomly determined times during the game.

There were several halftracks and trucks loaded with wounded in the city waiting for the signal to cross the bridges and break out towards the German lines.

German forces on the outside of the city had several battlegroups plus a convoy of vehicles with ammo and food for the defenders. There were a total of 16 convoy vehicles at both ends of the board. For each vehicle with food/ammo that got into the city or for each vehicle with wounded that made it back to the German lines the German side would earn 6 percentage points. At the end the amount would be totaled, then a German player would roll D100 and if under the total the operation would have been deemed successful by the German high command.

The Russians began with two understrength T-34/76 battalions on the board and one infantry battalion deployed at a village crossroads. There was also a FAO with three batteries of 12mm artillery off board. The Russians also had a battalion of T-34/85s, a battery of SU-85s, a 120mm mortar battalion, and a battalion of SU-76s that would randomly appear as reinforcements throughout the game.

The Germans had three battlegroups that would enter on the first turn from



either road. The first group consisted of three Stug IIIs and two Tigers; the second had a company of panzergrenadiers with some heavy weapons halftracks in support; and the third was a composite armor battalion with three Panthers and four PZIVHs. There was also a FAO with three batteries of 105mm artillery in support.

The Germans planned to pin the Russian infantry in the village, occupy the village/hill on the other flank with the panzergrenadiers, then strike down the center towards the bridge with the main armor force. Hopefully by that time there would be a chance to run the convoys in and out of the city without too much enemy interference. The Russians, quite naturally, were going to try to prevent this, but first needed to determine the main axis of attack. The main problem for the Russians was not knowing where or when their reinforcements would arrive.

The German attack got off to a less than stellar start, with most commands failing their second command rolls. This gave the Russians a chance to reorient their defense and bring their armor into firing positions. The main German armor force proceeded up the center of the board and was duly engaged by the waiting T-34s, knocking one of the Panthers out. The panzergrenadiers also took fire, losing their mortar halftrack and the 75mm armed halftrack. However, they did roll a 2 for their command roll, meaning they were then able to do two actions. The panzergrenadiers promptly moved into the village and (cont. on p. 25)







(cont. from p. 24) dismounted, which immediately forced the T-34s in the area to withdraw along with the SU-85s that had just arrived.

The Stug IIIs and the Tigers got more than they bargained for against the Russian held crossroads and began a several turn duel for control of the village that eventually sucked in another unit of T-34s. The main fight began in the center when the recently arrived T-34/85s started slugging it out with the Panthers and PZ IVHs. This engagement went on for several turns, with artillery, smoke, and massive exchanges of tank fire. In the end the Germans left the T-34/85 battalion in ruins, but they had lost the initiative and were running out of units.

The panzergrenadiers close assaulted

the SU-85s, knocking them out, but not before they destroyed several of the convoy vehicles. The T-34s that were helping with the defense of the village crossroads withdrew to new positions to engage the German armor. However, bad die rolls meant that they were then swiftly overwhelmed by the Germans.

At this time the signal was given for the convoy in the city to break out over one of the bridges. What followed was a frantic few turns while Russian forces headed to shoot at the convoy and German armor moved to intercept them. In the end eight of the sixteen convoy vehicles made to their destination. Multiplying by 6% gave the Germans a 48% chance of the operation being deemed successful and they rolled a 45, meaning

that the Germans were declared the victors.

Overall, it was a tense and fascinating game. It was our first widespread use of smoke to screen the armor attack and we had some desperate armor against armor slugfests. Both sides got too caught up in the village crossroads battle with the German armor unable to push the Russians off the road due to a lack of infantry while the T-34s didn't want to show themselves for fear of being destroyed by the Tigers. Both sides' armor units could have been decisively used elsewhere. Other than that, it was a well played game that showed us once again why we like BKC2. Including set up and playing ten turns we finished everything in just under 3 1/2 hours.





## GDB: French Defense & Counterattack

## Battle Report

This battle ended up being one of the largest and longest that we've recently fought. If you've been reading this magazine for awhile, you know that we flit back and forth between Age of Eagles and General de Brigade. Mainly it's that we have a ton of figures that can be used for either game as the bases are similar, but sometimes we want a detailed, lower level game while on other nights AOE provides a faster, higher level game.

This scenario began as a combined Russian-Prussian attack and then switched to a French counterattack, followed by another Allied attack. It was played over three nights with a total of five players for a combined 11 hours, which is a lot of gaming time, but then again there was a lot going on!

The first night was mainly set up, getting the forces straightened out, commands assigned, etc., followed by the initial Allied moves. Mainly this consisted of Prussian infantry brigades with artillery support pushing back the leading French elements. Not quite a large skirmish action, but the fighting consisted mainly of French forces firing a few shots and withdrawing back to the main line of defense.

The second night, however, is where the action really got off to a fast start. For one thing, the French forces on the far French right flank were determined not to go away quietly. They counterat-



tacked, even when presented with larger enemy numbers, driving the Prussian infantry back upon their supports and creating somewhat of a traffic jam. At one point the French broke through the Prussian lines and almost cut one of the brigades off from their division before heavy fire drove them off.

In the center the Prussian spent a good part of the second night getting everything ready for an attack on the hill that dominated the center of the board. The French were positioned there in quite some numbers and were waiting for the attack. On the Allied right the Prussians slowly moved to establish a solid line of Allied infantry across the board. A Prussian light cavalry unit screened the far Prussian right while artillery readied themselves for the first attack.

However, it was the French who struck first on that flank. Using forces that recently arrived they moved out quickly and engaged the waiting Prussians. The French garrisoned the village on that flank and then charged home in a series of attacks with light cavalry. This drove the Prussians back, with the Prussian light cavalry

retreating far behind the brigade. Prussian infantry quickly formed square and prepared for the next series of charges. The French artillery hammered the front lines of the Prussian infantry who had moved to engage the French on the hill. Now with the threat of the French light cavalry they pulled back slightly so as not to be flanked.

In the center the Prussians moved forward in series of attacks against the French center. The French held firm, although there were heavy casualties to both sides. Both the Prussians and the French used their artillery well, softening up units for attacks or counterattacks. At one point the Prussians broke through and it looked as if they would sweep down the hill on the other side, but newly arrived French forces counterattacked and drove the Prussians down the opposite side of the hill instead!



So, at the end of the second night the situation was confusing, but it appeared as if the French had gained the upper hand. The Prussian attack on the left had been broken up, with scattered French battalions now positioned between the Prussians and their main line of advance in the center. The French on the Prussian right had forced the Prussian brigade into squares and it had taken a serious beating from combined artillery barrages and cavalry charges. In the center the first Prussian attack had failed and the French counterattack had achieved some success, but the French had suffered heavily in defending the hill. Both sides were bringing up fresh reserves to renew the battle on the final night. (cont. on p. 27)







(cont. from p. 26) At the start of the third and final night the casualties for both sides were beginning to mount. A series of charges and countercharges in the center decimated several battalions on both sides. A French force that counterattacked too far was isolated and cut to pieces before falling back to rally. The Prussian forces on the Prussian right defended their area against further French attacks, but they also had to fall back to rally.

Both sides by this time were at the point of being unable to continue offensive operations. There were few fresh units available and most orders to the various brigades and divisions changed to Defend to either hold their ground or to get reorganized for another attack.

It was at this time that both sides moved up their reserves, which consisted of several regiments of heavy cavalry. With the center of the battlefield having turned into a no mans land, it seemed as a natural place for the deciding finish! Both sides opened gaps in the lines for the cavalry regiments to move through and get aligned for the deciding attack.

There was still fighting going on in other sectors of the battlefield which consisted of trying to cause as many casualties as possible in an effort to break enemy brigades and divisions. I'm not sure if I've ever seen that many casualty markers on units in one game before!

The cavalry charges went in and for several turns there were a furious series of attacks and counterattacks. In the end

both sides cavalry were down to approximately half of their strength and the Prussians were able to make little headway. After reviewing the battlefield and looking at the positions of the units it was determined that while the French had taken a serious beating, they were still in control of the main hill. The Prussians and Russians had been worn down and would be unable to renew the attack.

A very long (three nights) battle that featured a lot of figures on the board. The good thing about big games like this is that the use of reserves come into play and both sides need to show patience when committing their forces to action. Overall, it was a very good gaming experience and had the distinct feel of a large Napoleonic battle.





After reviewing the IABSM3 rules earlier in this issue, the least we could do is to report on a playtest using those rules! We had played IABSM during its first incarnation and we've played Sharp Practice several times, so we were already familiar with the major parts of the rules system. I had painted up three boxes of Plastic Soldier Company WW2 Russians, so we had several squads, AT guns, and heavy weapons, plus a few 1/48th scale Hobby Boss tanks. After reading through the rules a few times, making some shock counters, plus a few odds and ends, we were ready to at least try a small game.

It's late fall in 1941 on the road to Moscow. A German recon force has been ambushed and set on fire along the main road, plus there are reports of a



Both sides used blinds to hide the advance of their forces. We were using a 4x6 table, which with the number of vehicles we had was not a good choice and it should be recommended that larger tables be used for more than a platoon of armor per side if using 28mm or 1/48th kits.

The blinds moved up fairly quickly and when the first one was revealed it was a bit shocking to the German side. A KV-2 was sitting dead center along the main road! The Sdkfz-251/10 that spotted it opened with its 37mm AT gun, but would have needed a miracle and didn't get it. The return fire from the KV-2 immobilized the halftrack, then the Russian 45mm AT guns revealed themselves and knocked the halftrack out for good.



heavy Russian attack. A German kampfguppe consisting of a platoon of PZIVDs and a platoon of mech infantry in halftracks is rushed to the scene to prevent the Russians from seizing a vital crossroads.

The Russian force consisted of two KV-1s and a KV-2 with one squad of SMG troops riding on the tanks. They were backed by a sniper (we wanted to see how the system worked with these), two infantry squads, two 45mm AT guns, and a 81mm mortar section with two mortars. At this stage we had no idea about the scenario balance, so it was a credit to both sides that they went along with the game to try the system out.

The German PZIVDs deployed and tried to use cover to engage the KV-2 along with the AT guns. The KV-2 shook off the several hits it took, but the SMG squad riding it were not so lucky. One of the dismounted German squads in the barn opened fire on them, killing several. The first PZIVD went up in flames after being hit multiple times and the Germans were reeling. Another blind was spotted and unfortunately for the Germans it was a KV-1 moving up on the Russian left flank.

The Germans responded by turning one of the PZIVDs to engage this new threat while the other two squads of infantry moved to take up defensive positions. The KV-1 and 2 then engaged a pair of PZIVDs in a battle that went on for a number of turns. The Russian AT guns began to shell the barn that a German squad was in, but got more than they bargained for when the return fire knocked out the crew of one of the AT guns.

The KV-1 was then immobilized by a hit from a PZIVD and for a second it looked like the Germans might get back into the game. However, the PZIVD was then itself knocked out by the KV-2, which sat like a fortress in the middle of the board, taking everything the Germans could throw at it. Also, another KV-1 appeared on the Russian right flank and the Germans then moved to counter it. A brief counterattack by a squad of Germans and a halftrack knocked out the final Russian AT gun, but then the halftrack was hit and knocked out.

The KV-2 then began to do something it was designed for; knocking out buildings. The German squad in the farmhouse took a battering and had to fall back. The last two PZIVDs got the benefit of the card draw and were able to fire on the Russian armor first the next two turns, but couldn't score any knockouts. The return fire destroyed both of them and with that the game ended as the Germans would be forced to withdraw. The Russians still had mortars (cont. p. 29)







(cont. from p. 28) and two squads of infantry that had not even deployed yet!

A few observations from our first game. First, the rules are a huge improvement over the first version that we tried years before, so that was good. The infantry firing chart and the anti-armor charts need to be on a reference card as those are what gets used the most as far as we could tell from this game.

I think that there was some confusion on our end about running vehicles as a platoon or individually. It appears from the rules that you should have a Big Man in charge of vehicle platoons to issue orders, but what if there isn't one? We couldn't make heads or tails of that during the game, so we'll need to look into that further.

The infantry and anti-vehicle firing systems are fun to use and there is some excitement when seeing if a vehicle can block a number of hits to it with its armor saves. I've always been a big fan of the shock system that is used in these rules and I like how it degrades the performance of the units during the game. We felt that the game's base systems work well and can be easily picked up by gam-

ers in a group setting. Once everyone understands how the card system operates and you get through the first few turns the game proceeds pretty quickly.

In terms of problems there were a few, but fortunately they were pretty minor. First, there is some preparation time

required to run a game, most notably getting the right cards, quality of troops, and Big Men organized. Nothing that takes hours, but it does help to come prepared. We found that snipers are particularly nasty as well as early Russian armor, which really imbalanced the scenario in hindsight. We were just learning the system, so no big deal, but in the future we'll look at these things more closely.

I think the biggest thing that skirmish gamers may need to get used to is the number of troops that you will need for a group game. We're talking about needing (in our estimation) at least a platoon per player and some of the scenarios have quite a bit of stuff on the board. These rules are definitely designed for large skirmishes, i.e., company sized engagements with maybe two platoons of infantry plus heavy weapons along with support. Now some might argue that it will slow the game down, but actually IABSM3 handles large amounts of figs pretty well with the card system, plus infantry don't last long in these battles!

Overall, it was a very fun game and we liked the rules. I'm already working on getting some more infantry and vehicles painted up for even larger battles! For the cost of the rules you certainly can't go wrong.







### 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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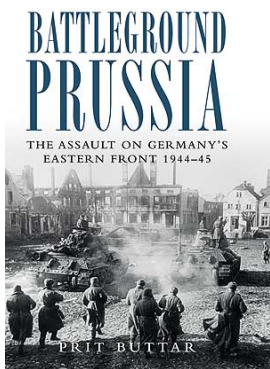
Several issues ago I wrote about how I found the plastics market in wargaming to be very interesting and would it replace or supplant the lead figure industry. I think at this stage it's safe to say that lead figures will continue to be around for quite some time in the hobby. However, the plastics side of the hobby has certainly taken tremendous strides from those first boxed sets by Wargames Factory and others. With The Plastic Soldier Company, Victrix, Warlord, Perry's, Fireforge, and more, there is now an ever growing selection of plastic miniatures to choose from. The sculpting isn't bad and you certainly can't argue the price, but what is stopping the plastics from pretty much taking over the hobby is the same thing that has plagued plastics since the days of Airfix, Atlantic, Esci, and others. First, there are the strange poses you seem to get in many boxes. Second, the ranges are usually the tried and true, such as WW2, ACW, Spartans, and so on. Third, the sculpting, while improving, still is missing out on details when compared to lead figures. These new boxed sets, however, are great for building up the core of your armies, but for specialty figs, i.e., officers, engineers, crews, etc., you still need lead figures. Overall, it's been great to see this side of the hobby grow and I look forward to new releases. One thing that continues to interest me, though, is with all of these cheaper figures now available and for all the hoopla, the number of painted figs I see at the FLGS, blogs, web sites, etc., still hasn't jumped in quantity. Are people just buying stacks of plastic figs and storing them for future use?

## Battleground Prussia

While there are many books about the end of WW2, particularly on the Battle of the Bulge or the Battle for Berlin, there aren't many that focus on the Russian drive to the Vistula and Oder rivers. Battleground Prussia is an interesting book in that it covers these interesting battles during late 1944 and early 1945.

The book does start off in an unusual way in that it goes over the history of the Prussian area, especially the ethnic background. Then the scene shifts to the destruction of Army Group Center and the Russian drive to the Baltic Sea. Army Group North, which covered this area was split apart and basically run over by a steamroller of Russian forces. The book covers the start of the campaign all the way to the final evacuations just before the armistice went into effect.

Along the way you are treated to a



multitude of interesting battles and stories from the participants. Most of the book covers Russian attacks against individual towns or areas with eyewitness accounts of the fighting. These range from assault gun platoons going into a counterattack to German infantry units trying to fall back to the next defensive line.

All in all, the battles are fascinating and give you a good idea of what the situation was on the ground.

I was struck by several things in this book that I knew very little about. The first was the scale of the evacuations along the Baltic coasts, which were enormous. The second was the fire support provided by ships of the Kriegsmarine during the battles. The third was how the refugee traffic greatly affected operations on both sides.

## Book Review

Also, the book goes into detail on the German command structure and greatly out of touch Berlin was with the front lines at the end of the war. Numerous units ran out of ammo and fuel, units were trapped in pockets, reinforcements sent back and forth to the wrong sectors, and more. It was an interesting look at the crumbling of an army when a war is nearly over. Still, many German units continued to launch counterattacks until the bitter end.

Overall, I found this to be an excellent book on a much neglected area of WW2. I wasn't too pleased with the maps and some with greater detail, particularly about some of the strategic towns, would have been most welcome. Despite that, the eyewitness accounts of the battles, refugees struggling towards the west, and the ships trying to save both soldiers and civilians at the end makes for fascinating reading. If you are an East Front aficionado then this book definitely deserves to be in your library.