

Warning Order

ISSUE #62

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BIG BOXED GAMES
SCENARIOS & REVIEWS



Warning Order

Learning The Rules

Recently, there have been some discussions in the gaming world about rules and how to learn games in general. One of these on Consimworld went on for several pages with the topic being how to learn the rules for GMT's popular COIN (Counter-Insurgency) games. Having played (well, actually struggled with...) *Fire in the Lake*, I felt a lot of sympathy for those involved in the discussion.

Here you have a group of popular games that look pretty interesting from the outside. Open the box, however, then go through the terminology in some of the rules and you get the feeling of being lost. You set the game up, struggle through a turn, then wonder why so many people like these games or there is the feeling that you're playing it wrong. Many gamers want to play these games, but can't seem to get past the set up stage.

While thinking about this, I was punching out Quacks of Quedlinburg, which my family got for Christmas as we were going to play it that day. Now this is a popular family game, but the six page



rule book utterly befuddled me! I had to watch a video or two on how to play the game, which answered my questions. Meanwhile, not three feet away, I had a solo play going of scenario #5, Guderian

Drives South, from Barbarossa: Army Group Center, which has a 50 page rule book and tons of charts, but I have no problem with that!

Obviously, there are all kinds of issues with game rules, whether they are fairly simple or exceedingly complex. There are also numerous ways in which the rules get delivered to the gamer, ranging from a series of booklets to programmed instruction to videos that available online. For some gamers there is a lack of information, clear explanations, and few examples of play. On the other hand, some rules go too far in the other direction and the gamer is overwhelmed by materials! Let's take a look at the various types of rules for both board games and miniatures.

The most common type of rules for a long, long time, were just simple, B&W booklets that were all in text.

Many of us grew up on these, whether they were for SPI and Avalon Hill games, or for WRG's various rules sets. While many of these were functional, many of them were obscured by the "wall of text"! Still, we go through it and today, you rarely see this style any longer.

One of the newer styles and in my opinion, very effective, is the system from Fantasy Flight Games. This consists of a basic, well illustrated booklet that goes over the basics as well as the set up. The second booklet is a rules reference guide, set up like an index. Very easy to use and it will get you into the game quickly. If you need to find a specific rule or come across something you don't understand, the second booklet is there to help. I only wish more companies would use this method of rules writing as it really comes across well and is easily understood. (cont. on p3)



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Special points of interest:

- Two new Engagements scenarios.
- Battles For Empire, Age of Eagles, BKC IV, WMA, and F&F ACW battle reports.
- A look back at a typical Lou Zocchi catalog.
- Several game reviews, including the new version of Kingmaker.
- How to approach big box board games.

Learning The Rules (cont.)

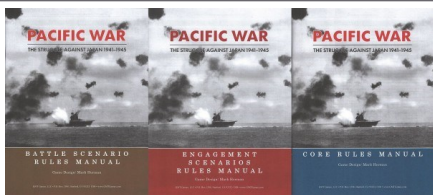
Another tried and true method is what is termed “programmed instruction”, where you start out with one

phase of the game, then continue to add on rules until you’ve used all of them in a game. This was very popular at one stage of the hobby (maybe not so much in miniatures rules), but isn’t seen too much any more. It had the benefit of layering the various game systems scenario after scenario, making even fairly complex rules easy to digest. With today’s gamer who wants to open up the box or rule book, then get going in 15-20 minutes, this process has clearly fallen out of favor.

Another good method is what GMT’s Pacific War uses, which is three booklets to deal with varying sizes of the scenarios. The first booklet gets you going on the short battles, which can be 1 hour or so, then the next booklet goes over the 2-8 hour battles, then finally the campaign game with the full rules, which could easily take 100 hours or more. A very logical and detailed approach that appears to be successful at this time.

Board games and miniatures, however, clearly diverge in how rules are presented. Board games have an advantage in terms of handouts, charts, and a fixed map to help decipher the rules. Miniature rules, however, have to explain the terrain, measuring movement, how to decipher flanks, etc., on a game board with no standard marks (hexes, squares, etc.). While many gamers play both board and miniatures games, it’s readily apparent that miniatures rules are a different animal. However, despite the huge advances in rule book publishing, including many color images, scenarios, etc., they seem to lag behind board games at times in terms of rules presentation.

So, the question becomes, how does one learn the rules and more so, how does one teach the game to a group? There’s not much new under the sun here and there’s probably a dozen ways to do this, but for those looking to improve things or maybe thinking about trying out a new set of rules with their gaming group, here’s a few ideas.

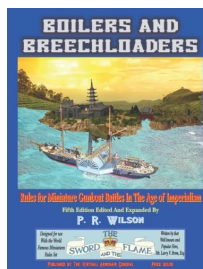


First, I think it is important to determine what your goal is when learning the rules to a new game or introducing them to a group. This sounds simple, but most gamers ignore it. For example, if you’re learning the rules to a new supplement for a game you already play for a face to face game with someone, you can afford to glance over them, start playing, then refer back to the rules when there are problems. You’ve clearly committed to this series of games/rules, so if the game goes slowly or poorly it’s no big deal because you’ll be playing it again soon. If you’re looking to teach a new set of rules to your gaming group in the hope of getting them to either a) supplant an existing set of rules that you regularly play, or b) get these rules into the regular rotation on club nights, you need to put in maximum effort!

1. **Look Over The Rules:** Scan through the rules, noting the various sections such as movement, terrain, ranged combat, morale, etc. Note how long each section is as the longer sections will probably need a second reading and/or this will be where most of the questions about play come from.

2. **Do You Have What it Takes to Play?:**

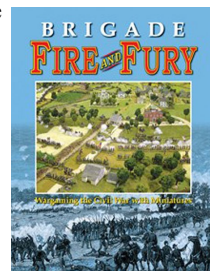
Again, this sounds simple, but do you have the dice, measuring devices, fire are templates, any casualty markers, etc. required to play? If not, you need to order or make them as you learn the rules. It’s surprising how many games fail due to something as simple as this step.



3. **Read The Rules Thoroughly:** Take however long is needed and take notes if necessary. You’re the one who will be answering questions on game night, so take the time now to know where to go for answers. Re-read what you feel are the critical parts of game play, then envision how a game will progress and what situations you expect to encounter.

4. **Test The Game Systems:** This is the make or break part of getting to know the rules. Hopefully you have

some units and/or counters that you can set up and try out the combat system, from approach to morale checks and afterwards. There’s nothing worse than trying to teach a game and not being able to explain how one system interacts with the other. That’s code words to your group that they’re in for a long night! Try some flank attacks, ranged combat, retreats, rallies, etc., until you know exactly how the systems work.



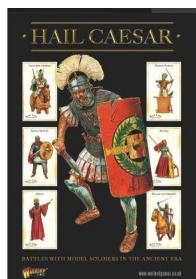
5. **Think Small, Not Big:** For the first game choose a smaller scenario for board games and/or only a few units/commands a side for a miniatures game. No special units or rules, no unusual terrain, and no complex victory conditions. You want everyone to learn how the system works and for game play to be as straightforward as possible. If playing a WW2 or Modern game for example, don’t include minefields, engineering, a lot of fortifications, etc., for example. Keep things pretty basic so that everyone can learn how to play.

6. **Make Handouts Available:** If there are reference cards, tables, etc., EACH player should have a set to refer to. Often, just by looking at these handouts gamers can learn a lot on their own.

7. **Note Any Issues:** As the game progresses and if questions arise or you start seeing the same problem come up time and time again, write these down. After the game check online for any errata, gaming forums, etc., to see if others had these same issues or if there are clarifications that would help in future games.

8. **Re-read The Rules:** After the first game, go over the rules again. Usually, you’ll find that you missed something or played one or two things wrong!

Hopefully by using these steps you can learn some new rules and have a successful first game with your group.



Engagements 51: Finding the Watering Hole

Situation: Blue is on a punitive expedition against a local native tribe that is in revolt against Blue's colonial government. The column has been in pursuit of the native forces for a number of days and is running out of water. The guide attached to the column is positive that there is a large watering hole up ahead, but is not entirely sure as to its exact location! The column needs to move quickly past a village up ahead, then locate the watering hole. The native tribe is surely ahead and will try to prevent this.

Period: Designed primarily for the Colonial period, but it could work with Ancients by adjusting the unit mix.

Table Size: 6 x 4, but a larger table could be used with more terrain added.

Terrain Notes: Hills are rocky and should be treated as rough terrain. Due to the number of crags and rocks, any unit in those areas should receive some type of cover benefit. The village is mud and stone buildings that will provide some cover, but will not hold up against artillery fire. The multi-colored areas on the map are rocky/brush areas that limit visibility and movement. Large forces could remain hidden in the middle of these areas.

Scale: The scenario is designed for any scale and can be used with The Sword and the Flame for skirmish actions or Battles For Empire or Black Powder for larger games.

Red Forces: Red's forces are lying in wait, hoping to spring a well coordinated ambush. Red's forces are split up into groups, with each group following its own leader.

Group 1: Two sword/spear units and two rifle armed units.

Group 2: Three cavalry units

Group 3: Six sword/spear units

Group 4: Four sword/spear units

Group 5: Two sword/spear units and two rifle armed units.

Set Up: Red's units are set up by groups and can be placed anywhere on the map. Each group must be at least 12" from any other group and up to one group can be held off board. The off board group should have a designated area where it will enter before the game begins.

Red Orders: Prevent Blue from reach-

ing the watering hole. Inflict enough losses on Blue that they are forced to withdraw from the battlefield.

Blue Forces: Blue has assembled a column that has been in search of a local tribe that is currently in revolt. The following units are available:

8 units of infantry

2 units of cavalry

2 sections of either artillery or machine guns.

Blue Orders: Move past the village and locate the watering hole, which should be towards the end of the board. Blue is expecting an ambush or a general attack from native forces that are even now probably massing in the area.

Blue Set Up: Blue enters from any point along the edge of the map (marked in blue) in any formation.

Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules: There are several special rules for this scenario:

1. Each turn, before their movement, the native side needs to roll 1D6 for each of their groups. On the roll of a 6 on 1D6, that group breaks cover and either fires on the Blue units and/or moves to melee them. If a Blue unit is within 12" of a unit of a specific group, add +1 to the roll.
2. Before the game begins, the native side rolls 1D6 and the result is where

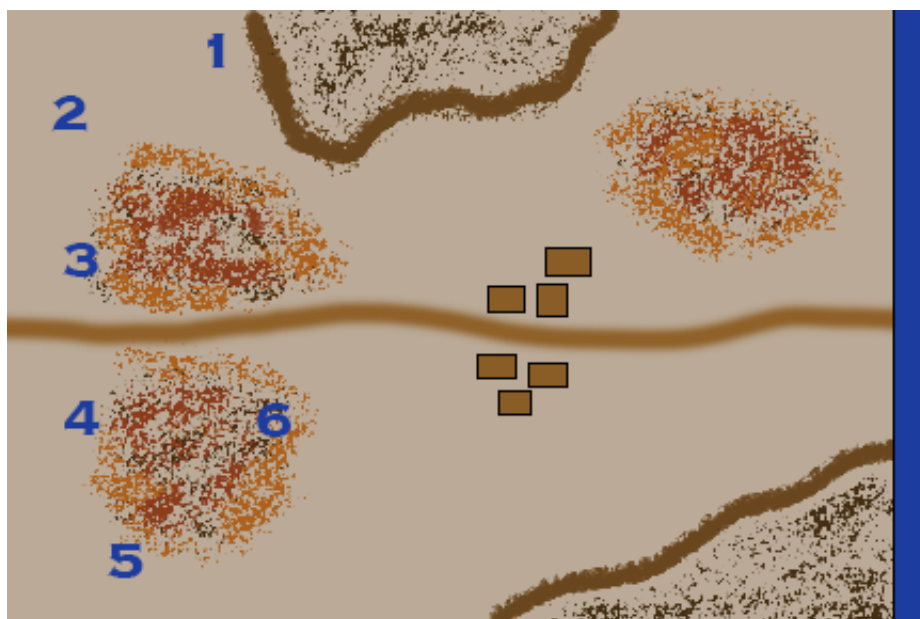
the watering hole is located. Once a Blue unit gets to within 8" of the location of the watering hole, the native side must inform the Blue side that they have located the watering hole.

Victory Conditions: At the end of 12 turns Blue must be in control of the watering hole. Depending upon the set of rules used, the Blue force must naturally have not been forced to withdraw due to casualties

Variants: The first variant would be to allow Red to deploy their units anywhere on the board from the start. This would allow Red to mass a large amount of forces possibly near Blue's entrance, thereby making the game relatively short one way or the other with attacks on the first turn or two.

Another option and one that could be used to balance out the experience level of the two sides is to have Red start with a few units on the board, but have the others arrive randomly. Create a table where you roll 1D6 and result could be one or more units that arrive that turn along with which side of the board. This will make things more challenging for Blue as enemies will be slowly assembling at various points on the board.

Finally, this scenario could be adapted to the Ancients and/or Medieval periods, mainly by replacing Blue's artillery or machine guns with some open order troops.



Engagements 52: Fortifications Breakthrough

Situation: A stalemate on this front has resulted in both sides establishing fortifications along the front lines. Red is determined to break the stalemate by launching a massive attack against Blue's fortifications, breaking through, then moving quickly into Blue's rear areas, which would force Blue to withdraw from this sector.

Period: Designed primarily for the Horse & Musket period, but other periods could be used with modifications.

Table Size: 6 x 4, but a larger table could be used with more terrain added.

Terrain Notes: The town consists of several wooden and stone buildings, which should provide some type of cover modifier. The river is too deep to cross at any place except for the bridge. The woods are considered to be light forest, which provides cover, but is not a serious movement obstacle. Fortifications are covered in the special rules.

Scale: The scenario is designed for any scale and can be used with skirmish rules such as Sharpe's Practice all the way up to Black Powder or Regimental Fire & Fury for larger actions with large figure scales.

Red Forces: Red's forces have been massing just outside the range of Blue's fortifications and have moved into position just before daybreak for a dawn attack.

12 units of infantry

2 units of light infantry/rifles

1 Sapper unit

3 batteries of artillery

Set Up: Red's units will enter the board at any point along the edge of the map marked in red. Units may be in any formation

Red Orders: Quickly overcome the fortifications, then seize the town and bridge. Where possible, exit units off the two road entrances.

Blue Forces: Blue has been stretched thin by having to man extensive fortifications. Blue's forces are in several groups as described below:

Fort and fortifications

4 units of infantry

2 batteries of artillery

Town garrison

2 units of infantry

1 battery of artillery

Patrol

1 unit of cavalry

Reinforcements

2 units of infantry

1 unit of light infantry

1 unit of cavalry

Blue Orders: Defend the fortifications as long as possible, then fall back to join any reinforcements in blocking the two road entrances/exits at the bottom of the map.

Blue Set Up: The Forts & fortifications group must be set up along the lines of fortifications. The Town Garrison must be within 6 inches of the town on the map. On turn 3, roll 1D6 to see where the Patrol enters the board; 1-2 at A, 3-4 at B, and 5-6 at C. If A is blocked, then the Patrol enters at B on turn 5.

Units that are labeled as Reinforcements arrive one per turn starting turn 4 (Blue can choose which units arrive each turn). Roll 1D6; 1-3 the unit arrives at B and on a 4-6 they arrive at C.

Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules: There are several special rules for this scenario:

1. The forts (pentagon shapes on map) should be formidable structures reinforced by logs, sandbags, etc. The other fortifications should be trenches, berms, etc., that provide extensive cover for infantry and would prove difficult to overcome.
2. Before the game begins, Red can attempt to destroy a section of the fortifications (mine or heavy artillery bombardment). Red can choose a tower or 6 inch section of the fortifications, then rolls 1D6; 1-2 results in no damage, 3-4 fort or section of fortifications is heavily damaged, and a 5-6 is completely destroyed.
3. If the targeted fort or section of fortifications is undamaged or heavily damaged, the sappers and/or artillery should be able to finish its destruction. The rules that you are using should cover sappers or destruction of targets by artillery, but you may need to make something up to cover this.

Victory Conditions: Red must take the town to at least force a draw. If Red takes the town and bridge it is a minor victory. If Red takes the town and bridge plus is able to get two units off of the road exit at B and/or C it is a major victory.

Variants: This could be easily converted into Ancients by changing the forts into towers and the fortifications into walls.





The Seleucids were given a few options for their army list that included various combinations of heavy cavalry, 1-2 units of elephants (shown as ovals on the map), and different numbers of skirmishing infantry and cavalry. The Seleucid players chose to go with one elephant unit, imitation Romans, Thorakites, and a group of heavy cavalry including two Guard and one cataphract units. Definitely a powerful force, but short on skirmishers and it had a low break point of 10.

during the pursuit phase the Seleucids were rolling an incredible 36 dice for the next combat! As one could guess, the Indian infantry hit by that simple ceased to exist. However, and this was the Indian theme/strategy for this game, was that they caused a stand loss here and there, which was to add up by the end of the game.

On the Indian right there were a series of cavalry charges and infantry actions in and around the brush lining the road in that area. This was an interesting battle within a battle, watching both sides commit more and more forces into this mael-

Yet again we're off to the frontiers of the Seleucid Empire where their pike blocks and heavy cavalry would be going up against the Indians. We were going to have five players this night, so we needed to use the armies that would ordinarily have a lot of units so that everyone would get a sizable command. We settled on 2,000 points a side, which would give both sides 20+ units and 3-4 leaders to spread around.

While we usually leave the terrain pretty bland as is typical for most ancients battles, this time we decided to do something a bit different, which didn't quite work out like we thought it would! There would be a large village near the crossroads painted on the mat that would be the central objective outside of trying to make the other army hit its break point. The huge issue is that only infantry type units can go into that area and units defending can only be hit on a 5 or a 6. Both sides really didn't know what to do with this piece of terrain, so both allocated a few units to go into it and see what happens!

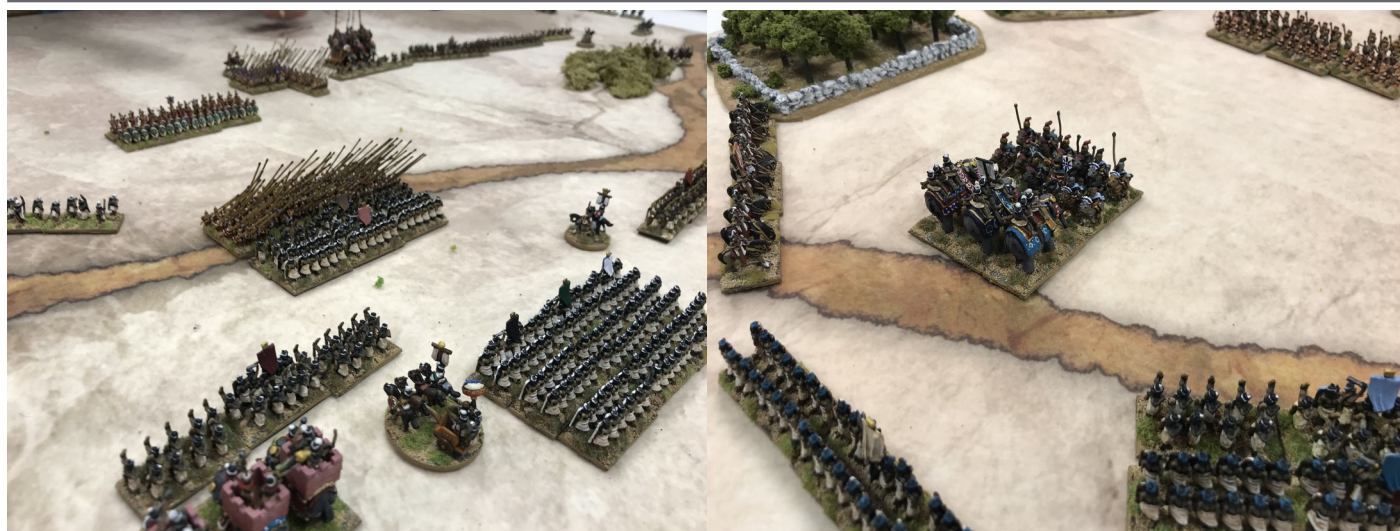
The Indians were as most would guess, a mass of infantry and archers. 12 units of infantry and 8 units of archers made up the bulk of the army, backed by a few skirmishers and some very average medium cavalry. The main striking force, however, was two units of elephants and one unit of heavy chariots. The Indians have a reputation of being a "hard luck" army in our WMA games, so this was a good opportunity to correct that image!

Movement was pretty scattered on the first two turns as both sides had bad die rolls; i.e., "command" problems! Things finally got going on the Indian right flank when the Seleucids got their heavy cavalry into range for a charge, rolled two consecutive moves and charged. Being based on the narrow frontage and hitting the first poor Indian infantry/archer brigade in their path meant of wave of destruction. The Indian archers simply evaporated and



strom, which continued to chew up units. Things weren't looking too good for the Indians on that front, so the heavy chariots that were allocated near the center had to be moved to support that flank. After 5 turns the Indians had taken fearful losses and were halfway towards their break point. However, they had chewed up a number of enemy stands. (cont. on p7)





(cont. from p6) Back to the Indian left the elephants launched their attack, picking off the damaged Seleucid heavy cavalry units while the other units moved up and showered the Seleucids with arrows. The Seleucids on that flank had issues with command and could never really coordinate their attacks, allowing the Indians to pick and choose where to apply their combat power.

The village was a true bottleneck, forcing units into traffic jams going around it to get at the enemy. The several units in the village tried to take it, but were thrown back with losses. With neither side willing to commit more forces to the village area, an uneasy truce settled over it, with neither side controlling the village. The battle would be won or lost based upon which army would break first due to units lost.

By turn 7 things were heating up across the board with a number of attacks and counterattacks. The elephants (we refer to them as “ancient panzers!”) smashed a number of units while the Indian heavy chariots had a number of successful attacks. By turn 8 the Indians were back to about even with the Seleucids and were slowly wearing down their better units. Each time the Seleucids attacked they did incredible damage, but they would lose a stand or be forced to break off the attack.

Heading into turns 9 and 10 the Indians were now calling the shots as to where and when the battles would take place. The Seleucids were bringing up their pikes for a major offensive, but the Indians kept focusing on the Seleucid cavalry and supporting units. The Seleucids tried one more major coordinated

effort, but things fell apart due to some bad command rolls at the worst time. The Indians pounced on the scattered formations, defeating them in detail and winning the game by causing the 14 break points, but only having 11 of their own.

A hard fought game which ended in something we don’t see often; an Indian victory! The Seleucids simply could not get their pike units to coordinate their attacks, which gave the Indians their opening. The Seleucid heavy cavalry, while doing serious damage, had really bad saving rolls which resulted in them losing several stands during each attack. It’s probably time to paint up some new opponents for each of these armies to create some new challenges, but with all of the other projects that seems a bit down the road at this point!



Blast From The Past Pt. 48

A Lou Zocchi Catalog

Recently, I picked up an old copy of a Strategy & Tactics magazine featuring the game Raid! Even though it was designed by one of the hobby's most prestigious designers, Mark Herman, it was pretty bland! However, it did contain something that almost made the purchase worthwhile, and that was a Lou Zocchi catalog from February of 1977!

From just picking up the small booklet I was instantly transported back in time! I can remember that era in my hobby life which basically consisted of going to the local hobby shop every Saturday to see what was new and gleaning what you could from catalogs that showed up in the mail. For the uninitiated, Lou Zocchi was one of the early distributors in the hobby, just as Dungeons & Dragons, miniatures, and board wargames were really starting to grow. Not only did he sell to hobby shops, but he sold items through his catalog and at wargame conventions. I had the pleasure of meeting him only once as he was driving back from a convention and he stopped by our local hobby shop where I purchased several hard to find games from him.

I thought it would be an interesting exercise to go through several pages of the catalog and see if some of the titles jog the memories of gamers who have been in the hobby for some time. The first few pages (not shown here) had the staple of Lou Zocchi's selection, which was dice and gaming accessories! At this time, if you wanted anything outside of D6s, Zocchi is where you went. He had all kinds of sizes, colors, and for those of you who remember this far back, he had some of the first D30s and D100s! Not to mention a wide range of hex paper, combat "calculators", ziplock bags, and all kinds of other items. If you

needed it for wargaming, he probably had it somewhere in his stack of stuff!

The Ancients page is pretty interesting to start with. Chainmail for only \$5! It was also not uncommon to mix rules and board games on the same page as frankly, there was nowhere near the number of items that we have today. You have

offerings from Milgamex, TSR, Heritage, Little Soldier, Fantasy Games Unlimited, and many more companies that are no longer with us.

The WRG and Chainmail rules would probably have been the most popular at this time, with WRG really starting to get established as the "go to" set of rules for the period. While there was a page in the catalog (also not shown here) for SPI and Avalon Hill games, there really weren't a lot of other Ancients board games at this time. William The Conqueror, Siege, and Ancient Conquest were some of the exceptions and while I remember having seen them at one time or another, I don't remember much about them.

It was, however, great seeing all of those SPI and Avalon Hill titles that were around \$9-10 each!

Zocchi was big for science-fiction and fantasy gaming at this time. It's hard to explain now, but back then (1977) RPGs were just getting going and there weren't a lot of fantasy miniatures, so board games was what you relied upon if you wanted that gaming genre. You can see in

the Fantasy page, however, that this was changing and more RPG related material was becoming available.

The Dungeons & Dragons boxed set for \$10, Empire of the Petal Throne for \$25, and even the original White Bear & Red Moon board game from Chaosium (later Dragon Pass by Avalon Hill) for \$10! Today, you can't touch any of these three items for under \$100! You can see, however, that this was clearly a different time where you did a lot of the work for your gaming. By that I mean that you would buy the D&D boxed set, maybe the Blackmore and Eldritch Wizardry books, some hex paper, then get to work designing a dungeon. You also had a lot more time on your hands back then compared to today! Still, there were a lot of fantasy board games on that page, including an old favorite of mine, TSR's

Lankmar.

If you were looking for sci-fi wargames outside of SPI, then again, Zocchi was the place for you and for many years it was the only place that you could get any sci-fi gaming items. The famous Star Fleet Battle Manual is here (on another page the plastic ships were for sale), along with Ythri

(I should never have sold my copy of this!) and Godsfire from Metagaming.

There were all kinds of weird titles from TSR, Heritage, Attack, Flying Buffalo, Taurus, and even GDW who was just getting going. There were all kinds of booklets, zip-lock games with very basic components, and rules to add on to other game systems. Just looking at this page back in 1977 would get you thinking about sci-fi gaming for weeks! While the prices of \$5-8 for most sets of rules seem cheap today, back then you had to really think about spending that much on a set of rules sight unseen. Not to mention that it would take quite some time for the order to get there, get processed, then shipped to you! (cont. on p9)

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Blast From The Past Pt. 48 (cont.)

(cont. from p8) The one thing that Zocchi was known for was air combat gaming. This was mainly due to the fact that air combat games were hard to find! There was SPI's Foxbat & Phantom along with Spitfire, but not much else in the mainstream section of the hobby. Here in this catalog, however, you had all kinds of options if you were into that genre. There was a good mix of both miniatures rules and board games here. Zocchi's own Basic Fighter Combat and Battle of Britain games were fairly popular during this era, plus you had Fight in the Skies by TSR and even Their Finest Hour, which was part of GDW's Europa series.

I did purchase Mig Killers, which was a zip-lock board game on jet combat. I had grown tired of Foxbat & Phantom and was looking for something more involved and this was definitely it. I played it for quite some time before Flight Leader from Avalon Hill and GDW's Air Superiority series came out. It's interesting to look back now and realize that there weren't a lot of choices around back then, so you really gave wide allowances to many games that weren't that great, which was the case with Mig Killers.

The Saber and Musket page is where you really get what a Zocchi catalog was all about! There are all kinds of rules and board games that cover a really, really, wide range of the hobby. First off, there's En Garde, which was a role-playing booklet by GDW and then the offerings go all the way to the Boer War! Along the way, there are some really interesting titles here that are worth discussing. Again, at this time there weren't a lot of options, so you would take a chance on some of these from time to time, hoping to find something that would really click with your gaming group.

I did spot Rally 'Round The Flag, which was my first set of ACW rules! I played those for a few years before Johnny Reb came along from Adventure Games (later GDW). Also on here is La Bataille de la Moskowa from Marshal/Martial Enterprises for only \$18! Today,

some of the games from that series go for several hundred dollars each. Tricolor from TSR, Boot Hill also from TSR (later to be a boxed RPG set), and the famous “little blue book” for Colonial Skirmish were all rules that I tried at some point.

Board games and rules from WRG, Z&M, London Wargames, and many others are listed here. It was sort of a flea market for those interested in off beat periods, looking for something new, or just starting a new period. Chances were that there was something listed here that would work with the miniatures that you were painting. Many of these rules were simple black & white text booklets with few illustrations and/or pictures, but they worked.

The Modern section actually had two pages, of which only one is shown here. By the number of items here, much like today, WW2 is probably the most popular period for wargaming. Even though this was during the Cold War, there weren't a lot of post WW2 rules and board games. SPI was certainly putting out their share, but other companies were just poking around at the fringes. Of course in a few years you would get numerous rules and board games, but here in 1977 WW2 was dominant.

A few items stand out such as *Tractics* for \$10 and *WRG's Armour & Infantry* 1925-1950. If you were like me back then, these were the two rules systems that you played when first getting into WW2 micro-armor. The other notables were the two Fire in the East games from GDW; *Drang Nach Osten* and *Unentschieden* for a combined \$29. Today a set might set you back \$250-300!

The other



page for Modern had the Angriff series of booklets from Z&M. Who remembers playing those? Boardgames by SDC, Conflict (later GDW), Balboa, Battleflag, and many more. WW2 was covered pretty well back in 1977! There were interesting items on Rhodesia, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and all the

way up to Nuclear Destruction by Flying Buffalo Games.

There was also a page for Naval gaming, listing things like the Fletcher Pratt rules, the original version of General Quarters, and Ship of the Line from Battleline (provided the basis for Wooden Ships & Iron Men from Avalon Hill). Midway, SSN, and Coral Sea are also here from GDW for those looking for naval board games. There's even Submarine from Battleline which was put out by Avalon Hill later and a game I still take out to play every now and then.

Finally, there were the back pages featuring a list for Jagdpanther Games, which included one of my all time favorites, Warsaw Pact, and they even carried Ogre from Metagaming for the original price of \$3! Also, there was an ad for one of the play by mail, subscription games from Flying Buffalo called Starweb. I remember playing some of those and looking forward to the computer print out every few weeks until they got too expensive.

Definitely a trip down memory lane!

Today it's hard to fathom what a few pages like this was to gamers back in 1977. With the Internet today and a host of information and selection at your fingers, you can look through a list of games, peruse the components, check a review, then order the game to have it appear in under a week. Not so back then. This was something that you looked through for days on end! You would make a list of what you wanted to buy, ask other gamers if they knew anything about the items, then save your money to put in an order. Those days aren't coming back, but it's fun to revisit them now and then!



Taking Scenario Design Seriously

by Steven Johnson

In the last issue of Warning Order I had laid down a number of thoughts about BKC IV's rules and how scenarios tended to unfold, which generated a lot of response. One of the more interesting replies was from Steven Johnson, who manages the Wargames With Toy Soldiers: 1685-1985 blog, which always has a lot of useful posts. While the topic was certainly BKC IV, these are some ideas that should be used when designing scenarios for all periods! While maybe a bit painful to read for those who just throw things together (I'm guilty of this every now and then!), what is presented here can certainly help to alleviate the problems with a lot of club night games.

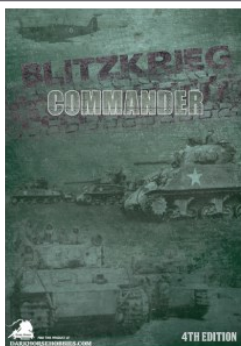
I thought I'd jot down how I approach creating a scenario for BKC, but this could equally apply to other rulesets and periods. So in a rough chronological order:

Select A Setting or Period

- This normally starts with what am I in the mood to play. It might sound bloomin' obvious, but you want to game what grabs you at that particular time.
- So is it Normandy '44, Sicily '43, Russia '41 or Poland '39? Each have their own merits for sure and sometimes you just fancy some Early War action as opposed Late War.
- Rather stating the obvious again but what collections do you have to game with? If mainly a Late War tank based force, then this naturally limits your options.
- For Solo play all of the above is quite easy to sort out, but with other friends and gamers, you might have to adjust things to suit.

Select A Scenario

- Do you want to play a historical action, such as the D-Day landings or Poland '39?
- Or do you want to play one based upon a Grant & Asquith book for example?
- To keep things



simple depending upon the time you have, then one from the rulebook might fit the bill nicely.

- Some scenarios might not be applicable, such as an Airborne Landing in Poland '39 or Russian '45. Not impossible of course but worth bearing in mind. I find that if it feels right and plausible, then you get a better game from it.

OOB

- I tend to do some basic research for both sides at the start once the Period and Scenario have broadly been selected.
- Decide who will be the Attacker, who the Defender. Depending upon the Period, this might point towards one force rather than the other. So Poland '39 is most likely to see the Germans attacking, but it is not out of the questions to have the boot on the Polish foot for something different.
- Do you use Points or Historical OOB? I tend to use a mix of both. For solo games I'm not too fussy, but if I've got a friend coming over, I will take more care and attention to try and make sure they have a good game by giving both sides a chance as it were.
- The Scenario will often dictate the OOB being used. So for example a tank heavy force would not really be suited for a Stalingrad type scenario. I know it's stating the obvious a bit, but still worth bearing in mind.
- How many players per side will there be?

Based upon experience each player should have roughly a Battalion plus Support to play with. If more than that it can be hard to keep track of things and then the game

can start to bog down with too many units to co-ordinate. So if each player does have their own Battalion, then roughly speaking they can do their own Turn alongside other players without too many problems surfacing.

Table Size

- Do you have space for a 6' x 4' table or larger or will that be a push? Maybe 4' x 4' would be more appropriate? Again Scenario selection and the number of players might mean a certain size is required. Naturally this can feed back into the above affecting the Scenario, OOB etc selected.

Scenario Specifics

- Are there any specific things that need to be taken into account, such as the weather, night time action, when reserves might arrive?



- What is the Objective for either side for the game? If using a scenario from the rulebook, then this is easy to sort out. Ditto for a Grant & Asquith type scenario, but some tweaks might be required. For historical actions then this is less easy to figure out, well for me it is. Either side might have different victory conditions, which can make for a fun and challenging game.
- Player briefings are usually required alongside a map so that again they can plan things in advance and hit the ground running when arriving *chez moi*.

Pause & Take Stock

At this point I normally like to leave things for a day or (cont. on p11)



Taking Scenario Design Seriously (cont.)

by Steven Johnson

(cont. from p10) two to let everything settle down in my mind and to let it wander a bit. Quite often I will have some slightly altered ideas on all of the above and tweak things here and there. A period of reflection is well worth doing if you can as it really does make a difference.

Set Up The Game

- Normally I try and set the game up at least a day in advance, taking into account all of the above. I will work round and view everything from all



sides to try and make sure I haven't made any glaring errors!

- Then if possible I leave it over night and come back to it fresh in the morning. It is amazing what you pick up when you look at it with fresh eyes the next day. Often I will move the odd thing here and there to remove possible obstacles the might inhibit one side more than the other. Again I will walk round just to give things a final once over.
- If playing with a friend, I will send over some photos of the layout from their own side, trying to give them an advanced view to help them plan their strategy and tactics.

Time

- A normal game for me lasts about 2-3 hours when playing solo or with a friend, where we each have roughly a Battalion per side with support. If more people are playing then you might need to allow

another hour or so.

- This excludes of course setting up and taking down the game. Normally the set up will take me a couple of hours as I find it is good not to rush things so that you avoid some glaring terrain placements that might unduly affect the game.
- Take down is around an hour or so.

A Campaign

- These days I find campaigns a much more attractive option and a better gaming experience. Naturally this is not an option for everyone but a lot of the above can be carried over from one game to another.

- I like narrative based games where the outcome of one game naturally suggests one or more options. The alternative of course is to use the Campaign system in the BKCIV rulebook, or one of the many options out there.

- For the players, having to marshal their forces over the campaign is something that to my mind, really adds another dimension to our games. No last minute Pyrrhic victories in a one off game, but careful consideration and husbanding of ones troops.

Well there you have it. I hope this might have been useful in some shape or form, but I found it interesting to jot these things down from my own point of view.



For as long as I've been in the hobby, scenarios are the hardest part of gaming for many gamers. Whether to go with historical actions, points driven games, unequal vs. equal based upon player skills, etc., this is a challenge. Not only just coming up with a scenario, but then creating the map, printing off handouts, etc., makes doing a really good game even harder. Now there are some gamers who really go all out in terms of orders of battle, sets of charts for each player, etc., and we've all played with those gamers from time to time. Normally, however, we just throw something together at the last moment and pray that it works!

What this really points out, particularly for BKC IV players (and many other WW2 gamers) is that a scenario book is desperately needed. While our group here clearly loves the rules, there are often questions about the points systems, how to represent a German infantry battalion, how many Shermans should be in a British tank regiment, and so on. Yes, you could find some online resources and take a guess, but it would be helpful if once and for all the designer/game company would just come out and say, "Here's what a Russian infantry regiment should look like.."

Also, with a scenario book it gives you all kinds of ideas about how many command units should be on the table, how much artillery is used in large games, etc. Historical scenarios are great starting points for gamers and not only gives them a target for how many figs they might need, but what an average game would look like. I sometimes think that designers and game companies lose sight of that. Regardless of ever getting a BKC IV scenario guide, there are a lot of lessons to be learned from this article and we can all certainly do better in the area of scenario design.

Memoirs of a Miniatures and Board Wargamer Pt. 49

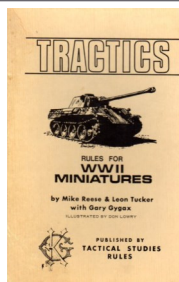
My Evolution of WW2 Tank Combat

I think it began back in 1976 when I was introduced to WW2 micro-armor battles. At that time I had only known the hobby through a handful of board wargames, but when I joined a gaming club things began to change. All of a sudden here were close to 100 vehicles and infantry stands slugging it out on a railroad hobby grass mat with masking tape roads! The rules seemed impenetrable at the time and there were a lot of discussions about armor ratings, artillery fire-power, etc. Little did I know then, but soon I would join those discussions.

The rules were Tractics and for quite some time they were the gold standard for what gamers term “rivet counters”. You could go pretty much anywhere in the country and chances were that someone in another gaming group had that set of rules. In the 70s and 80s the hobby (at least for me) was about realism. What was a set of rules that factored in angles of penetration, had ratings for every vehicle, and simulated WW2 combat the best. With that criteria Tractics seemed the best fit.

This was only reinforced when playing games such as Avalon Hill's Tobruk, which is basically a miniatures game masquerading as a board game about tank combat in North Africa. Not only that, I was already playing modern NATO vs Warsaw Pact games using SPI's Mech War 2 and other rules. Yes, complexity and time consuming games was clearly the path forward! When a new set of games or rules came out on WW2 ground combat I would glance through them and if there weren't hundreds of tables, charts, ratings, etc., I wasn't interested!

During this period as I've written about before, we had the luxury of time. So what if we played a scale five minutes in 13 hours over two days! There were no streaming services, video games (except at arcades), and Raiders of the Lost Ark was still playing at the theaters



after a year, so there wasn't much there either. Better to play a two day tank battle with your friends, gorge yourself on M&Ms and Red Vines, and talk about all kinds of stuff not related to the game that was going on! Life was good...or so it seemed.

As the club grew as did the size of our commands in the battles, the old way of doing things wasn't working. There was a need to get to the end of the battle, or at least there was the goal of trying to get there. Was it really important to argue over the penetrating power of the 88mm vs. a T-34/85 at 1,000 yards in snowy weather on a slight rise with an experienced crew? Probably not. Here is where we started to experiment with other sets of rules and maybe, just maybe, a different way of doing things. Now this was heresy to some members and it created a rift that would go on for quite some time, but it was time to press forward!

After trying several sets of rules, board game variations, etc., we reached a decision. We experimented with Tank Charts, Panzer Warfare, magazine rules, conversions of modern rules, and more. We had been using the WRG 1950-85 rules for our modern micro-armor games at the time, so we figured why not try the WW2 rules? They worked, at least for a few years. As we were really into modern warfare, our WW2 games took a back seat until the 1990s when the NATO vs. Warsaw Pact side of the hobby evaporated when the Soviet Union fell apart.

In the mid 90s, when it seemed like it was time to get back into WW2 micro-armor after getting a bit disillusioned by all the Games Workshop stuff that we had been playing, it was felt that we needed something different. No one really wanted to put 40-50 vehicles on a table, then play 5-6 hours and then find out in the end that we had played about 5-10 minutes of a battle in scale. Clearly it was time to move on and I had been seeing a lot of adds for Command Decision 2 by GDW. Once I read the designer's notes about scale and time, I was hooked and that kind of philosophy has stuck with me to this day. No more tactical engagements and arguing for hours about obscure stats. Now it

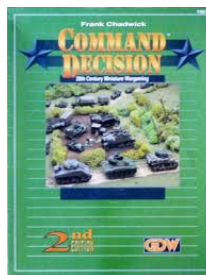
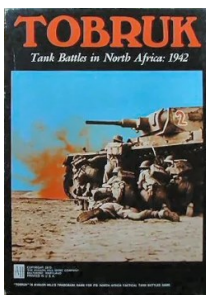
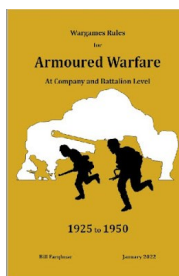
was about large operational battles that would involve artillery, engineers, recon assets, etc.

CD2 as we referred to it, served us well for quite some time. We had a member who had a 5 x 12 table, so we had massive battles and even fought a campaign with the rules. However, we had reached a ceiling after a few years. Some nights we would have 10-12 people, so the games started to slow down considerably. On top of that some wanted to move to 15mm instead of micro-armor and started looking at rules that might play faster. This was certainly a point in the hobby where complexity was at death's door and the new, simpler rules were about to make their entrance.

This was the time when Flames of War came out and there was a massive shift in the group towards these rules. Old Glory was putting out 15mm tanks for dirt cheap and within a year we had replaced all of our micro-armor with 15mm vehicles and infantry. We tried several Flames of War battles and while at first they were successful and fun, some of the mechanisms got old really fast and while no one wanted to go back to Tractics, there was a yearning with some of us to at least have a bit of realism in our games. This, along with a desire of some to only play 15mm for WW2 and 28mm for everything else split the group in half with no hope of reconciliation.

From that point we dabbled in WW2 skirmish games, first in 15mm then in 28mm, but nothing really stuck with us. Still looking for an operational set of rules to use micro-armor with we came across Blitzkrieg Commander and have been with it through all four versions. Will we move to something else? Possibly, but as we get older it gets harder and harder to change!

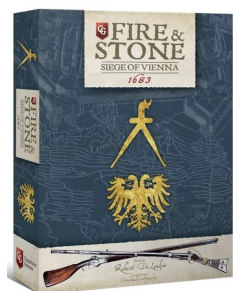
So, in the end, a long, long story about using micro-armor for WW2 battles. It went from playing one turn with Tractics in a few hours to playing 4-5 turns with BKC IV in the same time. It taught me that complexity is not the grail in the gaming hobby, but getting to a result that everyone can agree on is and still have fun while doing it, which is what the hobby is all about.



There is one question that every wargamer dreads, but that comes up quite frequently, and that is, “How many plays are you going to get out of that game?” Day by day, I’ve been thinking about this a lot, especially with the massive volume of new board games, Kickstarters, and miniatures rules/systems that are coming out for sale. What to do about it, however, is another matter entirely! The bad thing is that I’m just as guilty as the next gamer when it comes to this topic!



Take for example the 4th edition of *Successors*, which I reviewed a few issues ago. I waited a long time for this to come out, paid close to \$100 for it, then spent a few months painting all the figures, plus learning the changes to the rules. In the year that I’ve had the game, how many times has it hit the table? Twice. One of those was a one turn, two player game to learn the rules and the second time was a learning session for my group and we only got through a few turns. A beautiful game, something that holds a lot of interest for us, and is one of the all time great four player games. Yet, it might not hit the table again for several years.



Or, take *Fire & Stone* which I reviewed in this issue. A beautiful game on an unusual topic that plays pretty well, despite the abstracted nature of the siege. I

played it solitaire and had one face to face session. Despite the short playing time I highly doubt it will get played again in the next several years and will probably end up on the sale/trade pile. The game probably deserves better than this.

However, this is where the hobby is at the moment. The unrelenting barrage of new releases has turned gamers into a state of instant gratification coupled with a throwaway mentality, but there’s no long range planning involved. Gamers see new items, buy them, maybe play them once, then they either sit on shelves

or get sold to other gamers who repeat the process. As stated before, I’m about as guilty as the next gamer, although I do need to review a lot of things for this magazine, which is a great excuse or what I tell myself anyway!

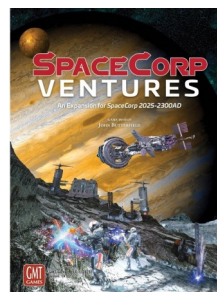
Game companies have seized upon this and are putting out product as fast as possible. Unfortunately, many of the items are underdeveloped, poorly playtested, need extensive errata, or the rules are constantly updated. There’s no time to go through the old testing standards, so instead games and rules are released quickly so as to not miss out on sales or be overtaken by another company. We as gamers shrug, make excuses for the company, and then soldier on, with many gamers creating house rules, homemade charts, etc., to make their purchases work. Yes, the inmates are running the gaming asylum now.

So what is happening here? At this time, the hobby is producing more games, rules, miniatures, than gamers can purchase or play. All of this is contributing to gamers who’s interests are a mile wide and an inch deep. Some factors that are helping this along:

- Modern publishing and technology enables almost anyone to produce rules, miniatures, and board game components quickly.
- A large segment of the gaming population has disposable income where spending a few hundred dollars a month isn’t an obstacle.
- Members of clubs with such diversified interests that agreeing upon anything to play is almost considered a miracle.
- Lack of gamers willing to play test new designs as they are too busy playing the stacks of games and rules that they just received.
- Large numbers of games and rules with minimal print runs on obscure topics that only add to the confusion.

Now a lot of gamers don’t see these things as a problem. If you look through posts on the Facebook Wargamers (one

of the hobby’s largest gaming groups) page there’s always someone celebrating the 10 games they just received to go along with the other 5 they got a few days ago from some company’s sale. How many of these are going to get played at all, let alone multiple times? We have become our own worst enemy. The more games, rules, and miniatures that we buy, the companies who produce these things are under pressure to make more to satisfy demand, which usually leads to cutting corners. 20-30 years ago many of these items would never have been published due to limited awareness, not much demand, or bad products that resulted in the company going under.



Take *SpaceCorp Ventures* for example. I reviewed *SpaceCorps* quite a few issues back and we have played it as a group once, plus a few solo plays. It’s pretty good and the *Ventures* supplement makes a good game even better, but outside of a solo play that I did, I have no idea if my group will ever play it again! Maybe I should never have purchased it in the first place? Why am I still

hanging on to it if it will never get played again?

Is this going to change and/or can we as gamers change in regards to this to see more of our games and miniatures rules played more often? Unless there are some major changes in society, the economy, etc., probably not. As long as a small company can design a game on an obscure topic, get a few hundred pre-orders, have a Chinese printing firm create low cost components, etc., I don’t see how things will change for the better. Yes, it’s great that some company operating out of a storage locker produced 200 copies of a board game about an obscure skirmish during the English Civil War, but at this point it’s just adding to the glut and general confusion in the hobby.

For 2023 I’m really going to start looking at what I own and what I intend to buy. If it’s not going to hit the table a couple of times in the next year or two, I think I’m going to hold off. I really need to focus on the games and rules that I do have, that I’ve invested time in, and that have proven to be fun. This urge to purchase new things really needs to be toned down a lot, even if I do need to review items for the magazine. We’ll see how long this new resolution lasts...

WMA: Some Really Unusual Opponents!

Game Review

From time to time we have communication issues when scheduling our games, which is what happened here. We had planned a Battles For Empire scenario, but last minute changes meant we couldn't play that and so we had to literally come up with something at the last moment, so that usually means BKC IV or Warmaster Ancients. We chose WMA, but there was some confusion over which



period, which is why we ended up here, playing Imperial Romans vs. Saracens!

The subject of "fantasy" games using historical rules and armies is always a subject for discussion in the hobby and our group as well. While it's not the preferred option, most everyone goes along with it. We certainly play a WMA tournament and DBA from time to time, of which both use armies from different time periods. We're definitely not ready for British vs. Russians in 1946, Jacobites vs. Ottomans in the Seven Years War, and Samurai vs. Greeks in a skirmish game!

We had six players this night, so it was good that we chose these armies as we were able to put some fairly large forces on the board, giving each player plenty of units to command. While most of our 2,000 point battles get finished in around three hours, that probably wasn't going to happen here, especially once we saw the table set up! In fact, we dispensed with the setting up unit by unit or brigade by brigade as there were so many units it really did-



n't matter since both edges of the board would be covered in units!

The Romans as in the previous WMA battle report in this issue, had the legions as their main striking force. With 3,000 points that meant just more of them! The Romans also had a ton of artillery, skirmishers, and more archers than usual. The one thing that the Romans were short on, however, was cavalry. While there were a few heavy and a few light units, which were enough to provide some cavalry support on the flanks, it was nowhere near what the Saracens had.

The Saracens had a ton of units! First off, there was a mass of very average infantry that would not stand up to the legions, but they could wear them down. The Saracens did, however, have 9 light cavalry units and 8 heavy cavalry units, outnumbering the Romans in cavalry by about 3:1. While the Saracens have few archer units, all of the heavy cavalry and three of the light cavalry units were equipped with bows. Both sides had a high break point (18 for the Romans and 16 for the Saracens), but the Saracens could lose a lot of skirmish units without hurting their break point number.

The Saracens figured that they would win on the flanks with their mass of cavalry, then turn on the Roman center when it advanced against the Saracen center, knowing full well that the Saracen infantry should not venture out too far against the legions. The Romans for their part were going to do a broad advance, then hold the flanks while the legions did their work in the center. Both sides had good plans that

really never came into being! The one thing that everyone didn't count on was that with so many units the battlefield depth wasn't what it usually is, so units were packed behind other units, trying to get to the front of the fighting.

The Saracen wings did pretty well the first few turns and were at least able to get out from their starting positions. Now the Saracens had put their general and three good commanders (command value of 8) on the wings, while the center had the three leaders with a command value of 7). Yes, it was a tradeoff, but the Saracen plan was to win on the wings, so if the center moved at all it would be considered a bonus!

Meanwhile, the Roman wings were nothing short of a disaster. The Roman right moved two units in three turns! The Roman left was able to get some units out in front here and there, but there wasn't a lot of support in the center. The Roman center, however, was doing great, but got separated from their flank guards. It was quickly coming down to whether or not the Roman center could kill off the mass



of Saracen infantry in the center before their wings got into serious trouble.

The first battles on the wings went in favor of the Romans, which was surprising given how much they were outnumbered. However, the large number of Saracen cavalry soon overwhelmed the Roman cavalry. The ability of the Saracens to sacrifice entire units to cause a bit of damage to the Roman units cannot be underestimated. In these types of unequal battles, the higher quality units need to do a lot of damage before they are eliminated and by turn 4 the Romans simply weren't doing enough.

The Roman center began to use its artillery to disrupt the Saracens in the center. The Roman wings were slowly starting to move, but were now facing increasing numbers of Saracen cavalry units operating freely on the flanks, meaning that the Roman (cont. on p15)

WMA: Some Really Unusual Opponents! (cont.) Game Review



(cont. from p14) infantry had to tackle the cavalry. They could score some hits and eliminate a stand here and there, but they couldn't pursue the cavalry. This allowed the Saracens to choose when and where they wanted to attack. By turn 6 the Romans needed to break through in the center or things would really start looking bleak.

The Roman legions in the center went in against the Saracen hordes, cutting through the first line like a hot knife through butter. With every attack, however, the Romans would lose a stand here and there. On top of that, some of the Roman units had to be positioned to guard the flanks of the center as the Saracen cavalry were probing the edges of the Roman advance and occasionally picking off damaged units. By the end of turn 7 the Romans were only 5 units away from their break point while the Saracens still

had 10 to go. Clearly, the Saracens held the upper hand at this stage of the game.

The Romans continued the attack in the center and the Saracens counterattacked, although the poor command ratings in the center prevented the Saracens from bringing their full weight in against the Roman legions. The Romans continued to obliterate units, but by the end of turn 8 it looked like they were running out of gas. The Roman wings were advancing and engaging the Saracens, which kept them busy and unable to interfere in the center, but they were losing units as well now, which contributed to the Roman problems.

Everyone knew that turn 10 would be the decisive point in the game. The Saracens launched massive attacks in the center and on the wings, engaging any Roman unit that they could find. This re-

sulted in the Romans losing several more units and they finally reached their break point. In the end the Romans hit their break point of 18 while the Saracens were at 12, still 4 away from theirs.

It had been a titanic struggle and certainly showed that ahistorical matchups can still be fun, particularly with Ancients. We still don't have a solution to the "pile on to break one more unit to win the game" effect that we see every so often, but the system does a good job of play balance, so both sides had their fair number of chances. The one thing that we have noticed is that ancient artillery on the battlefield is more of a nuisance than anything else and are easily knocked out, which contributes to your break point. This was, however, a pretty fun game that went around 4 hours and was pretty close in the end.



One of the interesting things about the wargames hobby right now is the sheer amount of new games that are coming out on a regular basis. Back in the 70s and 80s you were lucky to see a handful of games per month, but now it seems almost like one new game a

day! Furthermore, gamers seem to have an insatiable appetite for new games, which has given rise to many companies to try their hand at producing wargames. One of the more intriguing games to come along is Fire & Stone from Capstone Games.

Fire & Stone covers the 1683 Siege of Vienna, which is by itself an interesting topic that surprisingly has not had a lot of games made about it. While it would be logical that any game on the subject would cover the entire city with a giant map and hundreds of pieces representing all of the units, this game goes in a much different direction. We'll start by examining the components.

Not being familiar with Capstone Games, this would be a fresh look at what other game companies are producing outside of the usual GMT, MMP, and Compass offerings that I usually review. There is a small, mounted game board covering a section of the defenses, plus a



large number of plastic pieces representing the fortifications. You have multiple sets of cards that cover strategies and tactics, plus an unusual sized card deck for the troops. After that there are several tokens for game functions, two cloth bags, dice, and the rules plus a playbook/historical information. Not much to complain about here and as you play the game the components work as advertised. Just going through the various components gets you interested in playing the game!



Now trying to put this all together is the challenge after reviewing the components, which create numerous questions in your mind. Thankfully, the rules include a two page

set up picture/guide that aids you in getting the game ready and tells you what everything is used for. As you then set things out and start going through the rules most of your questions get answered.

For one thing, the map only covers part of the city's fortifications. This is clearly an abstracted view of the entire siege, showing the glacis, bastions, and curtain wall that would be encountered at any point around the city. Fortifications are in two forms; structured (angled) and improvised (straight lines). These determine how many assault troops cannot be included in the attack total. The cannon pieces are clearly artillery batteries and their placement is critical to the operations of both sides.

Each side draws five tactics cards at the beginning of the game and the rest are put aside. Players then draw five strategy cards (can be played for events or to perform actions) and the turn begins. Here's where you are going to make a lot of mistakes during your first game! Fortunately, there's only a few pages of rules, set up is fast, and you can complete an entire game in under two hours. If you mess up badly you can just start again! The amount of choices is bewildering as are the strategies to conduct the siege.

You can play cards for the events, which often allow counterattacks, bring back dead troops, or assist attacks. You can also discard cards to perform actions such as mining, assault, barrages, adding fortifications, etc. There are so many choices that it's going to take a while to figure out what to do. The mining action is interesting

as you draw tokens out of a bag and when you reach a number of "shovels" you can eliminate enemy fortifications.

Assaults are the main way to take areas and you draw a number of troop cards, conduct artillery attacks, play tactics cards, then compare what's left. The higher total of troops wins and either pushes back the attacker or the assault is successful and defenders have to retreat. Assaults are bloody and you can go through a large amount of troops which can be a problem. The first side to run out of troops loses the game! The Ottomans can also win by seizing the curtain wall, but that is at the end of the board and its going to take some good tactics and/or luck to get there! The amount of choices for both sides is too many to explain here, but this also gives the game

very good replay value.

In the end this is a highly unusual wargame that works in what it sets out to do, which is portray the Siege of Vienna, if

only in a small way. The game play is fascinating and you can try various strategies during multiple plays. I could see this sort of system being used for various other sieges throughout history and maybe even a boxed set with several in the same box. If there's any down side it would be that after two or three games you might be ready to move on to other things as there's really just the one basic scenario. However, that is a small knock on what is an interesting and unusual entry into the wargames field and it is highly recommended to try it at least once.

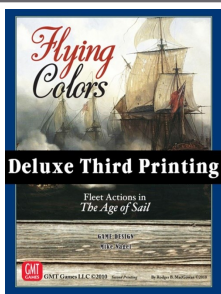


I'm pretty sure that I've mentioned this before, but naval games always hold a high level of interest for me. However, the dozens that I've played over the years usually fall flat for one reason or the other. Out of all the periods in the naval warfare genre, age of sail battles usually seem the hardest to get right. Too much detail such as in *Clash of Arms' Close Action* can drag the game down into a hopeless slog. Simpler rules such as *Osprey's Fighting Sail*, while fun, are pretty generic and turn into dice fests. Is there a happy medium out there in the hobby?

One of the games that must surely be in contention is GMT's *Flying Colors*, now in its 3rd or Deluxe edition. Not as detailed as *Close Action* and probably more in line with *Avalon Hill's Wooden Ships & Iron Men*. This boxed game sets out trying to fight operational level sailing ship battles, i.e., where there anywhere from 3-20 ships a side. Yes, we're talking fleet engagements here and not one on one duels.

It's surprising how much stuff is crammed into the box! First, there are four 22 x 34 maps depicted in various shades of blue. No, they're not very exciting, but they'll do the job. I'm sure that many are wondering why so many maps are included if they're all plain blue and the answer to that is some battles use up to three maps! Next up are the rules, playbook, then a reprint from GMT's *C3i* magazine with additional scenarios for the Seven Years War battles off of India. Very interesting stuff!

Then you come to the counters and there are a lot of them. With all of the status markers and leaders, there are larger counters representing ships from France, England, Spain, Holland, and more. There are around 1200 counters, so yes, you can pretty much do any naval battle from 1750 onward. There are also ship logs for those who hate status counters. In terms of components and scenarios, you certainly get your money's worth here. You also get each version of a ship as they were upgraded, so there is some detail here for the orders of battle.



So, what differentiates *Flying Colors* from all other age of sail board or miniature games that have preceded it? Most of that answer has to do with command and control. While moving, firing, sinking ships, etc., is obviously included, the focus is clearly on managing the fleet's ships while in battle. Each scenario will have

a number of leaders assigned to their forces and they are rated for their command range and quality. Each turn, those ships who are in command move together and the higher quality leaders get a better chance at the initiative. However, once battle occurs, things rapidly fall apart and players will find it a challenge to keep their fleets in some semblance of organization.

For those wondering if the game completely misrepresents movement and combat to focus solely on command & control, that would be mistaken. For movement there is reaching, wearing, thrown into irons, back sailing, etc., but it is used primarily to keep your ships in command range and come alongside the enemy. This is much different than in most sailing ship games where once someone fires its everyone for themselves! Ships run about the map or game board in chaos, firing when and at whoever they can. Here, the goal is to keep your formation together for as long as possible. Some gamers are going to like this and some won't.

Combat is pretty interesting in that each ship has a relative rate (firepower) and damage capacity. You choose to fire at the hull or rigging, run through the various modifiers, then roll on a table that gives a number of damage points to each.

Here's where the various status markers come in and from the picture on the right, you can see that the markers start getting stacked around fast and furious. The more rigging hits you take the less you move and the more hull hits you take your firepower goes further down the chart. At some point ships begin to sink or will strike if certain criteria are met at the end of a turn, but it will take quite a few turns to inflict serious damage.

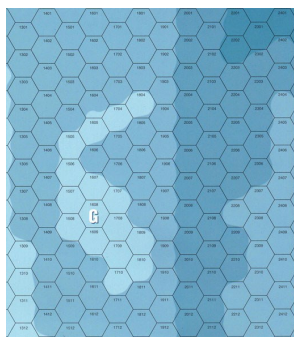
In terms of scenarios there are enough here to keep you and your gaming group busy for years. There's 18 scenarios in the playbook plus all of the ones in the *C3i* supplement which is included in the game. Many of these are pretty good sized and will take quite a few hours. Each scenario lists the ships, leaders, and starting positions, plus there is a diagram showing each ship which really helps with the set up. There is also a detailed example of play which is great for teaching how the game's various systems work.

Game play is about what you would think or have experienced with other sailing ship games. The big difference here is trying to keep you ships in command, which does give certain advantages, but is hard to do after the battle commences. Basically, ship maneuver to get into the best position possible to blast the opposing ships! Yes, this isn't rocket science, but at least in this game there is the attempt to keep your battle line in good condition and maneuver it as a large force, which is certainly lacking in many other age of sail games. The one aspect of the game that I am undecided on are the many markers that are all over and/or near the



ships, which can get cluttered at times. There are the log sheets, but tracking things on paper isn't a lot of fun. An enterprising gamer has made ship cards on BGG where you can stack your counters off board, which might be a solution.

At this time there are two other boxed sets for *Flying Colors*; *Serpent of the Seas* and *Blue Cross, White Ensign* with a 4th on the way. Both of these add more ships, campaigns, cards for initiative, and a lot more. If you're into sailing ship warfare, *Flying Colors* is certainly worth a look.



Gaming Over The Holidays

As many of my gaming friends and I get older, we seem to have a lot more time on our hands over the Christmas holidays! Some of this is due to the fact that the university I work at is closed for a few weeks, companies shutting down, etc. Where most of us use to only get a few days here and there, it's not uncommon for most of our gaming group to have off 7-14 days during this time of the year. Naturally, thoughts turn to gaming!

Unfortunately this year due to schedules, bad weather the entire holiday season, and other things, we were only able to get a few things played here and there. I had grandiose plans along with invites for about seven days worth of gaming, but in the end only got a few things accomplished. However, I was also able to finish painting a few units, read some rules, get some games ready to be played, and reorganized my painting bench.

Starting with the Warmaster Ancients game on previous pages, which was on Dec. 16th, there was some interesting gaming this holiday season. A few days later we were able to get in a game of U-Boot. The first game, which was useful as a training mission for those who had not played before. It was also great because we weren't even four hours out from Bremerhaven when we were surprised by a British escort in a storm and sunk!

The second attempt went much better, even though we were unable to finish the game. We were able to come across a convoy in our patrol area and sank a freighter, but were then depth charged for a few hours! We survived that and then went on to accomplish our second assignment, which was to bring some spare parts to a stranded U-Boat north of Scotland. A lot of fun, but we still had a long

way to go in the game and felt bad for cutting it short.

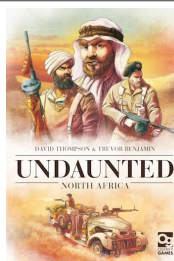
I then got in a game of Undaunted: North Africa, which is a cross between a wargame and a Euro-game. If you've seen Undaunted: Normandy, then it's basically the same theme applied to the desert! This module, however, does add vehicles, but does it in a very simple way that seems to work well during the game. There are a lot of arguments in the gaming world as to whether or not this series are true wargames, but they are certainly challenging puzzles that play quickly.

For each scenario both sides have objectives and a number of starting cards. More cards can be added throughout the game and by the end you usually have quite a few. You use the cards to move and fire the few counters that are on the terrain pieces. After a few turns you get the hang of it and it plays pretty fast. Again, not the most realistic wargame you'll ever play, but it's worth a play or two.

From there we tried Escape The Dark Castle, which is unusual in that it is a dungeon crawler that uses a deck of giant, story based cards. Each player takes one of the characters and a number of dice that correspond to their skills.

From there you turn over these huge cards that unveil part of the dungeon, with most having a monster or guards that you have to defeat to move onto the next card.

Surprisingly, it was pretty tough and we got killed early during our first try! We did succeed in the second quest and the game system is probably worth a few plays, but there are only three "bosses", so my guess is that you would start seeing the same cards after a while. Still, for solo play or looking for a one hour fantasy adventure game this is certainly worth the money.



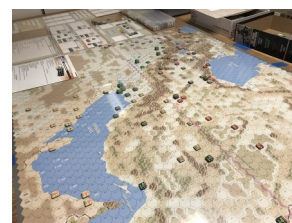
After that it was time for what has become our annual game of Twilight Imperium 4th edition. As mentioned previously, this is a massive 4X space game that should be tried by every gamer at least once in their hobby life! We had five players this time and when we decided to wrap things up after about 6 hours of play, Dave had a commanding lead and was on to the path of victory!



Part of the gaming group. Your esteemed editor at the extreme left, then Mark, Dave, Gary, & Phil.

TI4 as it is called, is not hard to play, but the sheer amount of stuff that can be done each turn means that as things go on the game does slow down. That's not saying that it isn't fun, but you need a pretty good sized time block to get to the finish along with several players who can really commit to playing this monster.

Finally, I had Persian Gulf set up from the Third World War series on my table and played a turn here and



there over the holidays, along with making more War of the Roses units. I'm also pressing forward with some German armor in winter camouflage for 1944-45 Eastern Front and some terrain. While it seems like we put in some good gaming time during the holiday season, we would

have liked to have done more! Schedules, weather, etc., however, conspired against us. Maybe next year we'll do even more gaming and report back.

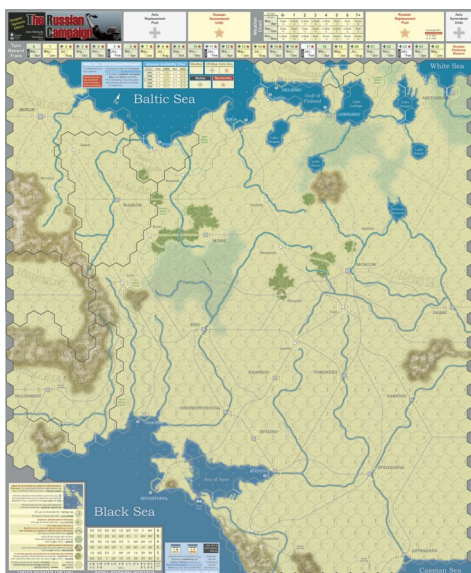


The Russian Campaign 5th Edition by GMT

Game Review

Of all the wargames that I own, The Russian Campaign is probably the one that I've played the most since I got into the hobby back in 1976. First put out by Jedko Games, then picked up by Avalon Hill, it has remained one of the most popular wargames of all time. While it's not the most realistic game depicting WW2 on the Eastern Front, it is a great game that is well balanced and easy to teach. There have been several versions of the game, including one put out by L2 quite a few years ago. Finally, after years of development, rules wrangling, publishing issues, etc., GMT has released the long awaited 5th (and hopefully final) version.

The game ships in the standard 2" GMT box, which if you added the mounted map boards to your order like I did, doesn't hold everything! Inside are two 22 x 34 inch maps, three counter sheets, a rule book, then the two set up displays, plus some mounted tables such as combat, terrain effects, etc. The first thing you notice is the maps, where there are now two instead of the one that came with the original game. The maps are of course, a massive improvement on the graphics of the Avalon Hill classic and even include a small overlay for those who want to replace the Lvov hills with something a bit less rough! All of the tables, turn track, etc., are clearly displayed on the maps. So far, so good.



The counters are much larger as well, plus you get an additional set of armor counters with silhouettes instead of the standard NATO symbols for gamers who like that feature. The sheets also include quite a few counters for the various articles, optional rules, etc., that have appeared over almost 50 years. There are battlegroup counters, the DAK corps, flak corps, and many, many more. The counters have all of the set up info on the backs of them, which is a nice and helpful touch. If I had one complaint, however, the Romanians and Hungarians should have been in much different colors as they are too close to the German green/grey.

Flipping through the rule book you can see that there are some changes here and there. For one thing, there are quite a few illustrations for some of the rules, which are very helpful. Even though I've played this game 40+ times over the years, there were always some rules I was never quite sure about! Partisans are clarified, the rail conversion piece was expanded (sort of good, sort of bad), and Russian air support was added. Basically, the development team took the advice of veterans of the game and fixed a lot of small issues. It's also good that some counters were provided to mark things that one would usually forget during the course of a game, like for example sea invasion availability.

For those who have never heard of this game, it is a strategic level Eastern Front 1941-45 campaign. There are locking zones of controls, a pretty basic combat system, limited air support, and it uses a double impulse system where a side moves/fights, then some units can move and fight again. For its time it was novel, especially since there is no advance after combat! There are worker units that replace Russian units, Lend Lease, and a never ending stream of Russian reinforcements. Basically, this is an invasion of Russia game that covers everything, but at a fairly high level.

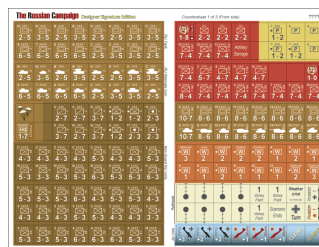
To say that there have been a lot of articles written about this game would be an understatement. The search for the

perfect defense, where should the panzers be directed at, what is a good strategy for both sides in '43, and many, many more have been written over the years. While the game isn't the greatest history and/or realism, it is a great game and finely balanced. For decades you pretty much just had the entire campaign to play, but now there are different scenarios included for those who want something a bit shorter.



When you lay out the new maps and place the now larger counters, you can see that this version has breathed new life into a classic. The charts on the map, new turn record track, holding areas, etc., definitely improve the game. The colors mesh well, you can tell which cities get the double defense, and the terrain is much more clearly laid out. The game play is pretty much the same, but there are a few changes here and there. If you've played Russian Campaign in the past, you can quickly scan over the rules and be playing in a manner of minutes. Again, however, there are a few changes.

First off, the Russians start getting air support in 1943. It's not as good as the Germans, but it will have an impact on Russian strategy now. Partisans are now more of a nuisance than they were in the previous game, where it was endless debated about what they could or couldn't do. Rail movement and rail conversion has been expanded to once and for all clear up the rules on how this works.



Finally, the weather chart has new modifiers that will help smooth out some of the wilder results that you would get from time to time. Taken together, these are fairly small changes and have limited impact on game play or for long time players, your favorite strategies.

By enlarging everything about this game (and including the option to buy mounted maps that don't fit in the box!), GMT has really produced the ultimate version of one of the Avalon Hill classics. When you add in all of the variants and options, there is a lot of replay value and it should continue to soldier on for quite some time. For the price and what you get, this version is highly recommended and hopefully, it will end all of the rules arguments over the last 45+ years!

Age of Eagles: Sudden Collapse

Battle Report

While we have pretty good-sized forces for 1812 Russian and 1813 Central Europe, we keep getting pulled back to the Peninsula campaigns. Whether it's the smaller forces that allow us to finish in 3-4 hours or just British vs. French, we've been playing a lot of Age of Eagles games in Spain recently!

Rather than go the historical route, we present another fictional battle.

The British are in a pretty good position, with a commanding hill in the midst of three villages (yes, Age of Eagles uses a building to represent a village). There were four British cavalry brigades posted on the far left with one horse battery, who would buy time where needed to rush infantry over to protect the villages. Several brigades of infantry were posted in the middle and the left with a good helping of artillery (6 batteries). There were two infantry brigades in reserve along the road near the third village just in case things went badly.

The French had six pretty good-sized infantry brigades, but only four batteries of artillery. They did, however, have several heavy cavalry brigades which were also larger than their British counterparts. The French would enter the board and attempt to seize the three villages with the British doing whatever they could to prevent this from happening.

Complicating things was a low ground



fog that shrouded the battlefield, limiting visibility to just six inches. A die would be rolled at the end of every turn and if a 4-6 was rolled the fog had burned off.

Here is where the British side

really messed up. Rather than have each side write down where they would set up due to the fog, the British set up first and gave the French a good idea about what they should do, which was namely to overwhelm the French left and center! In the end it probably wouldn't have mattered much (especially with the open British right flank), but you never know!

During the first two turns the French moved closer to the British lines and since the fog was still in effect, there wasn't any shooting, which again, really helped the French to set up their attack. The French cavalry got ready for a series of battles out on the flank against the British cavalry. Then at the end of turn 2 the fog burned off and now it was time to get serious! Both sides started to bombard the enemy front lines and you could clearly see that the big cavalry fight was about to start.

The British cavalry brigades counter-charged the French attacking brigades, but then found out due to various factors

that they were down 4 points on the combat rolls. For a few minutes it looked like it would be an early night as the British cavalry was clearly outclassed. Somehow, some way, the British cavalry hung on (rolling two 10s and a 9 didn't hurt any!) for two turns and the French could not rally to follow up. Both sides fell back to lick their wounds and get themselves reorganized.

By the end of turn 5, things didn't look too bad for the British. Their artillery had damaged a French battery, disorganized a few brigades, and had pushed the French cavalry back. On the British left, two infantry brigades moved forward to counterattack as the French had pushed everything towards the center and the British right. Despite the fog, cavalry



advantages, etc., the British were holding their own and might even win this thing! The British reserve had moved up, forces were shifted to provide a backstop in the center and basically, the British didn't see how the French could take one village, let alone three of them! (cont. on p21)





(cont. from p20) The French, however, were just getting started. They pushed forward their infantry brigades, brought the artillery closer, then moved up slowly with the cavalry to threaten the British flank. Despite the bad disorganized rolls, British artillery doing well, etc., the French felt that they really had not brought their full weight to bear on the British lines. This was about to change...

The French attacked one of the villages on the British right flank and launched two attacks on the center. At first they were negligible and it looked like the British would hang on. However, the French got the initiative, in essence moving twice in a row. They rallied, then came on again before the British could rally their disorganized units. The French pushed the British out of one village, then back to the middle of the center hill. This was definitely starting to look like a crisis

along the British line, so units started to shift to meet the threat.

Here's where things went from bad to worse for the British. At least two units were unable to rally and one quit the field. The French then attacked along the entire line, whether they had a chance of success or not! The attacks, however, kept all of the British units busy and they couldn't intervene in the center. A further round of attacks punched through when the French rolled high and the British rolled low, which led to disaster.

The British infantry were pushed back through their own artillery, which was then hit in the follow up attacks. In two of the battles the French inflicted huge losses on the British, then broke through and hit the units in reserve. This is where things really started falling apart. Between the French attacks, break-

throughs, and the British unable to rally, the French were now in control of the situation.

The British fell back, trying to establish a new defensive line with the French cavalry getting ready to move in for the kill. In several attacks they had so weakened the British cavalry that it wasn't a threat to them. Looking at the situation, with the French in control of the center, little to no cavalry, and the entire force spread too thin, the game was called as a French victory.

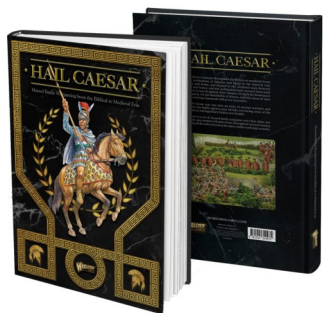
The speed at which the collapse occurred was something we don't see every day! One moment things were competitive and the next it was a complete disaster for the British! We still need to get a Spanish terrain mat and add some Spanish troops, which hopefully is a goal for 2023.



When you talk about miniatures rules for the Ancient period, Hail Caesar is usually regarded in the top five of any list that you could come up with. While still a relative newcomer to the available rules for the period, it has quickly established itself as being a popular set of rules with many gamers and gaming groups. The reasons for this are many, but it certainly helps that you can basically use any scale and/or basing system with the rules. They're not complex, are written in a friendly manner, and the many images in the book certainly help to provide inspiration for anyone interested in the period.

It's now been close to 10 years since Hail Caesar appeared and over that time there have been several books of army lists, but not much else. At some point you knew that there would be a second edition, but what it would look like and what changes would be made were only speculated upon. With Black Powder already having a second edition, particularly to tie in to their new epic lines, it made sense to have a new Hail Caesar rule book probably followed by new boxed sets. At Warlord's Games Day this past fall, a rough draft was shown and then shortly after the pre-order was announced.

The book itself is pretty impressive, coming in at a whopping 192 pages! As usual, it is filled with all kinds of images, depicting both the units that are used as well as battles during different periods. The first thing you notice is that there is sort of a "tour through the ages" right at the front of the book. In the first edition



there was a brief introduction to the various periods (Classical, Dark Ages, etc.) followed by a battle report from that period. Unfortunately, the battle reports are gone and replaced with this history section. It goes through each of the periods and shows images of painted units from that time period. Is it a good replacement for the battle reports? My answer would be no, but it's well done and fits in with the tone of the rules.

The rules themselves are essentially the same as they were in the first edition. They are cleaned up in a few places here and there with just slight modifications to make better explanations. When you get a revised edition of any set of miniatures rules the first moments of opening the book are filled with anxiety as you search for rules changes. There's nothing to really worry about here as the changes are primarily cosmetic. The only major changes I could see were those dealing with the army commander, who now gets one failed re-roll on giving orders per turn and can use the "Where's Your Courage" order to rally a unit from a broken division. Outside of that, if you know how to play Hail Caesar already, there's not much that changes.

An interesting section is the One on One part of the rulebook, which goes over how to run smaller games. I had assumed that most people already played that way, but maybe not! Since I pretty much only run large, group games with Hail Caesar this section really didn't help me any, although I could see where if you were just starting out in the hobby and had only one or two other gamers to play with, this section might help you out.

The one interesting section in the book is that they did provide sample army lists to show gamers how they are used, which is a change from the first edition. My opinion is that this shows new gamers how the lists are organized, what percentages you need in your army, and what the stats are for each unit. However, unless you're playing those armies

the lists don't help too much.

Now we come to the one large section that was added, which is Medieval and War of the Roses, which I was naturally very interested in since I have armies for the War of the Roses! There are rules for knights, arquebus, organ guns, spear/pike blocks, and household troops along with artillery. This section should answer most questions and allow you to play these periods until the specific period books come out (Warlord has said that there are books coming for both the Medieval and War of the Roses). The army list that is provided is still the generic

1450-1500 list from the Perry's web site and the FB Hail Caesar group.

The other section that was added was how to add game sieges. While there is a complete set of rules and ideas here, there is one problem, which is you almost

need two sets of figures for siege games. One set based individually for walls and breaches, then the normal units for everything else. I understand the frontage issues, representing smaller numbers of defenders, etc., but for gamers who have their figs attached to multi-figure stands, what are they supposed to do? Definitely a head scratcher and I'm going to see about just using regular units as it shouldn't affect things too much.

So, is this book really necessary if you already have and play the first edition? Not really. I'm sure someone will put together a sheet of the changes that you



can just add to your current rules. If you're just starting out with Ancients or Hail Caesar in particular, this is a well done and beautiful set of rules. Although the cost is fairly high (\$56) it is definitely one of the few rules sets that is worth the money.

Quick Reviews

GMT's Next War:

Supplement #3

The Next War series from GMT Games is definitely a popular series for modern period gamers. The series currently has four games in it with more to come. One of the main issues with any kind of modern game is keeping the units and stats current, especially since countries keep adding new weapons, changing organizations, etc. To address this, GMT from time to time issues supplements to keep the games in the series up to date.

The supplements come in a zip-lock bag and usually contain updated counters, charts, etc. This particular supplement actually had quite a lot in it, but mainly focused on bringing first editions of Next War: Poland up to date in light of the new 2nd edition coming out. There is a replacement operational map along with an extension for the main map in the Poland game. There are new play cards, a booklet adding in optional rules, and a lot of counters. Most of the counters are for upgraded units, but they also include changes in orders of battle along with some corrected units.

Now replacing all of the counters can be a challenge and you need to have the guide that comes with it open while you do it. Some units are so close to those that you are replacing that you really need to look twice! In some instances, such as the Russian air units and South Korean infantry, they all get replaced! Once you have swapped out and/or added in the new counters, all of the games in the series will be up to date.

While the supplement is well done and kudos to GMT for doing whatever they can to keep things current, the optional rules and additions to the game bring up a serious issue. The issue is that the advanced rules for this series are already complex and more things keep getting piled on. It would be interesting to find out exactly how many gamers play with all of these rules, optional units, etc., as it looks a bit daunting.

Warlord Games Stone Bridge

This is a pretty interesting 28mm bridge in that it would certainly be at home for Medieval or Horse & Musket games.

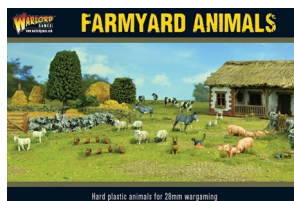


The first thing you notice is that there is dirt and grass on the bridge as if the bridge had greatly aged and been overgrown from the surrounding area. Certainly, painting the bridge is going to be more of a challenge than usual, but the finished product is well worth it. The only complaint I had about the bridge was that some of the resin "knobs" were still on the bottom of the bridge

and needed to be cut off or sanded.

Warlord Games Farmyard Animals

Something that is far overlooked in our tabletop games are villagers and farm animals! This box will definitely take care of that for you. There are cows, pigs, goats, chickens, donkeys, sheep, plus cats and dogs! All of the figures are sculpted pretty well and once painted, definitely look the part. The chickens and smaller animals are a bit hard to handle, but the assembly goes pretty quickly. The one complaint with this set is the cows and sheep had some weird gaps where the figure halves went together.



Grim is the Night by Dark City Games

I've written before about the wonderful solo adventures selection from Dark City Games. Each game, whether it is a western, fantasy, or sci-fi based booklet is a self contained game using the familiar paragraph format. You choose an action, it sends you to another paragraph, complete the task/combat/riddle and move on. The system is very similar to The Fantasy Trip, so many gamers, including myself, use these adventures with Melee and Wizard.



The adventures usually include a complete set of rules, spells, skills, etc., so that you all you really need is the book itself and some paper to get started. Each adventure includes a counter sheet for all of the charac-



ters and/or monsters that you will encounter, plus a multi-purpose map. Yes, the graphics aren't the greatest, but for the cost of the adventure they work fine. This one wasn't bad, but there was a problem with the paragraph numbering at one point and some questions about what characters should be taken. Hopefully, in the future all of the info to begin will be right at the front.

Testor's Dullcote & Glosscote

For decades I have used Testor's Glosscote and Dullcote for my painted miniatures, so imagine my surprise when I heard that Testors was discontinuing its Model master line and possibly everything! I quickly

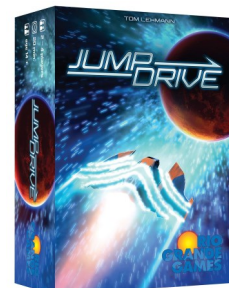
stocked up on several cans of both and tried Windsor plus some others in case I ever ran out. Fortunately, RPM (aka Rustoleum) seems to have the brand and have been re-releasing both Glosscote and Dullcote again. Crisis averted!



Jump Drive

If you've played Race for the Galaxy, Roll for the Galaxy, or any similar games over the last few years, you're probably not alone in being overwhelmed and/or confused by all of the icons on the cards! In fact, just knowing what to do, which cards can be played with which cards, looking up icons for hours, etc., can make for some long and frustrating games.

Along comes Jump Drive, which is a simplified version of many of those kind of card games. The cards do have icons, but they're fairly easy to understand. Once you figure out the system you can get in a game in under one hour and sometimes much quicker than that. There's a few paths to victory and you can finish a few games in an evening. Probably not something you could play every gaming night, but could be great for a filler game when needed.



It's weird that we really like playing Battles For Empire 2 and that we have 1500+ figures, buildings, gunboats, etc.. However, if it hits the table once a year we're doing good! The reasons for this are many and well documented in this magazine over the years, but we usually have a lot of fun with this period and the rules. So, once again, we were back for a fictional action somewhere in the Sudan.

Whenever possible, we usually like to play with the 1883-85 Egyptian forces, which include all kinds of strange units. The Egyptian army at this time consisted of large numbers of "auxiliary" forces, such as Sudanese infantry, Bashi-Bazouks, local militia, slaves, and friendly natives. Naturally, this army wasn't very good, so it makes it pretty challenging to play. We've found that when we use the British and Indians, that you really need to have them seriously outnumbered to balance out the firepower advantage.

The scenario this time involves the provincial governor, who was going to be arrested as a Mahdist sympathizer. An Egyptian column was dispatched to one of the villages to do just this, exchange the company garrison, and deliver supplies. Naturally, they got far more than they bargained for! The column consisted of the following:

- 2 units of Egyptian infantry
- 3 units of Sudanese infantry
- 2 units of Bashi-Bazouk infantry
- 1 unit of Slavers



1 mountain gun battery (w/camels)

3 units of cavalry and camelry (2 Egyptian and 1 Bashi-Bazouk)

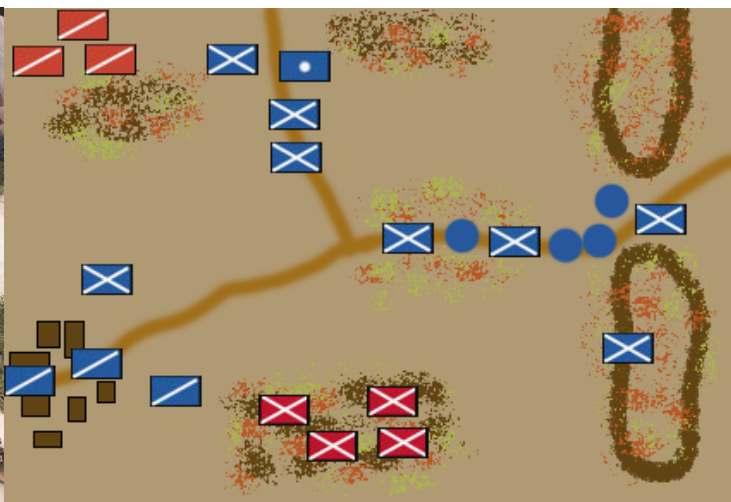
The column was broken down into three forces; the advance guard who was already at the town. The central force who had been checking the flanks and had the CO with them. Then finally, the baggage/supplies and their escort. The advance guard already had the mounted camel troops dismounted and skirmishing with the Mahdists on the outskirts of the village.

The reason for that was that the governor and the garrison had gone over to the Mahdi! Yes, the trap was sprung and both Dervishes and Hadendoa tribesmen started appearing from cover around the board. At this point, the Egyptian commander had a choice to make; move quickly to the village, fortify it, then hold out against any attacks, or, go back out the through the pass towards their home base. The Egyptian commander looked around for a minute, then issued the order, "Back to the pass!"

From this point on it was a chaotic and haphazard fight as the Egyptian column tried to fight its way back to the pass through the hills. The Mahdists forces had some units already in place for an ambush, but there were others that would be arriving. At the start, there were 4 infantry units on one side of the board in a rough area and three cavalry units on the other side. Four more units would be arriving near the middle of the board on Turn 4 and another four units would arrive Turn 5 near the mountain pass. There were three more units outside of the village, but would not enter until Egyptian forces left the area.

The Egyptians tried to get themselves straightened out. The baggage/supply column was strung out and guarded by the worst units! They did, however, get the initiative a few turns in a row and were able to at least get themselves into some kind of defensive stance. The Egyptian cavalry turned itself around and headed back towards the center of the board and arrived just in time to catch the Mahdist units springing their ambush.

The first attacks went in, which inflicted some casualties on the Egyptian forces. The Bashi-Bazouks, the 14th Sudanese (in their light blue Zouave uniforms), and a unit of Egyptian cavalry, all held their positions. The Egyptian cavalry launched some well done flank attacks, which took pressure off the center. The remaining Mahdist cavalry took huge losses moving in and simply could not close the range in time. While the Egyptian forces weren't the best shots as compared to the British, there were some good die rolls that slowed the Mahdist advance. (cont. on p25)



Battles For Empire: Escaping The Ambush! (cont.) Battle Report



(cont. from p24) There were a series of wild charges in the center that saw the destruction of two Mahdist infantry units along with the Bashi-Bazouk cavalry. At this time, it was hard to say if anyone was winning! There were units all over the place, no front line to speak of, and not much support for either side. This was a “charge who you can see” type game that rapidly became a fight in a phone booth, so to speak.

By this time there were Mahdist units on all four sides of the board. The Egyptian camel troops remounted and moved out of the village, followed quickly by three more Mahdist units waiting outside the village for just that moment. Things were quickly approaching a crisis for both sides. Most units had several hits on them, many were shaken and having a hard time moving, and it was felt that one final push by either side might just do it.

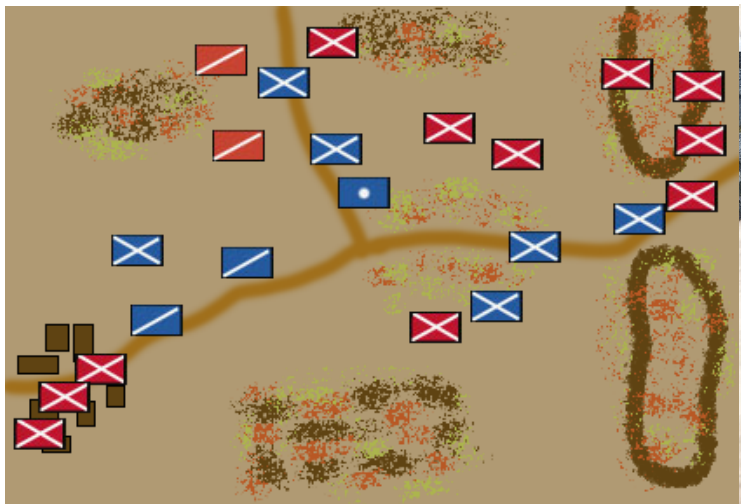
Then there came the critical two turns that decided the game. The last remaining Mahdist cavalry unit charged in, coupled with a Mahdist infantry unit that had recently appeared on the side of the board. In what looked like the attack that would open the way to victory for the Mahdists, it was instead thrown back with heavy losses, then the two attacking units were destroyed. The two units of the 14th Sudanese stood their ground, firing volley after volley into enemy units, then defeating two of them in close combat.

The final moment of crisis was the baggage/supply column where the Bashi-Bazouks, slavers, and Sudanese made some heroic stands. They rallied several times against the odds, defeated a number of attacks, got out of being flanked, and basically did far more than anyone thought they were capable of! This allowed the other Egyptian units to maneu-

ver in an effort to finish off several of the attackers, which they did. Even though the Slavers got eliminated, they held up the attacking forces long enough for the other baggage escorting units to rally and save the supplies.

We looked around after 8 turns and decided that the Mahdists simply didn't have the strength to eliminate the Egyptian column. The column had lost 50% of its forces (!!!), but in game terms would survive and get back to the pass. A near run thing that was a lot of fun, even though we spent a lot of time trying to remember the rules!

We've vowed to get Battles For Empire 2 back to the table at least one more time this year, so expect another battle report. We'll probably use the train and British next time, so the trick is coming up with a scenario that gives the British a challenge!



Battles For Empire: Escaping The Ambush! (cont.) Battle Report



Six more pictures from the Battles For Empire game. All of the figures are 15mm and are from various manufacturers that include Essex, Old Glory, some Minfigs, AB for the Bashi-Bazouk cavalry, and Old Glory ACW Zouaves for the 14th Sudanese units.

SaltCon Spring 2023 Convention

Convention Report

Once again it was time for SaltCon, which is a board gaming convention held at the Davis Convention Center in Layton, Utah, which is just outside of Salt Lake City. In some older issues you could see that we had run some miniatures games at this con, but for some unexplained reason there haven't been miniatures games on the program for a few years now. Still, it's a great chance to play some board games that we ordinarily wouldn't get to due to our Friday night schedule.

The con runs from 10am on the first Thursday in March to Sunday around 4pm and generally goes 24/7. I remember a few times coming in early to set up the day's miniatures events and had seen quite a few gaming groups who had been playing all night! There is an exhibitor hall, a RPG room, a game library, game swap/sell room, quite rooms, rooms with reserved tables, and the main hall which



and accessories. The games ranged from small card games that were over in 10-15 minutes and others with literally thousands of cards and parts that went on for quite a few hours. I made a mental note to check into a few things that were interesting.

The game swap room was expanded, which was good because the old room was too crowded. This is a great idea for cons as you can find some pretty good deals on games that you may want to try. Unfortunately for our group, there weren't a lot of wargames available for sale! We did pick up an Ogre 6th edition boxed set for \$10 which is a pretty good deal and I almost bought a Great Battles of Julius Caesar from GMT still in the shrink wrap for \$50. It was also great seeing some classic games like Carrier Strike for sale!

The exhibit hall was pretty full and as you can probably imagine, there were multiple vendors selling a lot of different board games, accessories, and again, surprisingly, a lot of RPG materials. The selections ranged from mom and pop local stores to game publishers, so there was certainly something there for everyone. One of the good things about the game publishing companies showing up at these cons is that you get a chance to try out their games and sometimes getting a price break at the same time. The big hit this time was the two Dark Ages games, which were in huge boxes and had games playing each day of the con.

The other feature that has really grown over the years was the game library. From its small beginnings it has grown into a vital part of the con! The library now takes up almost two of the smaller rooms and features hundreds of games that you can check out to play for a few hours. In fact, many con goers just show up and check out games over and over! This is a pretty good idea and the system seems to work pretty well from what we could see.

Being wargamers we naturally get in a few of those kinds of games, but

we also play a few non-wargames that have proven successful with the gaming group over the years. We started out with a quest from Heroquest, where the group actually won the game, although it was pretty close at the end. We followed it up

by playing Dune: Imperium, which is another in a long line of Dune games, but it's Euro type system of resources, deck building, and limited conflict produces a pretty challenging game. The con is also another excellent excuse to go to dinner as a group and talk about even more gaming!

After that, we got in an epic Britannia game, with Blue barely winning over Green, then a fairly long Terraforming Mars game. The one thing that we always notice at the con is that games take much longer to finish than on regular gaming nights. It's probably mostly due to the noise, distracted by other games, going to the snack bar, and long walks to the bathroom! Finally, we did get in a full game of Angola and finished off with Junta Las Cartas.

While we had fun at the con, I fear that this might be the last one for us for a while. The main reason is that there really isn't much there for wargamers and with no miniatures gaming any longer, our level of interest isn't as high as it used to be. The con is well managed, in a great place, everyone is friendly, and obviously very successful as its been sold out the last several times, with at least 1500-2000 gamers there on some days. We've just come to the realization that we can play the games we played at a club member's house and forego the registration fee! If they ever get a wargames room or bring back miniatures gaming we'll probably take another look.



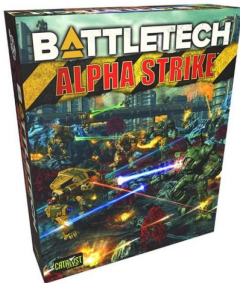
has to be seen to be believed! We played all of our games in the main hall, so it's interesting to see all of the activity there.

For those who think that RPGs had their day and are a fraction of the gaming hobby, that would be a totally wrong conclusion! The RPG room was pretty crowded all three days that we were there. I was really surprised by all of the new systems, themes, and materials that have been created for the next generation of RPGs. I'm not sure if it's at the same level of interest that D&D reached back in the late 70s and early 80s, but RPGs seem to still be going strong.

Of course, the great thing about going to cons is just seeing all of the unusual games that are being played. Some groups had professional mats serving as backgrounds for their games while others had all kinds of custom 3D parts, holders,



Ages ago, FASA came out with a very popular series of games called Battletech. This was way back in the 80s when sci-fi gaming was really coming into its own. The series grew and grew until there were multiple boxed sets, supplements with space combat, campaigns, various add-ons, extra maps, etc., until it became the Advanced Squad Leader of the sci-fi gaming world! This doesn't even take into account the miniatures for the game, which came out by the dozens!



I remember the time or two I tried this system, which was a long, long time ago. At the time it was fairly complex, but when you're playing Harpoon, Air Superiority, etc., it wasn't anything that hard in comparison. The record sheets, keeping track of all of the special rules, the 100+ variations of mechs, and so on was quite the challenge, making the games go on for what seemed at the time to be all day! As Warhammer 40k started to gain more and more traction, Battletech started to be played less and less. Other companies brought out their mech/big robot games, but nothing really took hold.

Today, after decades of having the old Battletech system, a new version has emerged; Battletech: Alpha Strike. One of our club members got the new boxed set and having quite a few mechs painted up, decided that it was time to give it a go. Several of us could easily see that the record sheets were vastly simplified, now being the size of regular playing cards. After a quick description of the rules,

how things shoot, etc., we were ready to begin.

The premise of the scenario was that House Kurita has been making incursions into House Davion's territory and have landed on the planet Adrian in an effort to push towards New Avalon. They've captured the lord who was

coordinating the defense of Adrian and are going to try to get him off planet before Davion's forces can stop it. House Kurita began the scenario with three "lances", which are groups of four mechs, in the city and surrounding area. The two APCs carrying the lord and his family are in the city, ready to be escorted to the nearby spaceport.

Davion had multiple lances in the area as well and quickly moved to secure the spaceport. If Kurita could not break through, then they would need to get the APCs off board by using a road exit. Each side also had available a lance of reserves that would appear based upon meeting certain conditions. Also, each side's mercenaries weren't interested in dying to the last man, so once their armor was down to 0 they would leave the battlefield.

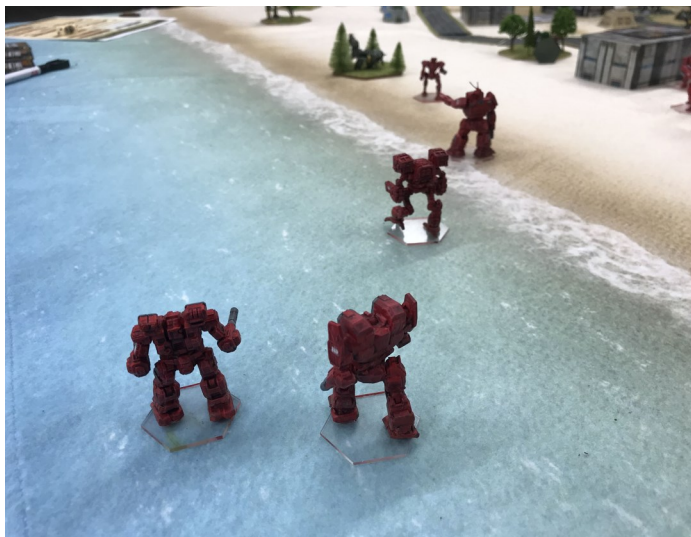
Not really knowing how things would work, how ranged combat worked, etc., tactics were novel to say the least! The first thing and something that we discussed afterwards, was how movement worked. Basically, one side gets initia-

tive, meaning that they make the other side go first, then you alternate mech by mech. This does create some weird situations where you might have someone cornered, but they go last and can move out of the opponent's firing arcs. Anyway, Kurita's forces moved out to take



the spaceport, while the heavy lance stood back and started a long range fire-fight to cover the advancing forces.

Naturally, Davion was going to just stand around and let this happen! Their lances began to maneuver to get to the APCs and deny the spaceport. By the end of turn 2 there were multiple fire-fights across the board. Nothing had died yet, but already several mechs had taken damage. We started to learn what worked best, moving to cover, how to close the range, etc. We're not the fastest learners in the gaming world, but by turn 4 mechs were dying and things were starting to get serious. (cont. on p27)





(cont. from p26) Davion's mercenaries had enough by this time and started backing off the board. Kurita dropped their reserve of heavy mechs, who immediately sealed off a potential end run by Davion to take the APCs. At this stage of the game, Davion was in trouble. They had several mechs knocked out, Kurita had some heavy firepower on the board, but getting to the spaceport would be tough. The game continued with both sides taking more losses, but finally, Davion qualified (scenario conditions) to get their heavy lance dropped onto the battlefield.

This created a massive slugfest where some of the heaviest mechs on the board were within close range. While these mechs could take a large number of hits, their weapons could produce a large number of hits! Kurita was now in control of

the middle of the board, although they were taking fire from three sides. Bad die rolling by the Davion players allowed the Kurita light mechs to slowly grind down Davion's forces. By turn 8 and 9 it looked like one more push by Kurita might do the trick.

Kurita moved everything forward, engaging everything in sight. While a few of the Kurita mechs fell or took heavy damage, the outcome for Davion was far worse. With just 5 or 6 mechs left to face off against almost a dozen Kurita mechs, the game was called as a Kurita victory.

The all day Battletech slugfests have certainly been shortened down! Including set up and take down, we probably finished in under three hours and that was with each player running two lances. Granted, we weren't playing with infan-

try, aerospace fighters, artillery, etc., but the game seemed to move along much, much faster than the old version. It will be interesting to see the playing time once we add in special rules, infantry, etc. The good thing is that at least military tactics seem to apply here and basically, you're substituting mechs for 20th century tanks, so even gamers who aren't sci-f an fans could probably get interested in this.

There were a few hiccups, but that's to be inspected. Trying to recognize which mechs were which off of the cards was a challenge all night. The ranges were interesting with under 6 inches being close (seems too close for large warmachines), then up to 24 for medium range, and 48 for long range. These are small quibbles for something that seemed to work well, especially the first time!



Dark Ages: Holy Roman Empire

Game Review

One of the growing trends in gaming the past few years has been big box Kickstarters. From wargames to Euros, there are a large number of these games coming out each year on a variety of topics, from science fiction to ancient Greece. Stuffed with cards, meeples, bits, plastic figures, boards, etc., these huge games must sell pretty good as there seems to be no end to them! Into this already crowded marketplace comes a new entry that focuses on a rarely gamed subject, which is Dark Ages: Holy Roman Empire.

The first thing you notice is the size of the box, which fairly large, even for your usual boxed games. Inside is a huge mass of boards, plastic figures, cards, tokens, and the rules. You have the game board, the master board, four player boards, and several decks of cards. Next up are the plastic archers, soldiers, and cavalry in four colors (one for each player). On top of that you have cities, keeps, farms, other buildings, then grand building for one of the modules. Finally, there are the commander figures and tokens for various other game functions, plus dice. Yes, there is a ton of stuff in the box and it all looks pretty good!

The only problem with the mass of components is how best to organize them to set up a game fairly quickly. After glancing through the rulebook you can see that there are the basic rules, then a number of modules that can be added on. Also, it's good to take note about what components each player will be using and have those in separate bags or trays. Once you figure out where everything goes and what it's used for, it's time to start learning the game's systems.

While the rule book isn't the easiest to get through, the various procedures are explained to the point that you can at least figure out what's going on. The



examples do highlight certain rules in the game, but at times it feels like maybe a play through of a turn would have been better. The good news here is that the base game only takes up half the rule book and some of that is just the set up and explaining the various components. The add on modules takes up the second half of the rules, which depending upon which ones are added in, will up the complexity.

Getting going the first few turns was a bit of a challenge. Learning how the noble tokens work, how the cards are used, and how to get resources (which play a huge role in the game) took some practice. You quickly learn that you need to purchase more buildings to get iron, wood, leather, etc., to pay for yet more things. However, and with most of these resource building/4X type games, there's far more to do than you have the capability for!

You could of course, conquer neighboring areas, but the combat system can be brutal to the attacker, but the rewards are pretty good. Your combat units can then be used to settle the province, which creates farms that allow for larger armies and to build cities. As you can see, one thing triggers something else that triggers something else, and so on. Trying to figure out what strategy to use can tax your brain! There are a million paths to victory here and it would take several games to explore various strategies.

On top of all of that, there are the culture cards and the culture track. Cards provide new technologies, allow for faster building, improving your armed forces, and additional scoring opportunities. Now most of these cost resources as well, so you can see how there are all kinds of things that you need, but there simply aren't enough resources to pay for them all. You can also move faster down the culture track, which gives you rewards as well as better card selection.

The game ends when someone reaches the end of the culture track or when the supply of churches (another thing that can be built) runs out, or when the supply of cities to build runs out (the number available depends upon how many players.) The scoring system is chaotic to say the least and it's hard to know who is actually ahead at any time despite the scoring track around the edge of the map. You add victory points when certain things occur during the game plus there are some things that are calculated at the end.

Now I haven't even mentioned that there are an additional 14 (!!!) "modules" that can be added on, although two of them, the solo game and the big game that combines Dark Ages: Heritage of Charlemagne, aren't actually optional things to add. The other modules add cards for the Pope, an optional combat system, commanders (featuring 5 famous leaders who are represented with oversized miniatures), alchemists, and many more new cards. Playing the base game was pretty challenging and adding on even more cards would be interesting.

The game is pretty fun to play once you figure things out and it can seem at times that there are too many things happening at once, plus it's difficult figuring out a strategy. The ability to add even more cards and add on a second game (Heritage of Charlemagne) for up to 8 players gives this game pretty good replay value. I think the main question is how many times will this get played, especially with all of the other games coming out? Still, it is recommended that you try this at least once.



You've just bought Tainted Grail, Twilight Imperium 4, one of the Dark Ages games, or any one of the hundreds of big boxed games that are literally raining from the sky every day into local game stores. You get it home, take the shrink wrap off, then stare at the mass of plastic, cardboard, wooden pieces, etc. What do you do next?



This is currently a plague running through the gaming community at the moment. If you're like most gamers, you put everything back in the box and never open it again! Believe it or not, there are quite a few gamers who have closets stacked from top to bottom with these big boxed games that will never get played. However, these games are meant to be played, so how does one go about getting these monstrosities to the gaming table? Hopefully, there's an enterprising gamer in your group who loves these kinds of challenges, but what if it comes down to you?

The biggest challenge is getting things organized. While the rulebooks that come with these games usually have set up guides and/or illustrations about what and where things go, there can still be a high level of confusion. With Dark Ages: Holy Roman Empire for example, it took me 30 minutes to figure out that the solo module and the base game shared a handful of cards and that some of the grand building cards were attached to certain leaders. No amount of staring at the set up guide was going to explain that, so I had to hunt it down in various rules sections.

Luckily for some of the more popular games there are companies like Folded



Space or Broken Token, who sell a variety of game storage kits. You simply assemble the trays, token holders, etc., then load up the components according to the plan. Some of these products are quite ingen-

ious and it's amazing how they get everything to fit back in the box! Also, there are gamers who provide 3D printable plans on BGG or how to build storage boxes from foam core. But what if you don't want to pay for these products (some storage solutions cost almost as much as the game!) or have the time to build an elaborate set of boxes?

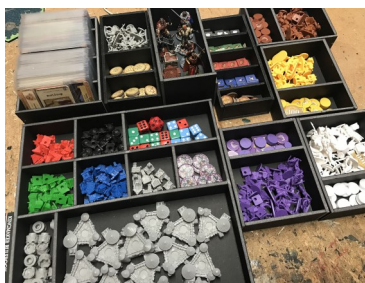
It's always a good idea to start with the cards as if there's going to be any set up problems that's where they usually occur. Sort out all of the various decks, starting cards, add-ons, promos, etc., then this would be a good time to sleeve them if you like that in your games. The next step is how to organize the cards. The simplest way is to just use rubber bands to separate the various decks, but you can build surprisingly effective trays with foam core, white glue, and a few minutes of your time. Once the card situation is under control, it's on to other things.

The next thing I usually tackle are the player's components, whether they are plastic ships, figures, buildings, tokens, etc. A decision needs to be made at this time in terms of either a) putting all of the components in the same bag, box, etc., or b) storing everything separately, then combining things for the player at the start. It's been my experience that if you can give a player a tray or box that has everything they need for the game, it

greatly helps in getting the game going and for clean up.

Speaking of clean up, this needs to be taken into account. If there are a large number of cards that need to be in separate decks at the start of the game, storing all of them in one tray, bag, etc., won't help much. It's better to have dividers in trays or some way to separate the cards during clean up so that for the next time you play the game sets up much faster. The same goes with tokens, plastic figures, etc., where having them in their own containers makes the next game more manageable.

I've included two images of the trays I made for Dark Ages: Holy Roman Empire, which certainly qualifies as one of those big Kickstarter games with lots of components. Just from opening the box and going through the rules, you can easily see that some sort of organization is definitely needed. I bought two sheets of black foam core for around \$5 to make the various trays shown here. Yes, it does take a few hours, lots of measuring, cutting, and gluing parts, but it is worth the effort. Without these trays I'm not sure how we would have played the game or figured out how to set things up the next time!



From there it's just figuring out how the game plays. I usually go through the rules to see what the designer is trying to emphasize, i.e., some sort of new, chit based combat system for example. Once you have a good idea of the rules, I usually set up a sample 2 or 3 player game and play all sides through a few turns. The idea is get the hang of the turn sequence, where are the problems areas, do some of the components need to be reorganized, etc. By this time you're ready for your gaming group to try it.

Will there still be issues? Most certainly, yes! However, with things organized for all the players and you knowing how the game basically works, the group can work out the rest. Usually, by the third turn everyone can proceed on their own and you will have introduced your group to a new game. Again, being organized is the way to success here!



(cont. from p32) In fact, casualties had been fairly light so far on that side of the board, even though many units were now intermingled.

So, this led to some interesting rolls on the movement chart. With most units now worn (and quite a few spent), enemy units on their flanks, and the heavy casualties modifier, getting units rallied and moving to the attack was quite the challenge! Added to the hills, rough terrain, etc., it was certainly hard to just come to grips with the enemy forces, let alone try to come up with a comprehensive strategy during the battle. By the end of Turn 6 both sides had suffered quite a few losses and units were all over the place.

The Union counterattacked on both sides of the board, achieving some success against Walker's forces and pushing most of them back to the second objec-

tive, which was the big hill on that side. The Union forces opposite Bates, however, were reaching the point of exhaustion, but they had eliminated most of the Confederate command on that side. There was a Union counterattack against the Confederate forces holding the first objective, but it never could quite push them all the way off.

As we were nearing the end of the game, both sides pushed hard for one more turn. The Confederates consolidated their grip on objective 2, but the rest remained in doubt. For their part, the Union tried to take back both objectives and were sharing the first objective when the game was called. Bad die rolls for moving and shooting prevented the Union from having any large measure of success on the final turn.

With time running out (the store we

were playing at was closing in 20 minutes!) we had to call the game with around two turns still remaining. We decided that the Confederates would win, but just barely. While one Confederate had been wrecked, the other was in pretty good shape and about to drive a wedge into the Union defense.

A very good scenario that was pretty balanced! First off, we definitely need to use the right rules for this size of game, although the brigade level rules played much better than we thought they would. Why more of us do not have the regimental level rules is a mystery and I'm sure we'll tackle that at some point in the future. The other thing that has eluded us for decades is getting ACW terrain right. The undulations in the ground, streams everywhere, roads at weird angles, etc., are definitely a challenge that we need to better with.



Along with the article at the end of this issue, I had been reading a lot about the Russians crossing the Oder River near the end of the war, which by itself is a fascinating topic. The amount of scenario ideas that these books could generate is off the charts, whether they are large scale battles or simple skirmishes. Not only that, both sides had plenty of late war, heavy armor that made frequent appearances! I had designed a fairly involved scenario, but when our usual place to game was unavailable and we only ended up with four of us, it had to be scaled down just a bit.

It's a day or two after the final offensive to take Berlin has started. On the flanks of the main drives, Russian forces are crossing the Oder River in strength and looking for cracks in the German defenses. Once through, they will race to the German rear areas to dislocate German forces and make it easier for the follow on forces to reach Berlin. In this particular sector, the Russians have repaired a captured river bridge, but it can only support three vehicles crossing it per turn. There are also two ferries in operation that can cross two vehicles per turn. The Russians begin with some units already across the river.

The Russians have a mech infantry battalion backed by a unit of SU-100s and SU-122s (6 vehicles total). The SU-100s have crossed and are in place, but the SU-122s and a company of T-34/85s



are forming up to use the ferry in this sector. On the other flank, two T-34/85s are already across with 8 more standing by, along with 3 IS-2s and a mech infantry battalion. The artillery bombard-

ment has already occurred, but the FAO has two batteries of 122mm standing by along with a one turn barrage of Stalin's Organs.

The Germans have a fractured command system, with most units of brigade and higher being personally directed by Hitler. There is a volkstrum battalion deployed across a road with one AT gun for this sector. One of the arriving forces from the south is an understrength panzer grenadier battalion supported by Stugs and Hetzers. It's job is to reach the bridge and destroy it. The other German command consists of a mixed armor battalion of three Panther and three PZIVhs. Two Tigers are directly attached to the overall German commander. There is one battery of 105mm artillery in support.

At first glance (and seeing the map below) it would appear that the Germans are in good shape and maybe the Russians could use more forces. However, the volkstrum are strung out with only one commander (command rating of 7), the other two German forces cannot coordinate their actions, and the Germans arrive in small groups. The Russians

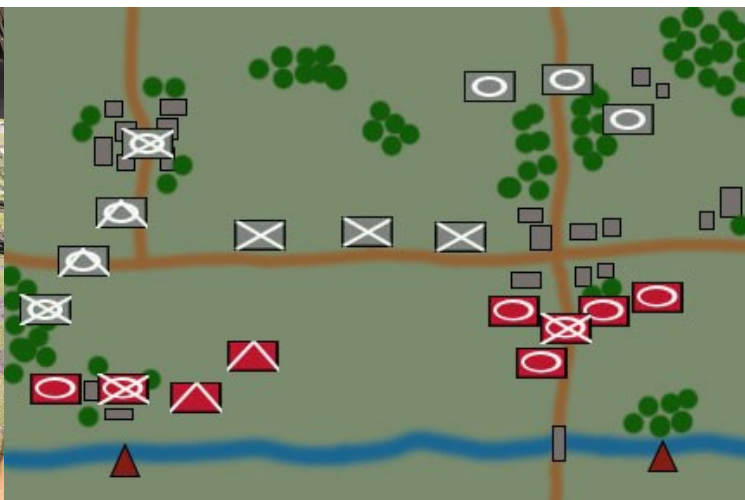
would have a short term advantage if they could push things.

The first few turns could not have gone any better for the Russians. Several units were ferried across and they were able to get out into the open, moving quickly towards their objectives (the road exits). A German counterattack by the Stugs was quickly defeated, with 3 of the 4 being destroyed. In fact, we started discussing whether or not the Germans might need more armor to make a game of it or we would be calling it an early night! However, that changed quickly.

For one thing, the Russian SU-100s and SU-122s could not make a saving roll if their lives depended upon it. The remaining German Hetzers and then the Tigers at long range, started scoring hit



after hit. The Germans kept pressing the counterattack and the Russians kept blowing the saving rolls. The Russians knocked out the German AT guns, but when the T-34/85 company blundered and fell back, that was pretty much the end of the Russian operations on that side of the board! (cont. on p35)



BKC IV: Russians Attack Across The Oder (cont.) Battle Report



(cont. from p34) Over on the other flank the Russians got held up by the Panthers just long enough. A huge chunk of the T-34/85s got stuck near a farm and simply could not move due to the German opportunity fire as well as bad command rolls. The one T-34/85 that went on a recon mission was quickly set ablaze. With the Tigers and PzIVs on board by turn 5, things were looking a bit tougher for the Russians.

Then the German artillery found the range. Even though it was just a few rolls per tank in the blast radius, there were quite a few hits on the Russian armor that weren't saved! The IS-2s finally (after failing three straight orders) got across and moved to engage the Tigers. The Russians still had the firepower edge if they could just all go at the same time, which simply never happened as the Rus-

sian command rolls got worse over time. The Russian artillery was nowhere to be found (bad rolls by the FAO) and the Russian left flank was in trouble.

The Russians tried one more time to get things going, but had poor shooting rolls and could not roll any saves versus the Tigers, still holding back at long range. The game became a stalemate, with the Russians unable to venture forth with the Germans waiting to kill them as they crossed the open and the Germans content to stay where they were. By turn 10 the game was called as a German victory.

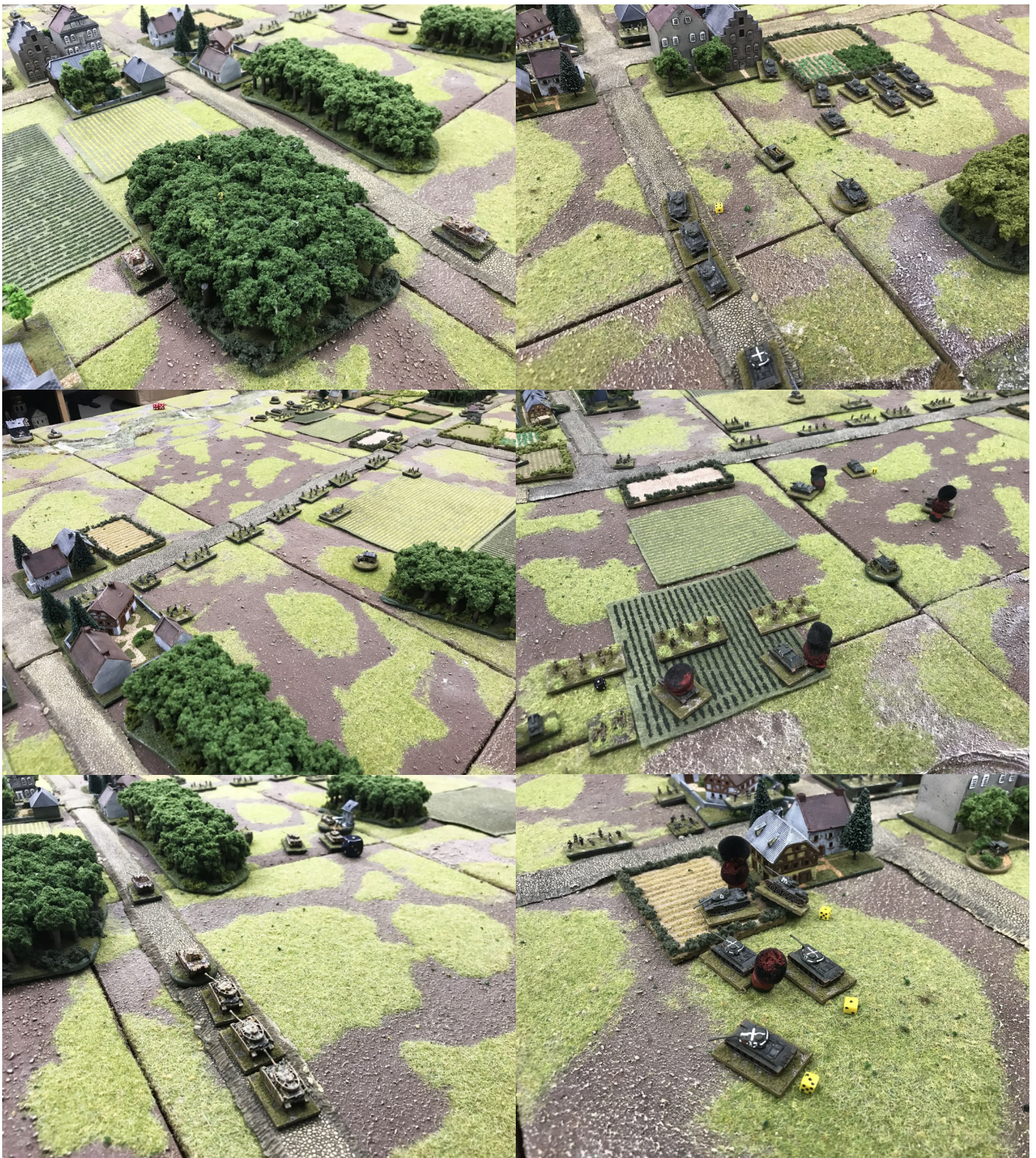
The scenario turned out to be pretty interesting in the end, despite the bad start the Germans had. Late war armor, with its long range firepower and pretty good saves is really good on the defense, so maybe the Russians didn't have

enough stuff for the entire game? It might also have been different if the Russians had scheduled artillery, but for the scenario we figured that had already happened and now the FAO was looking for targets of opportunity. The issue there, however, is that the Russians have really bad FAOs! Also, we felt the Russians could have used some more officers.

The scenario was pretty fun and challenging for both sides. One problem that stood out, particularly for late war games is that you can get to a point where everyone is too afraid to advance as you can really get hurt by the opportunity fire. After much discussion we feel that we need longer and maybe a bit wider boards to spread the armored forces out a bit. We'll try a few things next time to get some more maneuver room as well as try to force some infantry action.



BKC IV: Russians Attack Across The Oder (cont.) Battle Report



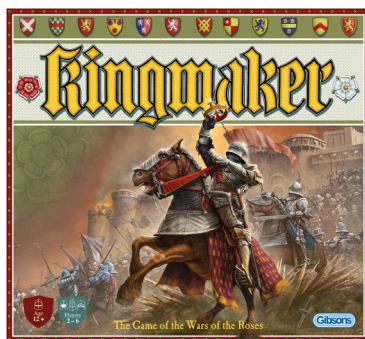
A few more images from the BKC IV battle. We usually use tiny black dice for hits and yellow dice for suppressions, but everyone is free to use whatever they want, which explains why you see a variety of status markers! Yes, it can be maddening at times, but we're getting too old to argue over small things any more!

A long, long time ago, a company called Gibsons Games came out with Kingmaker, a board game about The War of the Roses. It was picked up later by Avalon Hill and quickly became one of its most popular games that continues to be played to this day. With Avalon Hill's demise decades ago, the rights to various games ended up in multiple hands. Gibsons Games, the original publisher for Kingmaker, had now released a new version of this famous game.

The Avalon Hill game, while popular, had its issues. The map was fairly small, things were hard to read on the map, there was confusion about the various cards, and on top of all of that articles in The General kept adding variants to the game. Not to mention that games could go all day depending upon how long certain factions wanted to hold out for. Definitely a classic wargame, but one that was far from perfect.

The new version comes in a fairly large box and like many games of this era, is packed with components. The first item is the double-sided map board, with Classic Kingmaker on one side and Kingmaker II on the other. The map is much larger than the Avalon Hill version, with better art and places for the various cards. Speaking of cards, there are quite a few, ranging for the Events deck to the Crown deck to all kinds of optional cards. The artwork on the cards is certainly a step up from the older version. There are now tokens in six different colors for the players, with each faction getting all of the noble counters, but in their faction's color. Beautiful ship counters, new cards for the Royals, play aids, and several rule books. In terms of components, this game is hard to beat.

There are four versions of the game included in the box. There is the 2-6 Classic Kingmaker game, the 2-5 player Kingmaker II game, the Solo game, and



finally the Extended game, which adds all of the events, Crown cards, optional combat system, etc., from years and years of articles in The General. Each version has a separate set of rules, plus there are 4 sets of a 4 page player's reference guide. All of the rule books are lavishly illustrated with examples and represent years and years of player experience, so the rules shouldn't have too many loopholes or problems after nearly 50 years!

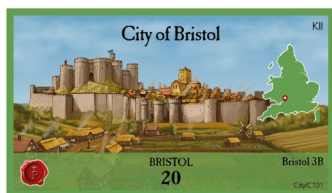
Most gamers are more than likely going to play Kingmaker II, just because it's streamlined and can be finished in around 3 hours, even with the max of 5 players. There are pre-made factions for each player in this version, which is a complete 180 from Classic where each faction gets a number of random nobles, title cards, etc. to start with. Each turn a player draws an Event card, moves their forces, then draws two Crown cards and keeps one. This keeps going until one faction has the last royal heir for their faction and crowns them king or queen. Along the way there is a lot of chaos, combat, diplomacy, and execution of various nobles!

The Events cards are the real jokers in the deck. There are plagues, summons to various parts of the country, storms that force ships to put into port, etc. You can assemble a powerful force only to see it broken up and scattered in a few card draws! Crown cards provide titles, bishops, ships, additional nobles for your cause, and mercenaries. Each card usually has a troop strength to add onto your armed forces. You then create stacks of nobles that move about the countryside, attacking opposing factions, capturing Royals, and besieging enemy locations. This can create a high degree of chaos that may not appeal to all gamers and planning any kind of strategy is difficult at best.

Combat is fairly simple; you add up the troop strength of both sides, then draw an event card. If the odds between the larger and smaller force is equal to or greater than the odds listed on the card, that side is victorious. The card also lists nobles that are killed if they were at the battle. The losers have all of their nobles captured and most of their titles, possessions, etc., get dispersed to the winning side or to the Chancery. When Parliament is called, the titles and other Crown cards in the Chancery get handed out to the nobles attending.

The more players there are, the more chaotic it gets. While in Classic version the game could go on for quite some time, with a faction stashing Royals until some break with the cards provided an opportunity for a comeback. With Kingmaker II, a faction can win a Prestige Victory, which is a clever way of ending the game in a reasonable amount of time. For those who really want to play with everything and the kitchen sink, there is Extended Kingmaker. This version adds a number of event cards, crown cards, and more, which can produce some wild swings of fortune.

In summary, this version cannot be recommended enough. Two sided map board, multiple ways to play the game, and a solo version gives this game great replay value. By giving each faction all of the nobles in their color, spaces on the board for the cards, player reference cards, and easy to manage rulebooks, this new version is extremely well done. While the price isn't cheap (around \$90), this is a game that you can play multiple times and never get tired of it.



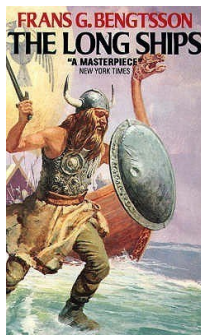
More Book Reviews by Steven Verdoliva

The Long Ships

Written by Frans G. Bengtsson; 478 pages

Published by Harper Collins

This is the book for all Viking fans. Covering roughly from 980 AD to 1010 AD, prime Viking times, it follows the adventures of "Red" Orm Tostesson. Broken into four main chapters it follows Orm on his adventures to Spain, England and Russia. One chapter concerns home life and while not as adventuresome as the travel chapters, it is a great insight to Scandinavian life during the Viking age. This is the book that the Richard Widmark/Sidney Poitier movie is based upon. Watch the movie for fun but read the book for the real deal.



This is an entertaining book with a pretty good historical base. It opens with a decent general history of the period and then goes into specific time periods, first with what historically happened, then possible alternatives and outcomes. For instance, what if King Aelfred hadn't won? Would Anglo-Saxon England become Anglo-Dane England even sooner and would the country ever return to Anglo-Saxon control? What if Harold hadn't been King but just Regent? Would Anglo-Saxon resistance continued against the Normans? This is also one of a series of books that Mr. Venning has written about alternative histories. Other titles cover Rome, The Hundred Years War and the War of the Roses.

Viking- The Norse Warriors Unofficial Manual

Written by John Haywood; 208 pages

Published by Thames & Hudson

A tongue in cheek guide to the Vikings and their age. The ten chapters cover everything from joining up, equipment, picking a good leader to follow and last but not least "The Sword's Sleep." Pretty good illustrations and nuggets of sidebar information. Also a decent glossary. I certainly can see the SAGA folks liking this for getting a feel of the era.

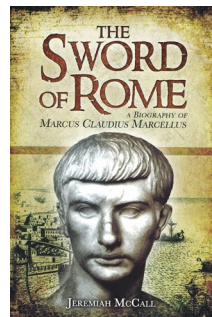


The Sword of Rome- A Biography of Marcus Claudius Marcellus

Written by Jeremiah McCall; 150 pages

Published by Pen & Sword Military

This was a good read about one of the lesser known Roman leaders to face the Carthaginians. A Consul multiple times, a rarity in Middle Republic Rome, he was also the holder of the "Spolia Optima" for killing an opposing Gallic commander in single combat. This was something still remarked upon in early Imperial times due to its uniqueness. He managed to check Hannibal in southern Italy and probably most famously capture Syra-



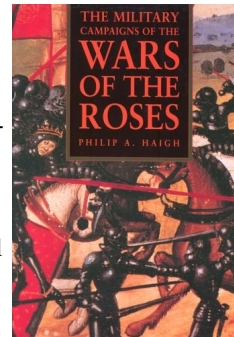
cuse. Killed in an ambush by Numidians while scouting out Hannibal's position (talk about your wrong place, wrong time) he was also a political animal and showed following generations of Romans how to manipulate the system. Scipio Africanus followed in his political footsteps as did other less scrupulous military politicians.

The Military Campaigns of the Wars of the Roses

Written by Phillip A. Haigh; 206 pages

Published by Combined Books

I found this gem while cruising the internet. Covers all the major battles of the war with maps, best estimates of troop strengths and the campaign leading up to the battle. Has a good explanation of what led to the war and also covers the later battles of Henry VII once he is on the throne. This is a great book for anyone looking for scenario and/or campaign information. Published in 1995, so there might be a couple things that are a little out of date with current theories of the battles, I still highly recommend the book if this is your period.

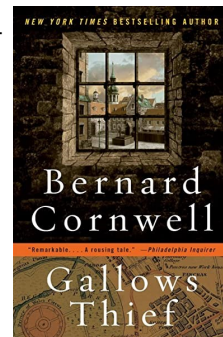


Gallows Thief

Written by Bernard Cornwell; 297 pages

Published by Harper Collins

Something different! This historical fiction is about Capt. Rider Sandman of the 52nd a few years after Waterloo. A hero of that battle he is out of the army and down on his luck. This forces him to take a temporary job as the "Criminal Investigator" for the Home Secretary and look into a murder involving the aristocracy. I enjoyed this book for the fun casual read that it was.

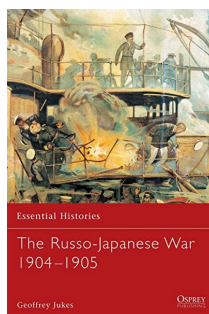


The Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905

#31 in the Essential Histories series by Osprey Publishing.

Written by Geoffrey Jukes. 96 pages

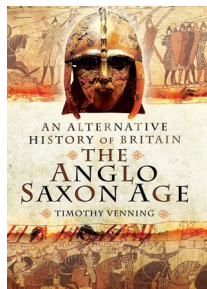
Another good title from Osprey about another generally obscure war. Well written with good pictures and OK maps. It covers all the major and minor actions- Siege of Port Arthur, Tsushima and Mukden. I was surprised at how much the Japanese wanted to avoid war but felt cornered into. It has an excellent section on the conclusions and consequences. Russia stepped closer to revolution and Japan received a big push to complete militarization of its government. This was the largest land conflict prior to WW I and general Russian incompetence seems to have obscured the fact that with trenches, machine guns and breach loading rifles the defense now was on the ascent.



An Alternative History of Britain- The Anglo-Saxon Age

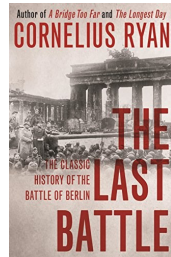
Written by Timothy Venning; 224 pages

Published by Pen & Sword Military



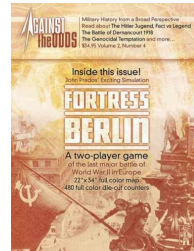
All of a sudden, there seems to have been a renewed interest in the Battle For Berlin as 2023 gets going. There have been a few battle reports, gamers showing off scenery, discussions about how the war ended, and gamers showing off their miniature forces for that period. Why this has all of a sudden showed on gamers' radar is anyone's guess, but it might be a good idea to revisit this topic in terms of what games and books are good to learn about this momentous battle.

Of course, the best place to start is Cornelius Ryan's classic book, *The Last Battle*. Very similar to *A Bridge Too Far* and *The Longest Day*, Ryan's style is more like reading a fictional novel with historical facts thrown in! For some reason, his books fly by and yet we find ourselves reading them over and over again through the years. This book does a great job on focusing primarily on the Russian and Allied race for the city, then on the brutal block by block fighting in the city itself. Highly recommended.



the battle for the city, including all of the political, cultural, societal, and military elements. There are sections in the book that are very detailed and very good, but intermingled with topics here and there which might be too high level for the battle.

When it comes to board games on the topic, the hobby has let gamers down in this area! Yes, it's probably not the most balanced topic and since it's the end of the war it probably appeals to only a small segment of gamers. Probably the best game on the topic is *Fortress Berlin* by *Against The Odds*. The game includes a 22 x 34 map of the city and has all of the units of the 56th Panzer Corps, which ended up defending the city along with all kinds of bizarre units including Hitler Youth, Luftwaffe units, plant protection workers, Volkstrum, and more. The game system is pretty interesting and works well, leaving gamers with a desperate battle for the city. There's talk of a reprint some day, which would be great for gamers who missed out.



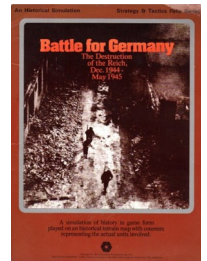
Against The Odds also released a supplement to *Fortress Berlin* called *On To Berlin*. This covers the planned for, but never carried out, operations to drop five airborne divisions on the city and surrounding area. A great supplement and very fun to play as alternate history.

Another interesting game, but in the end not very good is *Götterdämmerung*-*Twilight of the Gods*, which covers the final Russian attack along the Oder and into the city. The good thing is that every single German unit is represented up and down the front line, making for an interesting smorgasbord of units. The issue is that the Russian units are so overpowered (and rightfully so) that stack after stack of Russians just plows through the German held hexes. The city fighting is a bit strange and is almost an entirely separate game. Probably good as a solo exercise, but as a two player game it's pretty average.



There really aren't too many board games on this subject, which is a bit sur-

prising. The Advanced Tobruk system has a module for Berlin and there are several ASL scenarios as well. Another good game, but one that is a bit higher level is the old SPI *Battle For Germany* (there is a Decision Games remake with better map and counters). Great for solo play and when playing with two players, each player controls one of the Allied fronts and the German front against the other Allied force. Basically, you are trying to get to Berlin first with your Allied side while using the Germans under your control to slow down the other Allied front! Highly recommended, even after its been out now for 45+ years!



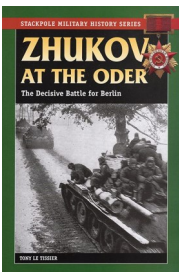
In terms of miniature games I've seen some scenario booklets here and there over the years for various systems that cover some of the fighting around Berlin, but nothing that really stood out. Again, this is quite surprising as it is fertile ground for miniature scenarios. Lots of heavy armor for both sides, desperate counterattacks, river crossings, and much, much more are all waiting to be used in scenarios. The one problem that could be a challenge to overcome are the massive Russian bombardments at many of these final battles and the airpower that was brought to bear against any strongpoints.



Having said that, however, there are some really good scenario ideas in the Zhukov and Kustrin books. Our group did a resupply run scenario into Kustrin as mentioned numerous times in the books and it worked out well. There were literally hundreds of brigade sized attacks during the final two weeks and there are some great opportunities for miniature battles here.

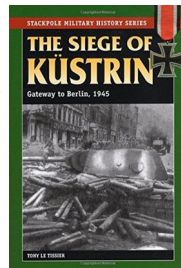
From a panzergrenadier battalion trying to counterattack along a canal with attached hetzers and stugs to an entire brigade of T-34/85s coming down an escarpment, spilling out into the countryside against a surprised German defense, the possibilities are endless.

If you can think of something else that belongs here, let us know!

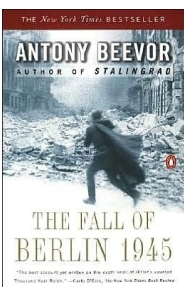


Two other books on the subject which are interesting, but a bit on the dry side is *Zhukov at the Oder* and *The Siege of Kustrin*. Both books tell of the Russian advance on the Oder, then the assembly of the vast armies that

would literally swamp the Germans on the road to Berlin. *Kustrin* focuses on the siege of that fortress while *Zhukov at the Oder* focuses on the momentous battle of the Seelow Heights. While both books do not cover the fighting for Berlin, they are essential studies for the battles near the city. In fact, there are so many scenario ideas here that they could keep you doing WW2 Late War Eastern Front gaming for years!



There is also *The Fall of Berlin 1945* by Antony Beevor, who is a well known WW2 author whose style may not be for everyone. This book focuses on



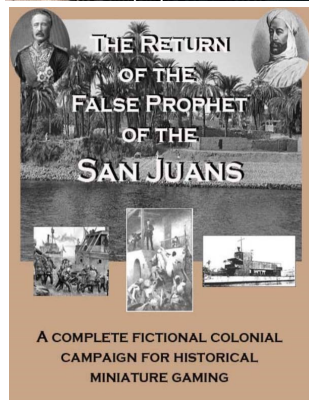
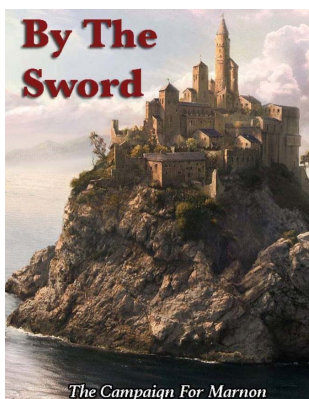
WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

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 Hail Caesar, Age of Reason, Age of Discovery, Age of Eagles, Fire & Fury, General de Brigade, Warmaster Ancients/Medieval, TSATF, Phantoms, Mustangs, Battlegroup Panzergrenadier, Saga, Ronin, BKC4, board wargames, and more...

Email the editor:
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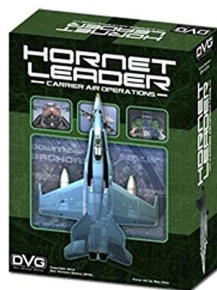
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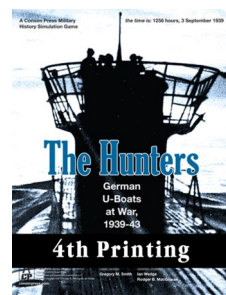
Be sure to check out our various campaigns for rules such as WMA, TSATF, and BFE II on our web site.

Playing wargames solitaire has always been one of the great challenges in the hobby. Either by playing both sides equally or in the case of hidden movement or cards, simply turning everything up so that you can play the game were always options! Most wargames in the 70s and 80s were designed for face to face play, but Avalon Hill started to realize that there was a market for solitaire games and released London's Burning as well as B:17 Queen of the Skies. Later, Victory Games had Ambush and even SPI would occasionally include some solitaire scenarios in their games. Articles in The General, Moves, and other magazines occasionally had solo scenarios or rules, but wargaming solitaire remained on the fringes of the hobby.

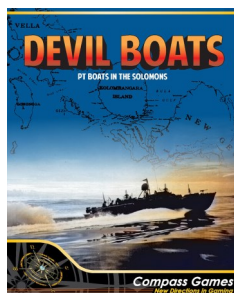


Even into the 90s and early 2000's it seemed like solitaire wargames had been abandoned. The board game industry was in a funk and miniatures games, led by Games Workshop, were on the rise. Occasionally you might see something emerge like GMT's Thunderbolt-Apache Leader, but they were rare occurrences. However, society was changing, the Internet had arrived, and with it the hobby's usual face to face or groups playing games together started to change. It started to become apparent that many gamers had no one to play with or had long distances to travel, making regular gaming infrequent at best.

Enter DVG and GMT, who really started to put out solitaire games along with other smaller firms such as Victory Point Games. The Hunters, Hornet Leader, Fleet Commander Nimitz, Nemo's War, and many others started to make headway into the hobby. These weren't just some articles with tables and ideas that allowed you to play existing games solitaire. These were professionally produced games with outstanding components specifically designed for solo play. The response was pretty good and now, companies are doing everything they can to make more. GMT even has a project to allow solo play with card driven games with a "bot" system. Solitaire wargames have arrived and are a sizable chunk of the current hobby.



Going into 2023 there will be plenty of new solitaire games, especially from



Compass Games who has fully embraced the solitaire concept and most new games from other companies, especially family and Euros, have solitaire rules, cards, etc., usually included. It's a shame that some gamers can't find someone to play with, but at least there's dedicated games for them. However, I find it really interesting that there is this large of a segment in the hobby and where does it go in the future?