

Warning Order

ISSUE 64

IN THIS ISSUE

BKC IV BATTLE REPORTS
ENGAGEMENTS SCENARIOS
AOR BATTLE REPORTS
GAME REVIEWS
WARMASTER ANCIENTS



Warning order

W F H G S

New Ideas in Gaming: The Levy & Campaign Series

Let's face it; a lot of what we do in the hobby has been done before, or done in multiple scales with similar set of rules and/or game systems. Think about how many Battle of the Bulge board games there are, or how many sets of Napoleonic rules are currently available. Usually, the differences are that one system uses 2D6 for combat or there are cards for events. Maybe the bases are 6 figs to a base instead of 4 or that the units are platoons instead of companies. Most of us who have been in the hobby for quite some time have seen just about everything under the sun! However, every now and then, something comes along in the hobby that you haven't seen yet.

GMT's Levy & Campaign series of games just might be one of those things. At the time of this writing, there are four volumes in the series, with the fourth, Plantagenet: Cousins War for England 1459-1485 having just come out. The other volumes include Nevsky: Teutons and Rus in Collision 1240-1242, Almoravid:



Reconquista and Riposte in Spain 1085-1086, and Inferno: Guelphs and Ghibellines Vie for Tuscany 1259-1261. There are also three more volumes coming out soon, covering campaigns such

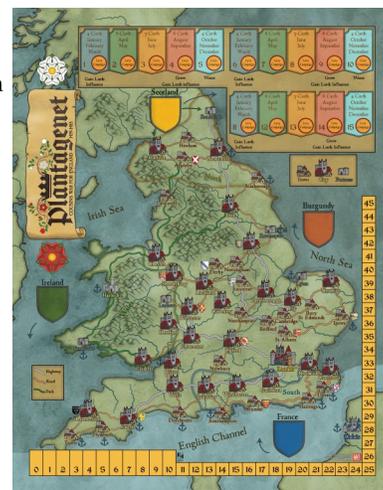
as Agincourt, Byzantium, and the Hussites.

Most of these will be unfamiliar to many gamers, which is good and bad. Good in that it opens up new eras that gamers might be unwilling to learn about, but bad in that the same unfamiliarity might hurt sales of the games. For some reason, gamers like their tried and true themes, so some of the campaigns in this series so far are definitely outside the gamer's usual comfort zone. Since I had been painting up Wars of the Roses armies for the last two years, I took particular interest in the latest volume; Plantagenet.

As is usual by now, GMT's components are pretty good. You get a small, mounted mapboard that covers all of England, some counters of varying

sizes, two fold out player reference cards, rules, mats for the lords, a play book, a pile of tiny wood rectangles in several colors, and a few decks of cards. Again, everything is of pretty high quality and looks great. If there is one complaint it is that the map is a bit small and hopefully there will be an updated version available for sale at some point. The one you get is functional, but once there are all kinds of markers on it, the map can get crowded.

Armed with cards for lords, event cards, cylindrical blocks for the lords on the map, smaller blocks for combat units, etc., you finally look at the rules. What exactly is the Levy & Campaign system all about? Unlike in most board games or in our miniatures games, (cont. on p3)



Inside this issue:

Levy & Campaign series: Plantagenet	2
Engagements scenarios	6
WMA battle report	8
BKC IV: End of Market Garden	14
When historical scenarios become disasters	22
BKC IV battle report: Late war Eastern Prussia	28
Age of Reason: Methodical French Assault	32

Special points of interest:

- Two new games, Plantagenet and Downfall show off new game design mechanics.
- Two Age of Reason and two BKC IV battle reports.
- Battle reports for WMA, Robotech, Fistful of Lead Big Battles, and more.
- A look back at Judges Guild and skirmish rules from the 70s and 80s.

New Ideas in Gaming: The Levy & Campaign Series (cont.)

(cont. from p2) where you are mainly pushing around combat units with the recruiting, supply, etc., all done for you, this game gives you a “behind the scenes” look at military campaigns in the Middle Ages. The Levy in the title of the series means just that; you will need to levy troops, provide food, pay your troops, then somehow get them to where they can engage their enemy. Sound easy? I can assure you that it is not!

At the start of each turn you have a number of options that are available to each lord, with each side usually having 2-3 lords per scenario. Each lord is rated for his influence, lordship, etc., which are used for various phases in the game. During the levy phase you can obtain carts to extend your supply lines, raise troops, try to get vassals (important knights/leaders) to join your forces, parley with locations to join your side, or choose a card that adds a capability (up to two per lord). Trying to determine what you are going to do each turn is a challenge by itself!

The map is broken down into locations such as towns, cities, and fortresses. Each one is connected by a series of paths or roads, which heavily influence movement. Each location (strongholds) offers different types and/or levels of troops, provender (food), and coin (taxes). Getting locations to join your side is critical to exploit their resources, provide a safe path for tracing supply, and whoever has the most towns, cities, and fortresses, gets extra influence points.

In fact, influence points are the driving force in the game. Each lord is rated for influence, which is used to parley to get vassals and strongholds to join their side. Each attempt costs one point of influence, plus one point for each path connection to the target, plus extra points to add to the

die roll. If a lord spends 5 influence points to get a town to join their side, then the marker slides 5 spaces in the direction of the opposing side. If the marker ever hits the limit for that scenario, that side wins. During a turn, the influence marker will slide back and forth depending upon how much influence is spent, who wins the end of the turn phase, battles lost, etc.

Once the levy phase is completed, then its on to the campaign phase. Before



that begins, each side creates a mini-deck of command cards, depending upon how many cards are allowed per side for that turn. Each time a card is drawn, the lord on that card is activated and can move/fight, tax areas, parley, obtain food, etc. Each lord can have multiple cards in this deck. Once the decks are set, each side alternates flipping a card, then completing the lord's actions. Getting this sequence right and who should move first, second, etc., will take some practice. Also, each time you raise troops, obtain provender (food), or tax a stronghold, you place a depleted marker. If you do any of the same things at that location again, the area is exhausted.

When you move, you have to feed your troops. If you don't have enough food (or coin) to pay them in the levy phase) they will pillage and your army could fall apart! Keeping everything moving, from enough carts to move, to enough food to support a move, to paying for the forces that you have, is a critical balancing act that has to be performed every turn. Once you get to an enemy lord's location, the combat phase begins.

Combat is one of the more interesting systems that I've seen in quite some time. Before it begins, a lord can voluntarily go into exile, meaning his forces are disbanded and he goes overseas, only to return again to take up arms! Failing that, each lord is arrayed against another lord on a battle mat. Then, each troop type, i.e., militia, longbowmen, armored troops, retinue, and vassals roll a number of dice trying to score hits. Each lord then rolls saves and allocates hits. Lords can then continue the fight or flee. Combat is decisive, and I do mean decisive! Losing lords will be lucky to escape with their lives and most of their forces will be scattered.

There are several scenarios that range from the opening of the war (15 turns) to a simple one turn of battle. You can also play the entire war, which is in three phases and which will take up a considerable amount of time. Even the scenarios that only have a few turns are going to be slow at the start as each player tries to figure out how things work. If you're playing the short scenarios it seems like you are prepping for one major battle, which will essentially end the game one way or the other. The longer games will give each side a few chances for a comeback.

This game (and game system) is unusual in that the gamer gets the entire package; i.e., mustering troops, gathering supplies, gaining allies, then marching to meet the enemy before everything falls apart! It is a unique perspective that gamers rarely experience. The only complaints were that the map was a bit too small and that the rules, while fairly short (around 18 pages minus the scenarios) can be dense in some sections.

The surprising thing is that this is (at least so far) the easiest of the games in the series! There are all kinds of new ideas here that are going to be hard for some gamers to get used to. There are also some very interesting aspects of the rules that could be applied to miniatures campaigns, particularly the mustering of troops, paying and feeding them, then marching to contact with sufficient transport. Outside of the few small issues noted above, however, this is an interesting series that gamers should try at least once.



One of the most popular wargame series in the hobby's short history has to be what is termed the "44" series from GMT and designer Mark Simonitch. The games use a similar system (for the most part), have high quality components, are extremely playable, and most everything has been well thought out. Some of the games, such as Normandy '44 and Ardennes '44 are now in their third edition. On top of that, there are more games planned and they hit their P500 number usually on the first day that they're announced!



big changes are in terms of complexity and differences from the other games in the series. Naturally, the North African campaign was highly unusual compared to other WW2 campaigns, so there are going to be a lot of special rules. Convoys, of-map boxes, events, supply, shipping replacements, terrain, etc., all have their own unique feel to them.

The good thing is that there is nothing overly complex here, but it's going to take a few turns to figure out how things work.

Fortunately, everything has been well designed and set up in a way to help gamers along. There are tracks for the ports, turns, impulses, etc., with markers to let you know what is going on. Tables, turn records, holding boxes for remnants and replacements, plus the asset tokens all have a place.

This helps in the flow of the turn and lets gamers with a quick glance determine where things stand. The map even has tiny numbers along the main highway to let you quickly count out the movement points at the highway rate!

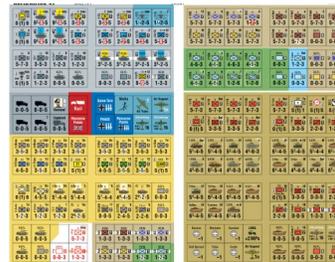
Most North Africa games that I have played usually have the first parts of the game "scripted", meaning that you know so many factors of Germans and Italians will attack certain hexes, then press on to achieve several objectives before the inevitable counterattack by Allied forces. With North Africa '41 there is actually quite a lot of options for both sides right from the start. This gives the game pretty good replay value and you're not locked into doing the same thing over and over again.

Each turn is broken down into three impulses (two during summer turns). During each impulse, each side rolls for events, moves, then conducts combat, followed by checking

for supply. The events provide the chaos as well as some choices. Most events result in the sides getting a resource point, which can be spent on various operations, such as air support, a second coastal convoy, shipping units straight to Benghazi, and more. As you would suspect, movement is dictated by the main roads, so trying to manage trucks, supplies, etc., to keep combat operations up is a challenge for both sides. If you don't have supplies to expend, you can't attack with more than 10 combat factors and there are no tank shifts, meaning that success during combat is going to be hard to come by.

While there is a lot of chrome such as the Rommel re-roll asset, delaying markers, LRDG, the Malta track, etc., all of it flows together nicely and there's nothing really hard about the game. Trying to determine where to send reinforcements, where to build forts and make a stand, what to spend resource points on, etc., is pretty challenging and there are quite a few options to consider. The playbook along with the examples in the rules were very helpful in learning the system.

There are a few shorter scenarios and the full campaign game. Even with a small number of units, the three impulses per turn means that turns could take a while until you figure out how things work. The only issues I could see were that the game has a fairly large footprint and it only covers the 1941 aspect of the campaign. As with all North Africa games it can be hard to get through the full campaign of going back and forth along the same road! This game, however, is a pretty good attempt at getting it right and its pretty fun to play.



ka Korps, Shifting Sands, and others, I'm always on the lookout for some new ideas for this campaign. Into this somewhat crowded arena comes North Africa '41.

You get a standard sized GMT box and inside are the usual, high quality GMT components. Two 22 x 34 maps (mounted maps are sold separately), two sheets of counters, player reference cards, a rule book, and a playbook. The maps cover an area near Tripoli all the way to Alexandria and as expected with this campaign, there are few combat units. Instead, many of the counters are markers of various sorts, including a large circle and rectangle for both sides to hold available assets.

The rules aren't exactly hard to learn, and if you've played other games in the series, then you really just have to familiarize yourself with the rules that are specific to this campaign. Here's where the



Need Better Maps? Inkarnate Review

One of the more interesting aspects of miniatures gaming and role-playing games over the years has been the mediocrity of the maps that we create. Year after year, campaign after campaign, we've been using homemade maps that were functional, but were definitely not works of art! In terms of skirmish gaming maps, they're usually some crude circles and squares for building and trees to just get a basic outline of what the table should look like. Over the years, there have been quite a few mapmaking and art programs, but many, such as Illustrator and Campaign Cartographer have fairly steep learning curves.



world maps. Finally, you have world maps and there are also watercolor and parchment versions of several map styles. What you choose gives you specific palettes of colors, stamps, brush tools, etc., to make that style of map. There are also several sizes of maps, from a simple 2 x 2 grid to massive maps with 20+ columns and rows.

Once you settled on a style, you're greeted by a blank palette and a brush circle. As you move the brush over it, land areas are created, which you can then finely detail. That's the first thing I liked about the program is that you can really get into some very fine detail for making rivers, islands, seas, etc. There are wide range of colors and backgrounds, so some experimentation in terms of what you like will be in order.

After that, you can break out the stamp tool, which is an amazing addition for your maps. If, for example, you're using the regional map maker, you'll get a selection of towns, forests, map symbols, and more. Many of these are broken down into desert terrain, human cities, elven buildings, Viking settlements, and much, much more. When you select one you can place it on the map. Usually, up in the left corner, it will show you variations of the same item, then you can choose random rotation (think multiple types of the same trees, building, etc.,) or you can just select one type to use on the

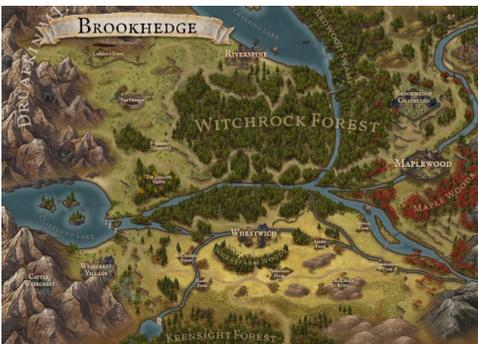
entire map. You can then place the terrain and resize it where necessary. You can also access stamps from the watercolor maps, battle maps and more, so there are literally thousands of stamps that can be added to your maps.



After that, you can create paths for roads, texts for towns or buildings, change colors for various items, and much more. There is literally no limit to what you can do with your maps. When making a world for instance, you can zoom in on various regions to add detail, then zoom out again to see how it appears from a more global view. There are all kinds of tools, layer manipulation, blending, and more that I'm

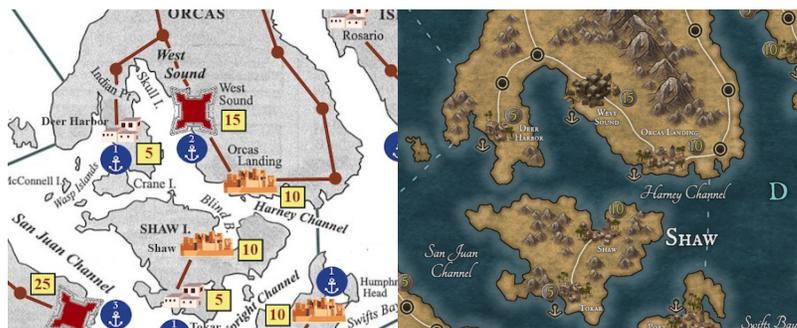


just barely beginning to understand. If you have any art skill at all, you can be making amazing maps in no time at all. Even if you have no art skill whatsoever, once you learn the basic you can make some pretty good looking maps!



After looking around and reading everything I could about making better maps, I decided to try the free version of Inkarnate. After that trial I decided to purchase an annual subscription, which as I would later find out, is a steal at \$29.95 a year. Just looking through the gallery shows you the *potential* of what you can achieve. That's not saying that you will be able to make those kinds of beautiful maps the first time out, but it does give you hope that you can improve upon your own mapmaking skills. Fortunately, there are a lot of YouTube tutorials on Inkarnate that are extremely helpful.

When you first open the program and start a new map, you're greeted by a large box asking you what kind of map do you want to make along with pictures of the various styles. You can make battle maps, which are great for skirmish games, specific locations for role playing games, or to just add detail to a large campaign map. Then you have regional maps, which can be for battlefields,



On the left is an old section of a campaign map that I did in Photoshop with a background, some icons, and text tools from 2010. On the right is the same section of map using Inkarnate. Pretty drastic differences!

With the full version you can save and export your maps. Once exported they can be emailed, printed, used on blogs or sites, etc. There is literally no end to what can be done with this program and for the cost it provides pretty good value with very low overhead. Highly recommended if you want to make maps.

Engagements #55: To The Fort!

Situation: Blue is a loose collection of tribes who are revolting against Red. In this area, there is a fort that controls the trade route that leads to several towns controlled by Red. Attacks against caravans have been increasing, so Red is determined to attack and seize the fort.

Period: Designed primarily for the Colonial era, but could be adapted to Ancients.

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

Terrain Notes: The fort is a large stone structure on a plateau. The plateau can be reached by infantry on foot (treat as rough or difficult ground), but impassable to cavalry and artillery. The village is a collection of mud/plaster buildings of various sizes. There are scattered trees and areas of scrub brush throughout the area. The hills should have severe movement penalties.

Scale: Skirmish type rules would probably work best with the 1:1 ratio, but other rules using bases and/or higher unit levels could be used.

Red Forces: Red's forces have been marching towards this area for several days. They consist of the following:

- (10) Infantry units
- (2) Cavalry units
- (2) Sections of artillery
- (1) Machine Gun section
- (1) Engineer section

Set Up: Red may enter at A and/or B on Turn 1, but must enter along the road in column. Each unit that spends one turn on the board in column can then change formation beginning the second turn that they are on the board.

Red Orders: Advance quickly to engage Blue's forces and try to prevent additional forces reinforcing the fort. Provide cover for the engineers so that they can place their demolition charges, then seize the fort.

Blue Forces: Blue's scouts have been observing Red's units marching into this area. Not knowing what Red's ultimate objective is, Blue has split their forces into three commands, which will attempt to turn back Red's forces before they can complete their mission.

Group A: ((4) Infantry units and (1) Cavalry unit.

Group B: (4) Infantry units and (1) artillery section.

Group C: (10) Infantry units and (1) Cavalry unit.

Blue Orders: Once it is determined that Red is trying to solely capture the fort, rush all available units to defend it.

Blue Set Up: Group A starts in the village.

Group B is at the fort.

Group C's units enter anywhere along the western edge of the board. Roll 1D4 each turn, beginning on Turn 3, to see how many units arrive until all units are on board.

Game Length: 15 turns

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

1. Blue is unsure of Red's objectives at the beginning of the game. Each turn (beginning on Turn 3) Blue rolls 1D6 and on a 6 they have determined that the fort is the objective. Add +1 on each turn until a 6 or modified 6 is rolled. Until that time, only Group B's units can be in the fort. Group A's and Group C's units must try to engage Red wherever possible, until a 6 is rolled, then they are free to move as they please.
2. The Engineer section is a smaller

unit (fewer figs or bases), but as long as they still have a few figures/hits left, they can attempt to place demolition charges against the walls of the fort. It takes two turns to set the charges, then a D6 is rolled. On a 1-5 a large hole is blown in the wall that will allow Red to enter the fort. On a 6 the charges fail and one more turn has to be spent re-setting them.

3. If the Engineer section is eliminated, Red can still breach the walls with artillery. Roll 2D6 each turn that Red fires at the fort and on the roll of a 12, a breach has been made in the walls. After three turns of firing, add +1, after five turns of firing, add +2, and after 7 turns of firing add +3 to each roll each turn thereafter.

Victory Conditions: At the end of 15 turns Red must have seized control of the fort. Control is defined as no Blue forces remaining in the fort. Any other result is a victory for Blue.

Variants: Have Red roll a D6 before the game begins to determine the objective, keeping the result secret from Blue.

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1-2 | Seize the fort |
| 3-4 | Seize the village |
| 5-6 | Escort a caravan from B to the western edge of the board. |

You could also add weather such as extreme heat, dust storms, etc., to make things interesting for both sides!



Engagements #56: From Defense to Counterattack

Situation: Red has secured two bridges and a major roadway in Blue's territory. Mechanized forces have already passed through this area and are attacking a major city to the north of the map. However, Blue has been launching counterattacks against the bridges for the last few days, including one just a few hours ago. Before Blue can re-organize for another attempt, Red is going to counter-attack to push Blue out of the area.

Period: Designed primarily for the WW2/Modern period.

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

Terrain Notes: The open ground is relatively flat. The villages at A and B are a combination of wood and stone buildings, while the town at C is mainly stone buildings. There are several farms in the area that consist of several buildings that can form strongpoints. Woods are light, but provide cover and vehicles should be penalized for moving through them. The river can only be crossed at the bridges.

Scale: The scenario is designed for any scale.

Red Forces: Red's paratroop units have been reinforced with mechanized units for this counterattack. Red has the following units available for the scenario:

- (8) Armor units
- (4) units of mechanized infantry
- (9) units of paratroop infantry
- (1) units of combat engineers
- (1) unit of mortars
- (2) AT guns or AT SPGs
- (1) battery of medium artillery (off-board)
- (2) air strikes/aircraft sorties

Set Up: Red's forces begin in the town at C and can move to the attack on the first turn.

Red Orders: Divide your forces into two groups. Each group will then be assigned an objective, which are the towns marked at A & B on the map. Seize both objectives, then defeat any attempt by Blue to counterattack. Shift forces where necessary to seize both ob-

jectives.

Blue Forces: Blue has three groups that have been scraped together from various forces in the area. Blue is trying to reorganize their forces from the attack against the bridges at C a few hours ago.

Group 1: (3) infantry units, (1) unit of mortars, (1) unit of armor, and (1) AT gun

Group 2: (3) units of armor and (3) units of mech infantry.

Reserve Group : Roll 1D6 +2 for the number of units in the Reserve Group. Then roll 1D6 for each unit to determine the unit type:

Die Roll	Unit Type
1	SPG/AT unit
2	Armor unit
3	Infantry unit
4	Infantry unit
5	Mech infantry unit
6	Armor unit

Farms: Roll 1D6 for each farm on the map (8 total):

Die roll	Unit(s) at the Farm
1-3	Unoccupied
4	(1) Infantry unit
5	(1) HMG team & (1) mortar
6	(1) AT gun

Blue is supported by one battery of off-board medium artillery.

Blue Orders: Hold villages A & B so that they can be used as staging areas for future attacks against the bridges at C.

Blue Set Up: Group 1 and Group 2 must be assigned to defend the villages at A & B (one group per village). The Reserve Group begins in the woods at D. Roll 1D6 for each infantry and/or mech infantry unit and on a 5 or 6 they may be entrenched.

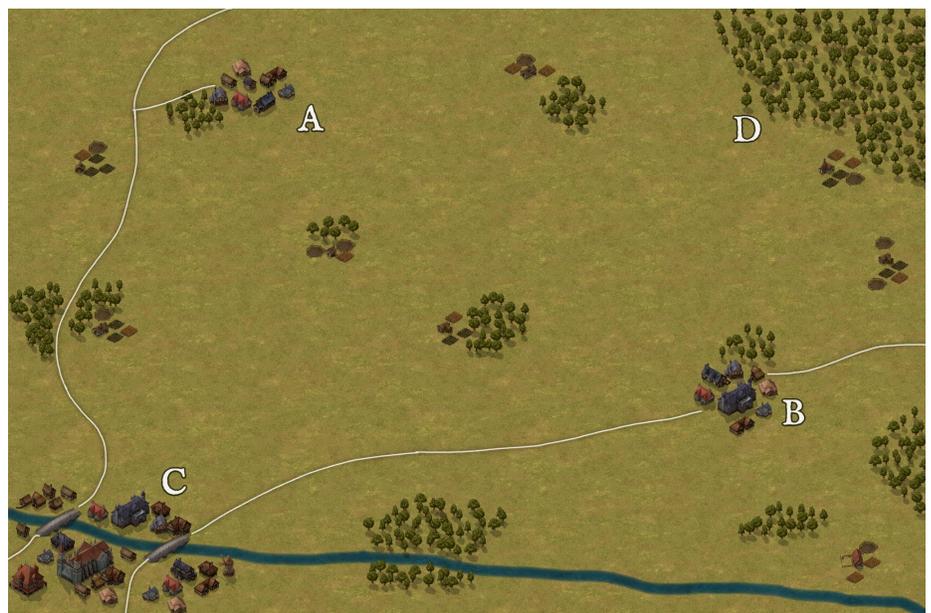
Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules: Red has the first turn in the game.

Victory Conditions: At the end of 12 turns Red must have seized the villages at A & B. If Red only seizes one of the villages the scenario is a draw. If Red does not seize either of the villages the scenario is a Blue Victory

Variants: Add airpower to one or both sides to balance out player skill/experience. If Red feels that the open ground is too much of a disadvantage, some hills or additional woods could be added to cover their approach to A & B. Random "on call" artillery could be added to Red to soften up the defenses at the villages.

For Modern period actions, replace the AT guns with ATGM teams/vehicles and each side could have a few attack helicopters added as well.



Weird & Wacky WMA Game!

Battle Report

Every so often, each gaming group is bound to have “one of those nights”! While we’ve played countless games of Warmaster Ancients, the rely bizarre ones are far and few between. Most of the games, whether it’s Assyrians vs. Egyptians, Seleucids vs. Indians, etc., are usually close affairs that go down to a few die rolls at the end. This, however, was going to be “one of those nights”.

We set things up as a 2,000 points per side battle between the Imperial Romans and Seleucids, which, while not historical (Romans are about 2-300 years too late), provide a fun game for 5-6 players that we can finish in 3 to 3 1/2 hours. The terrain, like most ancient battlefields was relatively sparse, with some rough areas of heavy brush/rocks in the center and a village on the Seleucid left. Most of these things are for looks, but the rough area in the center would play an important role in kind of dividing the battlefield.

The Romans went with the legions in the center, supported by their auxiliary infantry. For those who have not ever played Imperial Romans, that is a combination that at times can be hard to overcome. The front line already counts as self-supporting in the first round, then the auxiliary supports behind them add more, so even before combat begins they are usually +6 in hits! The Roman cavalry was spread out on both flanks where they would try to hold off the better Seleucid cavalry while the legions did their dirty work in the center.

After a couple of tries with a two elephant look, the Seleucids went back to a



tried and true army list. Basically, there are six phalanx units, one unit of elephants, two guard cavalry, and one cataphract unit that provide the punch, plus a number of other units. Both sides had a lot of skirmish units out in front of their main lines and skirmish combat this game went on for quite some time as the battle unfolded.

From the deployment of both sides, it appeared that the Romans were going to try to hold on the flanks and let the legions move up and engage the Seleucid center. The Seleucids for their part would use their heavy cavalry on the flanks to drive the remaining Romans towards the center where the phalanxes would then finish them off. In the end, both sides achieved part of their objectives, but failed in others!

The game began with both sides moving out pretty quickly, which is something of a rarity for our WMA games! On the Seleucid left flank, the Romans came right out to engage the best of the Seleucid cavalry units...and won! This was a major setback for the Seleucids and

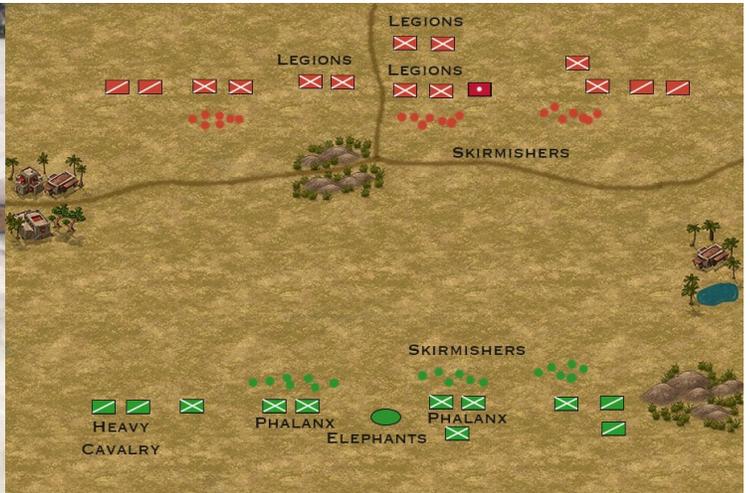
for a turn or two it looked like we might need to call the game and start another one. All of a sudden, the Seleucid left flank was gone and the Seleucid center was slow to move up, plus there was no way to cover the left flank as well. On the Seleucid right, there were some furious charges that left the Seleucid units battered, but in control of the road in that sector.

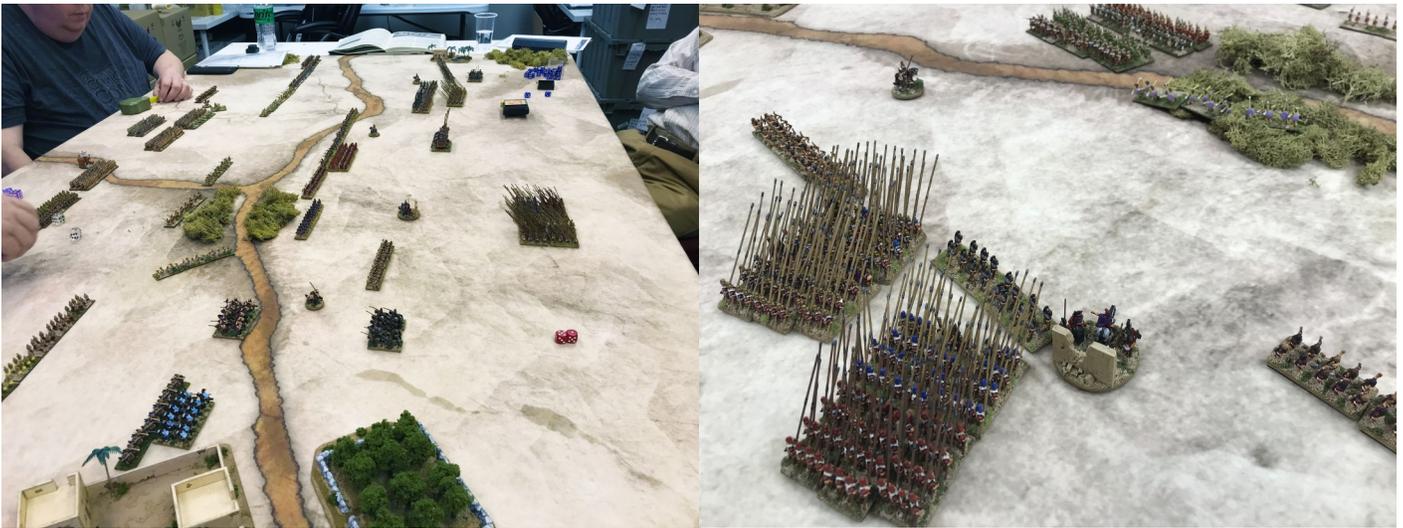
The Romans now tried to finish off the Seleucid left, advancing their archers, skirmishers, and auxiliary units. Surprisingly, they were pushed back and the Romans soon found themselves back at their start lines. The Seleucids, however, didn’t have the combat power to advance in that sector, so it became a game of



archery duels, limited attacks, and probing. By mid-game, it had turned into WW1 trench warfare on the Seleucid left.

On the Seleucid right flank, all of the strange and unusual Seleucid units kept advancing. The Romans tried to launch a series of counterattacks, but bad die rolls in both command and (cont. on p9)





(cont. from p8) combat produced negligible results. The Seleucids slowly advanced, forcing the Romans into defensive formations. What had looked like an easy Roman victory was now turning into a dogfight. Both sides kept looking for fresh units to make the final push, but by now most units had taken at least a stand loss.

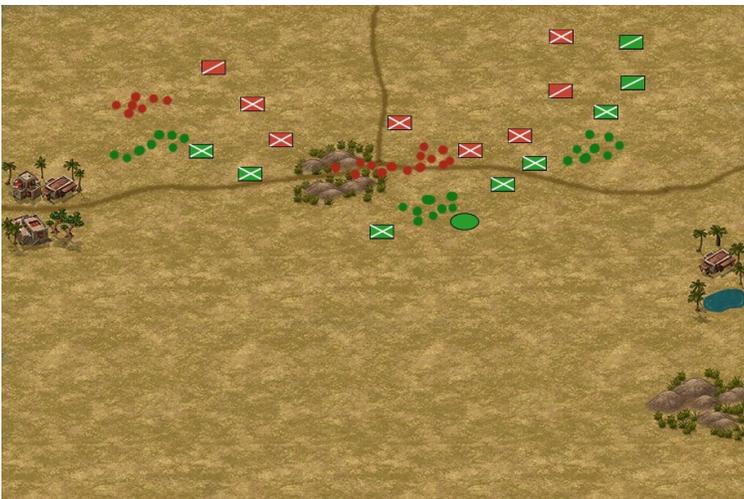
This left the center, where both sides advanced into contact. There were some titanic battles with multiple units on a side, which really started to produce casualties and pushing each side closer to their break points. The Romans started off well, with the legions at times simply destroying units in the first round, but then running into the Seleucid reserves started to slow them down. The Seleucids counterattacked, forcing the Romans back while the last of each side's reserves moved up.

The situation towards the end of the game was that the Romans had been forced back into a defensive semi-circle, which had been the Seleucid plan all along. It didn't exactly happen the way the Seleucid players thought it would, but it was acceptable! At this point the Seleucids were at 6 units down (actually more, but skirmishers don't count) and needed to reach 10 to lose the game. The Romans were at 10 and needed to reach 12 to lose the game. The Seleucid players then decided on one final push to force the issue.

All across the line the Seleucid units attacked, looking to take advantage of any gain to end the game. The casualties on both sides started to mount up in these final attacks, but the Romans were closer to their break point than the Seleucids were. After two more turns the Romans hit their break point and the game was called as a Seleucid victory.

Both sides had played well and it was pretty close in the end, even if both sides plans had gone sideways almost from the start! The loss of the Seleucid heavy cavalry on the left flank was a disaster that usually would be hard to overcome, but events proved otherwise. The legions and the phalanxes had their usual slugfest, which inflicted a lot of unit losses for both sides.

The one thing that hopefully gets addressed in a reworking of the rules (if that ever occurs!) is maybe some kind of a die roll when one side hits its break point. As it stands, once you know a side is only one or two units away from breaking, the other side throws everything at them, regardless of casualties, just to finish them off. It doesn't always work out, but probably has a 90% success rate. It's a game mechanism and not very realistic, but it could definitely stand to have a few changes.



Memoirs of a Miniatures and Board Wargamer Pt. 51

Early Skirmish Games

When I first got into gaming back in the mid-70s, skirmish type games were few and far between. Now that could have been the type of groups I gamed with, but for the first 10-15 years I was in the hobby, skirmish games only appeared every now and then. This was of course, back in the day when WRG Ancients was going strong, Empire and Johnny Reb were popular, and there were numerous NATO vs. Warsaw Pact rules as well.

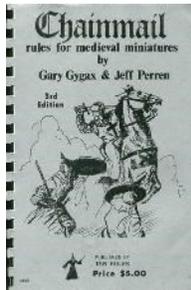
The first skirmish type game I ever played was in the WW2 period with Angriff. Probably not meant as a true skirmish game, but 1/72nd scale Airfix, Matchbox, and Atlantic vehicles plus figures were readily available. When you're in high school and on a budget, they worked great! However, Angriff was maybe a bit too much to start out with and we never could seem to make the game work quite right. A few months after our first game I moved from California to Utah, then found a few hobby shops that sold miniatures, rules, and board games.

I still had my WW2 1/72nd collection and several gamers in the area wanted to do some WW2 gaming, but were getting tired of micro-armor using Tractics rules. Having played through a few Tractics scenarios since arriving, I could see why it got tiring! I picked up a copy of the old WRG Infantry Action rules (which are now available for free)



and we set up our first game. They were immediately successful and for the next few years there were several pretty large WW2 skirmish battles using this system. Being near an USAF base, most of the gamers who played with me transferred out and WW2 skirmish gaming took a long, long pause.

It was at this time that Ral Partha, Grenadier, Superior, and Minifigs were at the height of their popularity. Several of us bought a bunch of packs of fantasy and medieval miniatures, looking to do some



sort of medieval battle or siege. Asking around, we found that Chainmail was the preferred system for that sort of thing, so armed with those rules we started playing battles. One gamer who moved into the area had a 25mm castle, so we had at least two massive sieges that involved several hundred figures a side. Probably at the high end of the skirmish scale, but it was a lot of fun!

When Knights and Magick came out, we dusted off the medieval miniatures and did that as well. This was a pretty revolutionary set of rules that frankly, was ahead of its day. There was no way to do massive castle sieges any longer and the commands that each player had needed to be smaller so that we could get a game completed in a reasonable amount of time. The rules, from what I can remember now, were pretty good and it gave us several good games. The question of course becomes, why didn't we keep on playing these rules as well as Chainmail?



Most of this had to do with this time period during the hobby. Starfleet Battles was nearing its ascendancy, RPGs were all over the place, NATO vs. Warsaw Pact games were being regularly played, plus there were all kinds of new board games like Gulf Strike, Air Superiority, the Fleet series, etc., that were taking up a lot of our free time. In essence, skirmish games were competing with everything else in the hobby at that time. Also, once again, being near a USAF base meant that gamers would come and go far more often than in an ordinary gaming community.

Much of what we played depended upon who was living in the area at that time. Some years there would be several ancients gamers all doing WRG Ancients campaigns. When they moved away the next batch might be into Traveler with a few more into WW2 naval. Each year would bring new rules, new ways of doing things, and from time to time there was the urge to get back to skirmish type gaming. It was at this time that a lot of companies started to put out Vietnam/Modern era 25mm figures.

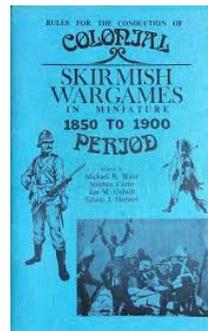
Not satisfied with having literally 1,000 NATO vs. Warsaw Pact micro-armor vehicles, we decided to get into Modern skirmish gaming. Having played Avalon Hill's Firepower, we thought it would be great to do something like that,



but with miniatures. Looking around at the rules choices we somehow settled on Phoenix Command. Now legendary as one of the most complex miniatures games, we took things in stride and tried a few battles. Highly realistic, but it could literally take an entire day to do a multi-squad battle! Yes, we had bitten off more than we could chew and by that time other games were coming out, so it was yet onto something else.

When Ral Partha debuted their Colonials line, many gamers, including me, jumped at the new figures. While The Sword & The Flame (TSATF) were clearly the dominant set of rules for the period, there was always the nagging idea at the back of your head that there was probably something else. We did enjoy our TSATF games immensely and it created some lifelong memories, but I was always on the prowl for other colonial rules. One of these was Colonial Skirmish Wargames, or the famed "Blue Book".

Now this really was skirmish with three second turns, tracking reloading, hit locations, etc. Our first few small games were pretty exciting, even though the paperwork was a problem just out there on the horizon. When we went to larger games with 6-8 people the game bogged down and it was quickly back to TSATF!



Today, skirmish gaming is the norm, with large battles/multi-unit games sort of the outlier. It really is strange how this has completely flipped during the time that I've been in the hobby.

Back in the 70s and 80s, if you wanted to do skirmish gaming you really had to work at it! Not anymore. There are so many rules, figures, terrain, etc., that are all designed for skirmish games. Who knew that what we considered to be fringe games back then would become the dominant force in the hobby today?

Blast From The Past Pt. 50: Judges Guild

Most of us back in the day played various role-playing games of one sort or the other. Usually, it was D&D or Traveller, but there were many, many others. When I first got started in the hobby back in 1976, I was asked to join a few sessions of D&D, using just the “three brown books” as they were known back then. There were little to no accompanying materials and every map, adventure, etc., were all hand drawn by the dungeon master. One company outside of TSR set out to remedy that situation and they were known as Judges Guild.



few times a week or month, you needed adventures. The second, as mentioned above, was that they did everything for you in terms of maps, monsters, plot themes, and more. For all of those who just wanted to play, Judges Guild products were heaven sent.

One thing led to another, and gamers soon didn’t just want adventures, but they wanted background, maps, and materials to supplement their own adventures and campaigns. Once again, Judges Guild came to the rescue. There were modules that detailed forts and castles on the frontiers, villages, treasure books, and much more. If you had drawn a huge campaign map with 20+ villages on it, there simply wasn’t time to detail each village. Instead, you would buy a village book with around 50 villages that were already drawn for you! Once again, Judges Guild provided an invaluable service, especially when you considered that all of these products were fairly cheap. You could go into a hobby shop, drop \$20 and walk out with at least three items that would provide plenty of hours of gaming joy.

Judges Guild also made DM screens, charts for interactions with natives, lists of names, tactical cards, and much more. One of the first modules, City State of the Invincible Overlord ended up selling over 40,000 copies. Clearly, there was a need for these kind of gaming products and Judges Guild was only too happy to provide them! The quality of the products, however, continued to dog the company, which at one time employed 40+ people and had 250+ products in print. While many gamers bought and used them, TSR, then others such as Iron Crown Enterprises, started to show gamers what could be done in terms of colors, maps, cards, and more.

Over the years, Judges Guild started to expand into other systems. Modules and supplemental material started to appear for other RPGs such as Dragonquest, Chivalry & Sorcery, Runequest, Villains & Vigilantes, and many more. The other popular RPG at that time was Traveller and there were several modules along with

ships, star charts, and spaceports published. For a process orientated game like Traveller, anything that was pre-generated was welcomed!

Judges Guild lost its license with D&D in 1982, but continued to put out products for that along with many other RPG systems. By this time, however, there were quite a few companies who were now getting into the RPG business, producing games like Top Secret, James Bond, Gamma World, and more. All of these had multiple supplements produced for them when they first came out, plus for several there were continual product releases. These products used modern publishing techniques and really showed gamers what could be done. When you looked at one of the supplements for Harn compared to a similar one by Judges Guild, there was really no comparison.

By 1985 the company was done, although some of the products were licensed and produced by other companies. Judges Guild did return around 2000 and produced some modules for various systems on and off for the next several years. Today, it still exists and is selling products through its web site. It’s hard to believe that almost 50 years since the first product for D&D came out, Judges Guild is still selling its products.

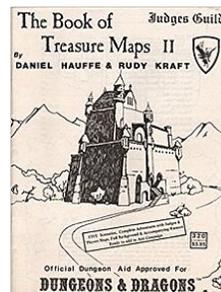
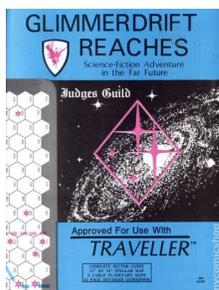
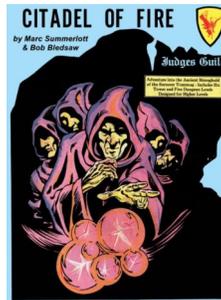
I was one of those gamers who had several products from Judges Guild. While I preferred the TSR adventures, there was a real shortage of materials about towns, NPCs, and more from TSR. You could only get so many ideas from the Player’s Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master’s Guide, and the few modules that were out. Judges Guild helped fill in those gaps and provided more ideas than you could possibly work through!

While the products were flimsy at times, hard to read, and contained some logic holes here and there, they were an integral part of how D&D grew into the phenomenon that it was. I can remember quite a few winter nights looking through those adventures and supplements, jotting down ideas. It was an exciting time and Judges Guild was a huge part of it!

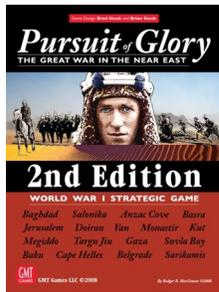
This was a company that at first offered various adventures for D&D. You would get a booklet, maybe a map or two, and it was chock full of ideas for running an adventure. At this time, adventures were in short supply. Yes, everyone had plenty of ideas for an adventure, but actually making maps, writing out a path for the party, making rooms, NPCs, etc., was a LOT of work that many didn’t have time for. This would become quite the niche in the RPG hobby for a long, long time and Judges Guild was right there at the start.

Now that’s not saying that everything was perfect with their products. Almost from the start there were some issues, from poorly drawn maps, printing at times was hard to read, and the adventures themselves could be fairly standard in comparison to the TSR adventures. In fact, those TSR modules that everyone remembers, would become the main competition for the Judges Guild products. The TSR modules were very professionally done, may have been (?) reviewed and/or tested, and there weren’t a lot of bad ones coming out.

There were a few things, however, that Judges Guild had working in their favor. The first was that they were putting out product far faster than TSR was. For D&D groups that were meeting a



GMT's Paths of Glory (POG) is one of the hobby's best selling wargames and its popularity continues on, with multiple editions having been printed. In 2008, Pursuit of Glory arrived, using basically the same system as Paths of Glory, but set in the Near East, covering everything from Egypt to Turkey. After some 15 years of the game being out, GMT has released a second edition.



etc. Two card decks, two sets of player reference cards, and interestingly enough, some very handy set up cards that include a place for all of the special units that appear by playing various cards. Finally, there are the rules and a separate play-book. As has been mentioned numerous times over the years, there is little to complain about in terms of GMT's components.

Pursuit of Glory was popular from the start, but there were some issues. First, there was a lot of what is termed "chrome" in the rules. Take the original POG rules, then add all kinds of odd units, complex cards, special rules for Russian involvement, etc., and soon you had a game where you really had to work at playing it. Most players spent considerable gaming time flipping back and forth through the rules, trying to find explanations or exceptions on pretty much every turn. While the topic was definitely interesting, the game didn't seem to hit the table nearly enough as POG did.

The game comes in one of the larger GMT game boxes, mainly due to the mounted map board. When you first look at the map, it definitely is a work of art and looks very similar to Paths of Glory. It's when you start looking closely that you see the big differences. Unusual terrain, a Gallipoli inset box where almost a separate game takes place, tracks for various events, holding boxes, and more. If you think the map is going to breed chaos, you are correct.

There are also two sheets of counters, with the now familiar larger counters representing what are termed large units and plenty of smaller counters for tribes, special units, markers, breakdown units,

From reading the rules you can see that there might be some issues down the road, most notably with all of the special units, cards, and various things going on in the game outside of just the basics. The underlying game engine with the combat units, movement, combat, etc., is pretty simple and can be taught quickly, even to non-gamers. If you've played Paths of Glory, Shifting Sands, or any of the other POG type games, then you'll be able to get into this fairly quickly.

Pursuit of Glory is what is termed a "card driven wargame", or CDG. Each turn a player usually gets 7 cards, which are then played for either ops (operations), replacement points, SR (strategic movement), or the event. A few can be played as both ops and the event. If played for the event, which is usually to bring on new units, move a marker down a track, or as a prelude to another event, these are usually taken out of the game. Ops allows you to activate spaces to move and/or fight with combat units. As can be expected, card management is a huge part of the game. You may want to use a card to do multiple ops or as an event, but it might have high replacement numbers on it as well, so deciding what to do can be nerve wracking.

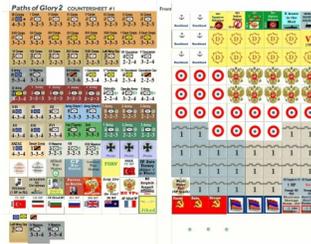
The objective of the game is to get the most victory points, which are achieved by seizing certain spaces spread all over the board. Here is

another challenge in the game; how do you come up with a strategy with forces scattered all over the map? For the British you have Indian forces who just landed in the Persian Gulf, Russians north of Turkey, forces arriving in Egypt, plus new fronts might open up with Bulgaria joining the Central Powers, and on and on. You need to suppress rebellions, manage the Gallipoli campaign, offset the Central Powers card play, etc. Managing the chaos is part of the game and there is a lot of chaos!

On top of that, more and more units get introduced each turn on both sides. The Central Powers are trying to induce a mutiny in India, a Jihad in the Arab regions, and other events to keep the British tied down. The Allied player needs to get the Russians moving before the Revolution might take them out of the game, then keep Bulgarian, Serbian, Austria-Hungarian, and German forces out of the Middle East. It's a balancing act by both sides that is going to experience a lot of wild swings of fortune.

Unlike Paths of Glory, which has a lot going on itself, this game takes that to another level. The cards that you get each hand usually have several options in terms of their play, complicating an already complex situation. There's nothing comparable to rocket science here, but on some of the events you really need to read them carefully, then weigh some options before proceeding. Luckily, the more complex events are explained in the rules.

In the end, you basically have an expanded Paths of Glory with perhaps too many options. It's still a good game that drips with theme, especially through the card events. However, trying to figure out what you should be doing each turn is going to be a challenge. There are so many fronts and fronts within fronts, that coming up with a strategy is difficult. You would need to play the game several times to really figure out how to play each side well. That's a problem with today's hobby in that there are so many games coming out, when will this get played again?



While we've played *Fistful of Lead* several times, using the rules for everything between Ancient Greece to far flung battles on the fringes of the galaxy, most of these had been small affairs. By that I mean with each player usually 4-6 figures and 2-3 players per side. This can still take a few hours, even if you are familiar with the rules, mainly due to the interactions of each individual figure.

If you want to do larger battles, however, you would probably need to turn to a different set of rules. The original *Fistful of Lead* scaled up might mean games of 4-5 hours to handle 30-40 figures a side. That is until a new entry in the *Fistful of Lead* family showed up, which is *Fistful of Lead: Bigger Battles*.



were heavily armored knights, crossbowmen, archers, spearmen, and heavily armored foot on both sides. The mix of units for both sides would be a good test of the rules to see how the various weapons interacted and how combat in this larger scale would work.

The Livonians started off their attack well, catching the Teutonics a bit out of place.

While reinforcements were rushed to critical areas, the Livonians pressed their attack. Since no one had any idea how the combat system would really work out, we all paid close attention to the first attack. While it was similar to the *Fistful of Lead* rules that we used in the past, there were some differences here and there. The good thing is that we were able to quickly remember the modifiers and work things out on our own after a few turns.

Both sides from time to time did try to use their archers and crossbowmen, but it seemed hard to hit your enemies! Not sure if it was just bad die rolls or good saves by the targets, but missile fire, at least this night, seemed to be more of an annoyance than anything. The Teutonics moved their forces up and launched a series of counterattacks. However, these attacks didn't do much other than deplete some of the Teutonic units. Several of their units were down to less than 25% of their strength remaining and had to fall back. The one thing that we did notice with these rules is that when things go bad, they really go bad!

The English contingent was now getting ready to enter the battle in two locations. Their first attack knocked out a Livonian unit and at least halted their advance in the center. On the Teutonic right

flank the mounted unit of English knights got ready to move against the most immediate threat while the crossbowmen took up firing positions. At this stage of the game, things were still pretty close and both sides had taken heavy casualties. In most cases, even if a unit won an



engagement, it still usually suffered kills and enough shock to put it out of action for a few turns. Balancing this soon became a priority to get damaged units back into the fight.

The mounted English knights went into battle, rolling really good in the first round and pummeling a heavily armored Livonian foot unit, which fell back, only to be hit again. The English knights lost one figure, but the 8 man Livonian unit got wiped out. The English knights then attacked whatever else was in range and due to their high saves as well as good rolls, inflicted serious damage. By this time both sides were in really bad shape and outside of the crossbow unit, there weren't any fresh units or reserves available. After looking around and discussing things, it was determined that the Teutonic side was probably slightly ahead and the Livonians would need to fall back and try again some other day!



The scenario worked out well and while at the outset didn't seem balanced with the Teutonic side having two mounted units of knights, it was a pretty even fight. Unarmored troops don't last long in this set of rules, so if you're planning to have them in your scenario there should be a few units of them! The rules were received well and true to their title, allowed us to play a larger type skirmish battle in a reasonable amount of time. Not having to look at cards, personal attributes, weapons for each figure, etc., seemed to save a lot of time. The other thing which is attractive to our group is that you can use the rules with pretty much any period.



To test this new version of the rules out, Rob (who does all of the *FFOL* stuff for us!) had set up a battle between a force of Teutonic Knights and Livonians. The idea was that the Teutonic Knights were having a festival with some English forces as their guests, when the Livonians and their allies attack the camp. There were some units posted as guards in the area, so the attack wasn't a big surprise. However, with their forces scattered, setting up a quick response was going to be a challenge.

For this game, most units consisted of 8 figs, with the mounted units only having 4. There



We decided to do another British vs. German BKC IV battle for two reasons; the first is that we did not have one in the last issue of Warning Order (a rarity!) and it was also the 79th anniversary of Operation Market Garden. One of our members recently painted up some U.S. Airborne stands, so the trick was to find something where the U.S. Airborne and British mech forces worked together. There weren't too many options outside of Market Garden.

With only a 6 x 4 table available for this night's battle, it took quite some time to find something that would work! I own the game Where Eagles Dare that covers the 101st and XXX Corps operations. There was a small scenario that had elements of Panzer Brigade 107 (which would later be upgraded to the 25th Panzergrenadier Division), but it

was extremely confusing as while the 107th Panzer Brigade went into battle on Sept. 17th or 18th with 36 Panthers and a dozen or so Stug IVs, plus some panzergrenadiers, finding their status by the 22nd and 23rd proved elusive. Likewise on the Allied side, where determining which Guards units fought where and with what was a major challenge. In the end, we had to fudge things to use what we had, but it was at least an attempt to represent the historical battle.



The Germans had the following units:

- (4) Panthers
- (4) Stug IVs
- (8) stands of panzergrenadiers plus (1) 75mm At gun
- (9) infantry stands plus (1) 75mm AT gun
- (4) command stands, (1) FAO and (1) medium artillery battery (off-board).
- The infantry commands also had light mortars and MMGs attached.

The Allies had their forces organized for two separate thrusts towards the two villages (Mariaheide and Erp).

one battery of off-board artillery for the airborne and one battery for the British. There were also two Typhoon air strikes on call.

The Germans could begin deployed up to the mid-point of the board, while the Allied forces needed to emerge from either the highway or Veghel. To win, the Allies would need to take both Mariaheide and Erp. If they only took one then the game would end in a draw, while taking no villages would be a loss. Each side took some time to formulate their plans, then the game started.

From the start, it became two games in one. The U.S. paras and British armor trying to clear the leftmost village while the other British force raced out to seize the other. Unfortunately for the second British force, they ran into long range fire from the Panthers, who were deployed on that flank. The Shermans had no answer and with bad saving rolls, soon had several of them on fire. The British tried to get their FAC to call in the Typhoons, but were unable to get them to come in. By Turn 4, the British were in (cont. on p15)



was too small for six players. However, that led me to the fighting around Veghel during the tail end of the operation.

Further reading/investigation showed that there were a number of German attacks against both sides of Veghel in an attempt to capture the bridges or at least cut Hell's Highway. If there had been enough table space, we could have done the German paras attack on the other side, but instead focused on one side around Veghel. Panzer Brigade 107 had attempted to reach the town and its vital bridges, but had been forced back. The following day, the Allies counterattacked towards Mariaheide (near the highway) and Erp with elements of the 506th Parachute Regiment, the Grenadier Guards, and the Coldstream Guards.

This led to the next problem, which were orders of battle. This topic is ex-

Mariaheide Attack Force:

- (6) stands U.S. Airborne infantry plus heavy weapons stands
- (4) Cromwells
- (3) Shermans and (1) Firefly
- (4) stands British infantry in Bren Carriers

Erp Attack Force:

- Shermans plus (2) Fireflies
- (8) British infantry stands in halftracks plus heavy weapons.

Each bullet point had a command stand, plus there was an FAO and FAC. The Allies had





(cont. from p14) trouble and were looking around for options.

On the other flank, the British armor quickly defeated the German Stugs, clearing the way for the paras and British infantry to move forward. There were some close assaults on the outskirts of the village, but progress was slow. Artillery was coming in, but wasn't scoring a lot of hits. The Germans desperately needed what was left of their armor to get to that flank to deal with the British.

The only remaining mobile force the Germans had were the Panthers, which were still operating as an intact unit. The Panthers started to shift towards Mariaheide, but first needed to deal with the remaining Shermans. In a several turn duel, the Panther finished off a few more Shermans, then brought the British halftracks under fire as they tried to move

to a closer staging area for the attack upon Erp. Again and again, the British FAC simply could not get the Typhoons to come in, which might have sealed the victory for the British by eliminating the Panthers.

Back near Mariaheide, the panzergrenadiers were putting up stiff resistance. However, the British armor were going section by section, pounding the village blocks, then assaulting them with the British infantry and U.S. paras. The artillery of both sides did little this night, mainly due to horrific shift rolls, which often pushed the barrage too far from enemy forces. The German panzergrenadiers were losing this fight and needed some assistance.

Turn 8 proved to be the decisive turn as the Panthers left most of the Shermans on fire and the halftracks had taken shel-

ter in a farm complex. That side of the board was firmly in German control. On the British flank, they had cleared half of Mariaheide and were clearly going to take control of the village. At that, the game was called as a draw, with the British in control of one village, but they did not have the strength to press onto the other village. Historically, the U.S. paras and the Guards took both villages with heavy fighting.

Engagements #56 in this issue was based closely on this battle. It does look tough to cross the open ground, but the satellite map I had showed a lot of open area. There was heavy fighting around the one village, but the Panthers are pretty fearsome at long ranges. Artillery and airstrikes factored in very little, which was surprising. We'll do some more battles along Hell's Highway sometime in the future.



I can't remember which Facebook group it was on (I belong to way too many hobby groups!), but there was a post about some gamers who were going to do some "heavy duty" wargaming, featuring Memoir '44, Necromunda, and some other board game with oodles of plastic miniatures. Whether you choose to classify these games as wargames is an entirely different topic, but I wonder what these gamers would have thought had they seen and/or participated in some real "heavy duty" wargames like Command Decision 2, Harpoon 4, WRG rules, etc.!

Yes, I realize that time has passed many of these games by and it really wasn't until the recent convention I attended that the truth of the matter really started to sink in. I've been in the hobby for 45+ years and used to know a lot of the gamers who we considered to be the "Old Guard". These were the gamers who got into the hobby almost from the start, playing rules by Featherstone and Grant, knew WRG Ancients front and back, plus they had the original set of board games from Avalon Hill and SPI.

As newer figures began to emerge in the late 70s from GHQ, Ral Partha, Essex, etc., they started to replace the earlier figures and scales. Back then, while we didn't regard the Old Guard with disdain, even we could see that the hobby was changing and members of the Old Guard needed to adapt or be swept away with hobby history. Why play with 1/72nd scale Airfix figs painted with enamels on painted cardboard bases when there were new 15mm figs, acrylic paints, Woodland Scenics flocking, and more? Most of the Old Guard adapted and moved on, leaving me to sometimes ponder what would happen when I was admitted to the Old Guard.

Well, that time is here. Not only at the convention, but many of the posts I see on other groups and forums has convinced me that my gaming group and I have become the Old Guard. What makes matters worse is that there will be no adaption period for us, nor does it look like the hobby is going to continue on as we once knew it. Things are changing and fast.

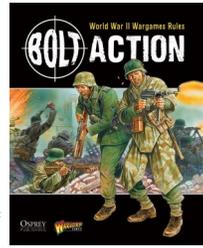
At the convention we ran a huge War of the Roses game in 28mm that drew a lot of attention as well as a lot of ques-

tions. At the same time, however, we were surrounded by tournaments for Bolt Action, Flames of War, Blood Bowl, and this doesn't even count all of the WH40K, Age of Sigmar, Saga, etc., games at another location. All of these are certainly wargames in one fashion or the other, but our large, multi-player game with 700+ miniatures really stood out for various reasons.

Most, if not all the other games are smaller in scope, use far fewer figures, have fairly basic systems, and can be completed in a fairly short amount of time. Can you do longer games with these rules systems? Yes, but they are the outliers. The hobby has transformed itself into getting a glossy new set of rules out there, make the figs available in some kind of box/set, require little set up, lots of action, and wrap things up in around two hours where possible. There's nothing wrong with it and several of these games are highly successful as seen with table after table of gamers playing them.

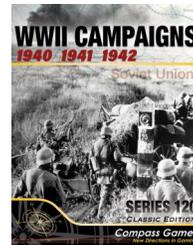
Now there are many members of the Old Guard who also play these games, but for many of us they don't hold too much appeal. Whether it is the codex of the week approach, points driven tournament nature of the games, not satisfying the need for some kind of history, or something else, they just aren't the right kind of fit for many in my gaming group and I suspect many other gamers as well. Instead, we retire to reading how to paint cuffs on Seven Years War Austrians, plan out the next Napoleonic Peninsula Battle, play GMT's Pacific War, or continue building units to do some large 8 player refight from the Classical Ancients Age.

Do we think that many other gamers who do play these games are going to join us? While that used to happen in the past, not so much now. Back in the day, we used to kind of admire the Old Guard, particularly the number of figs that they had, the terrain collections that they had built up, and they inspired us to get into new periods, try new rules, and strive to get large collections of our own. That doesn't seem to be happening too much any more. Did many gamers like our



28mm War of the Roses game? I'm sure that many did. Are some of them going to go out, purchase a set of Hail Caesar rules, then paint up several hundred figs? Probably not. The hobby has changed greatly and frankly, what my gaming group does is starting to fall outside the established lines.

You also see it in the board wargaming side of the hobby. Lately, several companies have been bringing back games from the 70s and 80s. Sure, some of the more popular ones such as Kingmaker, Successors, etc., are in their 3rd or 4th editions, but many of the Simulations Canada games, Series 120 games from GDW, SPI games, and more lesser known titles are getting reprints. While nostalgia runs deep in the hobby, pretty much only the Old Guard gamers are going to be interested in these. In another 5-10 years when this generation of the Old Guard passes away, I doubt that there will be any interest in these kinds of games at all.



There's also been discussion about what happens when current members of the Old Guard pass away. Will anyone want their stuff or will it end up in a dumpster somewhere? Sure, there's always collectors and even some younger members of the Old Guard might be interested, carrying things forward for a few years, but is today's gamer in his late 20s/early 30s who plays WH40K and Blood Bowl going to be interested in some 15mm ACW stuff? Probably not. Historical gaming isn't dead by any means, but I don't think its growing any longer.

The important thing is that those of us in the Old Guard are still having fun playing games and I don't think anyone is bitter about things. It's just the nature of hobbies and life. I remember reading an article called Twilight of the Rock Gods, which talked about what happens when AC/DC, the Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, etc., call it quits. Who will fill the stadiums or who is the next great rock and/or heavy metal band? As the article stated, there really isn't anything comparable at this time and it will be the end of an era. The music will live on, but probably nowhere near as popular, especially when all of their fans pass on. Is historical gaming facing a similar issue or will there be new gamers who carry the torch forward?



Battle Card Series 1 by Postmark Games

Game Review

Kickstarter has definitely changed the world of gaming. Now whether that is for better or worse is a topic often debated by gamers! In this instance, it worked out pretty well. One of the benefits of backing a lot of Kickstarter projects (mainly The Fantasy Trip modules/accessories) is that you get a lot of emails that show off new projects that you may be interested in. While I delete probably 90% of those, one of the projects from a company called Postmark Games caught my attention.

Solitaire games have been growing in popularity over the last several years. Where in the past you would have Avalon Hill's B-17, London's Burning, and some fantasy RPG stuff, now there are entire series of solo games for wargamers. Most of these take several hours to complete and some, such as Compass Games' Silent War, can go on for 100+ hours. However, let's say that you only have an hour, but want to get in some wargaming? Battle Card Series 1 is a pretty good option.

For \$5 you get four games; Moro River, Malaysia, Mortain, and Operation Market Garden. The backers got a link via Kickstarter and the company, Postmark Games, which contains a series of folders. Each folder has color and low ink options to print the games, along with



an A4 or regular 8.5 x 11 option. Many gamers print these on cardstock and even laminate them, so there are a lot of options for how you want your games to come out.

Each Battle Card has a sheet that serves as the game board. There are a series of boxes that serve to track where "units" are, the turn number, and usually one or two combat tables. Each game will detail what the grayed out boxes are used for, numeric symbols near the boxes, red connecting lines, etc., along with the starting positions. The "units" are D6s! Yes, you use a number of dice (preferably in different colors) to represent combat forces on the map as well as the strength of those units. Another D6 serves as a turn and/or weather marker as well.

The rules for each game are on one page. While the rules for Market Garden took up almost the entire page, some of the others did not even fill up the last column. There is nothing here that would qualify as rocket science. Just follow what the various boxes mean for this game, note any special rules (weather, counterattacks, reinforcements, etc.), then look at the sequence of play. You can literally have any of the game set up and start turn 1 within 5-10 minutes. There are also several YouTube videos that show how the game systems work in case you have any questions or are unsure how to play.

Basically, you as the player are trying to achieve a goal by attacking, advancing, then seizing an objective. For example, in the Moro River game on the left, the player is the Canadians who are trying to reach Torre Mucchia by turn 6. you begin by attacking along the red arrows and rolling on the combat table. There are no "odds" or "+/-" ratios here with different columns, just whether the strength of the Canadian unit is more, less, or the same as the German unit opposing it. Roll 1D6, which results in a

loss for one or both sides, and possibly a withdrawal by the German unit.

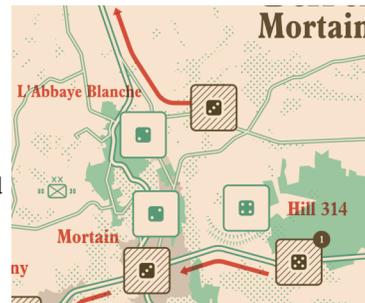
If the Germans reach a reinforcement space, their unit gains an extra dot on their D6 and if the box is gray, they counterattack if the Canadian unit advances next to them. In this game, the Canadians have a reserve D6 with two points that can be used to add strength to a Canadian unit and they can transfer strength between units along the red lines. The addition of a Mud roll can affect combat and other games have similar features with airpower, artillery, and weather.

Some of the games have units in the same locations, so there is a grinding type of attrition battle, then a few decisions about where to go or how far to push things. Most games end with either an objective seized or the player's units have run out of strength. Each game has some kind of special rule, but in terms of complexity it really doesn't add much and it gives each separate game a bit of flavor. The rules to each game can easily be read and understood in under five minutes.

The game play is as one would suspect; a lot of die rolling and randomness with a few decision points here and there. Again, there's nothing approaching rocket science here and if you've played any type of solitaire wargame before, then you pretty much know what to expect. If you have a terrible

first turn and it looks hopeless, just reset everything and try again. You can easily get in a game under 10-15 minutes, which is one of the attractions here. For \$5 you get four games and while you need to print them yourself, this is a pretty good deal. Whether you will get tired of them after a few plays is the big question here as there certainly is limited depth and usually few strategy options.

I could see an entire range of these games to cover ACW, WWI, etc., and they're certainly worth a try, especially for the price.



Battle Card Market Garden 1944



Market Garden

European Theater of Operations

During Operation Market Garden, Allied forces attempted to seize the bridges over the Netherlands.

Nijmegen German defenses. You take the role of the Allies and must secure a complete bridgehead for the Corps.

operation you will be playing the role of a paratrooper.

as a Turn die. If an Allied unit is reduced below 1 dot, it is destroyed.

Setup
Place one German Reinforcement (Ludlow, Green, Nijmegen, Breda), one German unit (Ludlow, Green, Nijmegen, Breda), and one Allied unit (Ludlow, Green, Nijmegen, Breda) on the map. Place one or two Allied units on each of the three bridges. Place one or two German units on each of the three bridges. Place one or two German units on each of the three bridges.

German units are placed on striped spaces with broken dice tables.

German units are placed on striped spaces with broken dice tables.

Place the Turn die on the Peg space with the Turn value facing up.

Roll the Turn die to adjust the starting strength of the Allied units.

Strength
1 Strength
2 Strength
3 Strength
4 Change

Turn Structure
After completing the setup and rolling the Turn die, the game proceeds in the following order:

1. Battle
Check to Attack or Defend with one Allied unit on the bridge for each location separately.

Compare Allied and German Strength. The side with the higher value takes the bridge.

Roll 1d6 and consult the appropriate Combat Results Table.

Roll 1d6 and consult the appropriate Combat Results Table.

Roll 1d6 and consult the appropriate Combat Results Table.

Roll 1d6 and consult the appropriate Combat Results Table.

Roll 1d6 and consult the appropriate Combat Results Table.

Roll 1d6 and consult the appropriate Combat Results Table.

Roll 1d6 and consult the appropriate Combat Results Table.

Roll 1d6 and consult the appropriate Combat Results Table.

Roll 1d6 and consult the appropriate Combat Results Table.

Battle	Canadian	German
Adv	1, 2, 3, 4	5, 6
Can	1-1 W	1-1 W
Ger	1-1 W	1-1 W
No	1-1 W	1-1 W

German Counterattack	Adv	1	2, 3, 4	5, 6
Can	1-1	NE	NE	NE
Ger	1-1	NE	NE	NE
No	1-1	NE	NE	NE

AOR: French Attack Against Twin Villages

Battle Report

We figured that it was time again for a Seven Years War battle, so we went with Age of Reason 3rd edition and chose to use French vs. Prussians. One of our members is a big fan of One Hour Wargames and selected a scenario



from one of their sets of rules. This scenario had an attacking force trying to seize two villages that were pretty close to each other, connected by a single road. There was also limited terrain in terms of hills, woods, rivers, etc., so this would be a pretty straight up fight.

Apparently, the scenario was supposed to have the defenders entrenched, but someone forgot the entrenchments! This probably worked out for the best as the attacking force was going to have a difficult enough assignment as it was! During the game, comments were made how many of the scenario books, magazine scenarios, etc., that come from England always seem to have the forces a bit too even, no matter what the defender's situation!

The French, who were the attackers, had the following force:

- (4) small [6 figs ea.] cavalry units
- (3) grenadier units
- (12) regular infantry units
- (2) medium batteries, (1) heavy battery, and (1) siege gun

The Prussians, who were defending, had the following force:

- (1) infantry garrison unit at each village.
- (3) grenadier units
- (9) regular infantry units
- (1) cuirassier unit
- (4) medium batteries

The Prussians were allowed to set up halfway across the board and of course

focused their efforts in support of defending the two villages. The lone cavalry unit covered the extreme Prussian right flank and the rest of the Prussian force was set up to be able to respond quickly to any threat. Villages in Age of Reason are notoriously hard to take, so the thinking was that the villages could take care of themselves while the other Prussian forces focused on trying to attrite the French forces as they set up to attack the villages.

The Prussians drew first blood, hitting the advancing French with artillery as they moved up to attack. The French cavalry set up to charge the Prussian cuirassier unit, but one of the French cavalry units rolled freakishly bad on their charge roll and so only one of the smaller French units went up against the cuirassier. This

resulted in something of a disaster as the cuirassier bulldozed the French cavalry, then charged into the disorganized second unit, causing it to rout as well. All of sudden, half of the French cavalry force was gone. The remaining two French units now moved up to stop the victorious Prussian cuirassier unit.

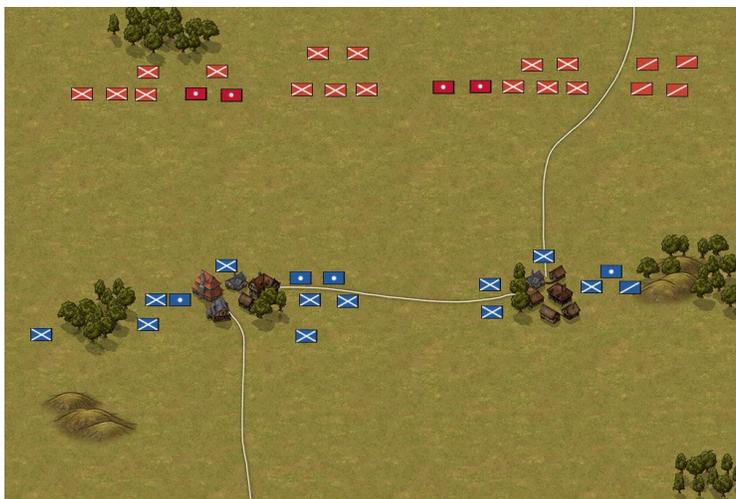
Elsewhere on the board, the first French infantry attacks went in. For anyone who has played Age of Reason knows, getting infantry to charge isn't easy (it wasn't easy during the 7YW anyway)! The Prussian fire was intense and casualties started to pile up. One glimmer of hope for the French was a grenadier unit that did



capture at least half of the left-most Prussian village, driving the Prussians back towards the center of the village. Right then and there, it looked like things might be turning around for the French.

The siege gun was deployed now and knocked out a Prussian batter,

The Prussians shifted forces to areas of concern and shored up some defense lines. The French tried a few more charges, but failed to move into contact. Instead, the Prussian infantry fire and artillery was taking a toll on the French forces and although the siege gun knocked out another Prussian battery, time was running out. (cont. on p19)



AOR: French Attack Against Twin Villages (cont.) Battle Report



(cont. from p18) The French resumed the attack, trying to break the center and swinging around the extreme Prussian left. The new command and control rules, however, showed that the French were too spread out and it was difficult to move up the infantry and the artillery at the same time. The French ran into two Prussian units on that flank and were brought to a standstill by infantry fire. The artillery on that side needed to move closer, but was now out of command range, so they kept up long range fire that was ineffective.

Back to the lone Prussian cavalry unit, now facing off against the last two French cavalry units. In a series of melees, the French cavalry were defeated and fell back to the edge of the board. The Prussian cuirassier now pivoted and looked to threaten the French infantry on that side of the board. The French infantry had thrown themselves at the town in

reckless abandon, almost capturing it twice, but driven back by Prussian counterattacks. They now slowly fell back, forming squares to protect not only themselves from the menacing cuirassier unit, but also that entire flank.

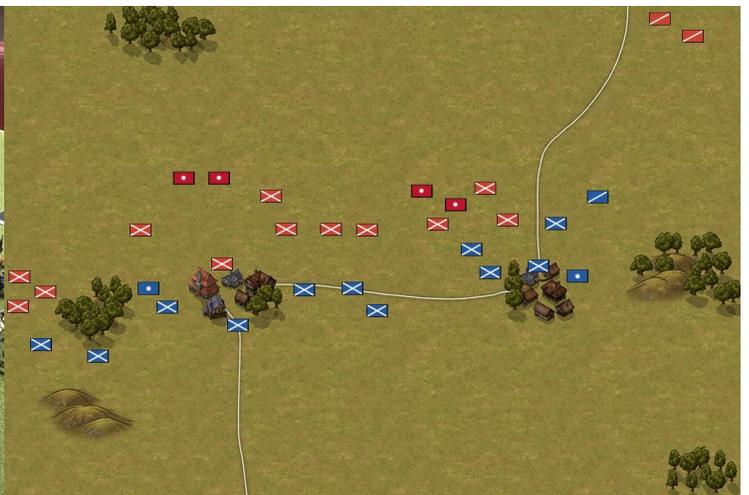
Across the center and the Prussian left, the French were unable to make any gains. While they attacked and were causing casualties, the Prussians were always able to respond just in time. French infantry strength was starting to feel the losses and almost every single morale check was done with one less die than the time before. At least in the center and the left, the Prussians were holding.

On the Prussian right, the Prussian infantry advanced, signaling that the end of the game was in sight. Hit by artillery, Prussian infantry fire, and a cuirassier unit on their flanks, the French on that

side of the board started to fall apart. They passed their first withdrawal check (at 25% losses each side has to check at the end of the turn), but the end was in sight and the game was called as a Prussian victory.

Finally, we had a game that felt like a Seven Years War battle! Everyone was in supported lines, the infantry were having a hard time advancing to close combat, and the artillery didn't dominate the board. The French had a tough task in front of them and to the player's credit, the attacked with elan and made a pretty good fight of it.

We definitely did something right with the game set up and play, but we're not sure what we did! Many of our 7YW fights go wrong somewhere, but not this time. Hopefully, we can learn something from this and keep doing better games in what is one of our favorite periods.



A few issues back I reviewed Dark Ages: Holy Roman Empire, which I had bought at one of the SaltCon shows where the publisher had been attending. At the time, I did mention that you could add that game to another game in the series, Dark Ages: Heritage of Charlemagne to make a huge game covering the entire European continent. After debating whether I needed the companion game or not multiple times, I finally broke down and got it.



pile everything into groups around the board, then playing the game as well as future games is going to be tough.

As with Holy Roman Empire, this is a civilization building game that combines a bit of everything. The game can be played solo, then there are specific rules for the 2-4 player games as to what cards are left out, which regions are out of play, etc. Basically, you're trying to build out your empire, fight off other players, advance your civilization, and gather as many resources as possible. If it sounds like a lot, it is. Thankfully, there's nothing approaching rocket science in this game. The basic rules aren't that long and what seems complicated really isn't after a turn or two. We'll get to the modules later that can add some complexity, but the basic game is fairly easy to play.

Like the previous game, this comes in a huge box with a ton of components. This does seem to be the latest trend for big boxed games, but the question has always been whether or not gamers actually play these games multiple times or not, usually due to all of the components and set up time. This game, like it's brother, does bring up those very same questions, especially after you look at the huge stacks of cards and all of the rules for them!

The first component is the very colorful map board of Western Europe, covering most of Spain all the way to southern England. There are play mats for up to 4 players, tokens, markers, buildings of various sizes, and a few decks of cards, again in varying sizes. On top of that you have the add-ons which features more cards, miniatures of famous buildings, and 54-60mm figures of famous commanders. Finally, there are the rule and play books. You definitely get your money in terms of components!

I quickly did for this game what I did for Holy Roman Empire, namely build a bunch of storage trays out of foam core. This is one of those games where if you are going to play it more than once, you better get it organized! A tray that holds all of the cities, trays for each player with their miniatures and tokens, a card tray with all of the modules sorted, etc., are essential. If you just



The game uses a unique turn structure where basically there are no turns! Rather, each player keeps doing actions until (you get a number of tokens to use) they pass. Once you pass, you produce resources, then actions start all over again. In between there are cards that you can play, building things, using special rules on your cards, and trying to advance your military technology and civilization. This is going to take most gamers a turn or two to figure out what exactly is going on here. There is a clever system of passing, getting resources, first choices on certain tracks, etc., that helps balance things out.

There is a military component to the game as well. Purchasing troops, upgrading your military technology, fortifying your cities, etc., are a big part of the game. To take new areas, you need to invade with enough troops to defeat whatever forces are there (there are tokens with hidden values for these areas). There is an interesting combat system with special dice that makes any military adventure a challenge. Of course, balancing out military conflict with the other parts of the game is tough to do.

Of course, there are limited ar-

eas/regions to conquer and only so many resources that you can obtain. At some point, one player is going to achieve victory by hitting one of the several ways to win. In essence, this isn't a long game (2-3 players might take 2 1/2-3 hours and this is one of those games where the end comes all of a sudden! Smart players are going to figure out a path to victory (i.e., military, culture track, etc.) and then the



game really starts to move along. Again, this is one of those games where it seems like you still have an hour or so to go, but then in 15 minutes someone hits the objectives and the game ends!

Now its on to the expansion modules, which can really add to the game. There are well over a dozen of them, ranging from the solo module to great commanders. Each module has several cards/tokens/figures along with a page or two of rules. Using all of the modules might make things interesting, but a good guess would be that the playing time might go up, especially if you need to check the rules for that module. The modules do add a lot of flavor to the game, so picking and choosing which to use will be up to each gaming group. You can also join this game with Holy Roman Empire for a massive 7-8 player game!



The game is fun to play and combines resource management with Risk like combat, plus there are multiple paths to victory, so there is pretty good replay value. The big question is how many times is this going to hit the table? If you have things organized, it should cut down on the set up time, which is a plus. There are some things that could have used a bit more work and the ending seems rushed, but it's worth a try at least once.

Colonial Campaign Upgraded

A long, long time ago, The Courier ran a series about a fictional Victorian colonial campaign from a group of gamers in Washington. The author, Lynn Bodin, who also did *Savage & Soldier* magazine, created a Sudan campaign by using the San Juan Islands as the fictional setting. It was definitely an original idea and seemed to work well for their group, using Imperialism for the larger battles (this was a battalion level rules set) and *The Sword & The Flame* for smaller actions.

Back in 2006, inspired by that same campaign, I designed a similar campaign. The premise was that while the original uprising in the San Juans probably failed (the results of the campaign were never described in the series), a new Mahdi entered some 20 years later, thus was born the Return of the False Prophet of the San Juans. The campaign would use the same Sudan setting as well as the San Juan Islands, but there needed to be several changes to make the campaign work better (at least from my point of view).

The original campaign used two sets of rules, where I wanted gamers to just use one if possible. Also, it would be tough to find a team of gamers who wanted to not only play the native forces, but keep track of them throughout the campaign as losses would surely be heavy. Finally, how could British intervention be added into the campaign so as not to unbalance things too early.

10 **C** **2**

Reinforcements



Egyptian high command recalls garrisons from the continent. Four units of Sudanese infantry and one battery of artillery arrive at any victory point location in the San Juans

Remove this card if it is played as an event #35

12  **3**

General Graham Arrives



Graham arrives at Suakin with the following: (8) units of infantry (2) units of cavalry (1) artillery battery

Until recalled, Graham must engage all enemy forces in an effort to clear Lopez Island

Remove this card if it is played as an event #4

This is where playing board games came to the rescue. I play a lot of card driven games such as *Paths of Glory*, *Shifting Sands*, *Successors*, etc., where cards control the action and can be used for multiple operations. Also, the problem of finding native players was solved by having all of the players on the Anglo-Egyptian side. The Mahdists are randomly placed by die roll and when a battle occurs, the gamers can be split up to play both sides for that battle, giving everyone a chance to be on both sides during the campaign. There's no tracking native losses in between battles, which eases the record keeping.

Each turn, the players draw a hand of several cards, which are then used for either events, operations (moving units and fighting battles), or replacements. How the cards are used will be the subject of great debate with the players throughout the campaign. They may need to use the card as an event to receive some new units to shore up defenses somewhere, but then again playing the card for Ops (operation points) could move some units to safety or counterattack at a critical location. This gives the campaign pretty good replay value as you'll never know what cards will be dealt or how they will be played.

Once the rebellion hits a certain victory level, then the British cards are inserted into the deck. This allows for a British entry into the operational area to stabilize things, then later to begin a re-conquest, much like the original Sudan campaigns. However, nothing is written in stone and things could get so bad that the British never even enter the campaign! Also, the re-conquest could meet with some disasters and then the British withdraw.

The original map was pretty bad, but functional. Armed with *Inkarnate* (reviewed this issue), I went about making a completely new map. While the islands came out close to how they actually are in our own world, the villages, ports, terrain, etc., is completely fictional and designed to make the campaign setting interesting. Of course, all of the map graphics in the rules had to be

reworked, so that also gave me a chance to revisit the various rules sections, tables, etc., and make some improvements here and there. The cards could use a graphics upgrade as well, but that's a project for another day!

The current version of the rules is available from the WFHGS site and contains everything that you will need for the campaign. Counters, cards, planning



map, unit rosters, etc., are all included. There are some additional rules to make the campaign more interesting, including a more detailed supply system as well as the chance for gunboat battles against the Mahdi's makeshift fleet. There is also a separate file for the full scale 24 in. x 24 in. map.

Any set of miniatures rules can be used with the campaign system. This means that *Black Powder*, *Battles For Empire*, *The Sword & The Flame*, etc., can all be used. While there are a large number of interesting units that many gamers might not have (mainly all of the early Egyptian and local forces), substitutes would surely work, so that shouldn't prevent anyone from trying the campaign.

If you're looking for an unusual Sudan campaign, this is one that you might want to try. The cards will make for some interesting decisions and the rebellion can spread in random directions, causing the players to respond to each crisis. You can go to the following page on the WFHGS site and download the rules as well as a larger map: <https://wfhgs.com/downloads.html>



1/38  **G**

Staffords

Sultan

Force 2

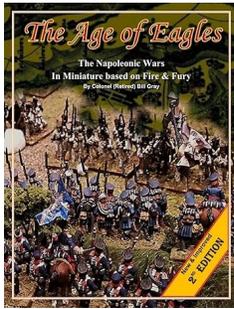
Gordon **1**  **Sudanese**

When Historical Scenarios Become Disasters...Ideas?

From time to time, many of us turn to historical scenarios for our regular gaming nights, or on occasion for a convention. On the surface, there would be a lot going for historical scenarios, i.e., plenty of maps, the orders of battle are known, most special situations (entrenchments, lack of supply, etc.) are covered by rules, and you have an idea of how things actually turned out. It would seem to be a low risk, high reward, easy to do type of game. Unfortunately, that would be a wrong assumption.

Instead, most historical scenarios turn out to be disasters at the worst and usually nowhere near what actually happened at the actual battle. There's a lot of reasons for this and we'll explore them later on in this article. For now, we'll focus on our recent refight of the Battle of Klyastitz using Age of Eagles.

During July of 1812, when Napoleon's columns were on a scenic tour of Russia and heading towards destiny at Borodino and Moscow, there was a series of battles on the road between Polotsk and Sebezh. Over three days, covering July 30th to August 1st, Oudinot's corps fought a series of skirmishes and small battles near Jakobovo, while holding a bridge at the village of Klyastitz. Wittgenstein actually assembled a force and not only held near Okhova, but drove the French back to the bridge. In fact, there is a famous painting of Russian grenadiers saving the bridge which the French had attempted to burn.



From looking over the scenario you would think it would make for an interesting and probably shorter Age of Eagles game. The map is fairly small, although the closed nature of the terrain means that there isn't a lot of room for maneuver. The two sides are roughly the same strength, with both having several brigades of infantry, some small units of cavalry, and a few batteries of artillery. It was during the set up that the Russian players began to think something was wrong.

First, a French division was already deployed on the plateau that overlooks Okhova. Historically, the French attacked down the slope towards the town. Both sides could pretty much see from the start that the French weren't going to do that. The Russians had part of a small force on board, but the next two divisions would need to enter their infantry brigades in mass column (!!!) within 6 inches of the village, right in front of the French. From a Russian point of view, things did not look optimal.

In our first try, the Russians on the right engaged the French opposite them to tie them down and set up for an attack. On the left, the Russians advanced in their deep columns right up the slope while the artillery got set up to bombard in following turns. The Russians on the right ran into trouble immediately and every time it looked like they might advance they got hit with disorder markers. Meanwhile, the French moved up every unit they had, forming deep lines with cavalry on the flanks that were ready to deal with any Russian that emerged from the woods.

The Russians on the left pressed their attack, driving the French back from the edge of the plateau, which by itself seemed amazing considering what they were up against. The next turn they renewed the attack and pushed the French past the town towards the other side of the plateau. Now historically, here's where the French decided that was enough fighting for the day and they withdrew over the river. Not so here. The Russians looked down to see that while the attack on the left was successful, they

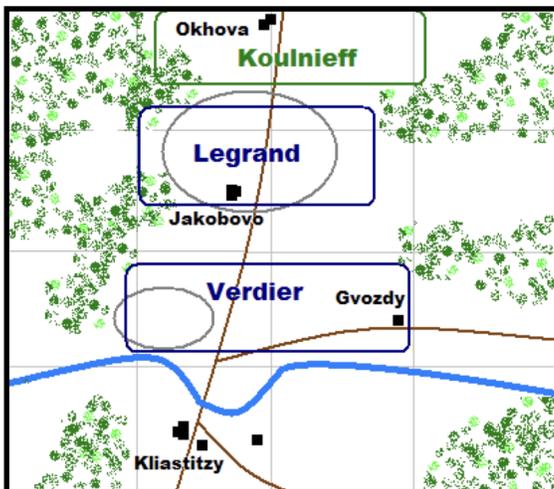
were now in the midst of five French brigades (against two Russian brigades) and cavalry on the flanks. With the Russian right going nowhere and the left about to be surrounded and annihilated, the Russians conceded on turn 5 of a potential 20 turns.

Since it was still early (the first game was only 90 minutes), we decided to reset and try again. This time the Russians were going to try something different since the French showed no inclination to recreate their historical attack on Okhova. The Russians led with their artillery, which deployed and started shelling the French brigades on the plateau. The infantry brigades were stacked behind the artillery, waiting to move forward. On the Russian right, the units posted there again ran into heavy French fire, making just trying to move up a challenge.



Once again, the French moved everything up and you can see from the images that there was line after line waiting for the Russian attack. The Russians were having some success with the bombardment, moving up behind a screen of infantry, then bombarding again. By turn 6 the French were forced back from the edge of the plateau, but two batteries were damaged and two others kept getting silenced every other turn, meaning the offensive was going nowhere. Technically, the Russians were winning on casualty count, but they weren't going anywhere and any kind of French counterattack was going to finish them off. At that point the Russians packed up their stuff as the game was essentially over.

So, what went wrong? Sure, the dice always play a part in these kinds of things and the Russian bombardment rolls weren't anything to get excited over, but these things tend to even out. (cont. on p23)



When Historical Scenarios Become Disasters...Ideas? (cont.)

(cont. from p22) The Russians didn't have a lot of options and were basically forced with two options; first, advance in brigade columns and attempt to fight their way through, or two, open up a bombardment and advance slowly as the French get wore down. Neither one worked. While the French players were clearly having fun, it was an exercise in frustration for the Russian side.

Now usually with historical scenarios they often fail because replicating the terrain on the tabletop is almost impossible, unless it's an ancients battle with flat ground. Terrain that should be nearly impossible gets moved through quickly, rivers that would be difficult to cross aren't, and so on, usually due to the rules that all of us gamers use or that we simply don't pay much attention to detail when it comes to terrain. Here, however, the terrain was pretty basic and only the woods really played any part in the game.

What exactly happened that day is known only in general terms. There had been two days of fighting in the area and the French were probably surprised that the Russians had turned to offer battle. The French did launch an attack, but then ran into the oncoming Russian columns. After some fighting the French were forced back to the middle of the plateau, then fell back until they were across the river again and set fire to the bridge so that the Russians could not follow them. Did Oudinot have orders not to engage in an all out battle? Did he revert to a previous directive to just support the main drive into Russia by holding the flank? How did the Russians actually get to the river?

One of the answers may be that Oudinot that day did not have a satellite's view of the battle, which the players ob-



viously did have. There was no sense in the French starting with an attack and nothing to prevent them from packing all of their reserves into successive defensive lines. Naturally, Oudinot couldn't see all that was happening during the French attack, nor how many Russians were coming up the plateau, plus we have no idea where the units in the French rear actually went. Short of forcing the French to do certain things, the Russian options were pretty limited.

The other culprit here could be the rules. This might be a battle that would play out much differently with a 1:20 scale set of rules. The Russians, it seemed, needed a lot of things to go well for them in this game and the initiative system used in Age of Eagles did not serve them well. When the Russians really needed to go first, the French invariably did. The brigades seemed to limit the players options, where 3-4 units in a brigade operating at the smaller scale might have provided the flexibility to attack more effectively.

Not all historical scenarios end up as wargaming disasters, but many do, which gave me pause to think about why. I've participated in quite a few over the last 40+ years and only a handful here and there seem to work out. I really think that many gamers like the idea of playing a historical battle, but when its played, events don't often come close to what actually happened. I think what makes it worse is knowing that the side that you're portraying did better in real life than you

did! It's like playing Isandlwana as the Zulus and not even getting past the British first line. The British in game terms aren't going to commit the same mistakes, so it's going to be much tougher on the Zulu side during the game.

So, why play historical scenarios at all? That's a good question and probably greatly depends upon your gaming group, the rules that you use, and what you're trying to accomplish. There's so many obstacles and things that go wrong with historical battles that there's a good chance that the game goes sideways at some point. It could be a small point like a bridge or stream in the wrong place, not following through on special scenario rules, sketchy orders of battle, or just the players knowing what actually happened and taking steps to mitigate potential pitfalls. Also, it's exceedingly difficult to



represent the fog of war as well as preventing players with an Olympus level view of the battle. Do you really think that Union players aren't going to cheat a bit to prevent a flank attack at Second Bull Run?

I think by this point my interest in recreating historical miniatures battles is at an all time low. I do like fictional battles based off of historical situations like the BKC IV battle report earlier in this issue. We couldn't get an actual map of the terrain or comprehensive orders of battle, but went with what we thought would represent the battle on that day in 1944, which worked well and was a lot of fun. What do others think about this topic? It would be good to get some feedback and ideas about how other gamers handle historical scenarios. I could definitely post a follow up article on this.



There was a battle report in a previous issue where we tried out the new Battletech Alpha Strike system. For those who recall, “back in the day” there was a Battletech game that was pretty “crunchy” and having several “mechs” (the large robots/armored behemoths) per side could take you 6-8 hours to play! Several of still remember the detailed record sheets, tracking heat sinks, lots of modifiers, sifting through technical readout books, etc., so the most recent version was a pleasant surprise when we first tried it.



mechs in the city and were a bit too aggressive in the defense

First off, things move faster than you would think! This gets units into contact rather quickly and a small situation can spiral out of control in just a turn or two. Basically, there

are three firing ranges, i.e., short (under 6”), medium (7-24”), and long (over 24”), with several modifiers for terrain, movement, damage, etc. This is certainly a game where you do not want to just stand still and slug it out! While the cards seem a bit complex at first, once you’ve played a few turns things are actually pretty easy to figure out.

For this scenario, we would be adding in some armor, powered infantry, and VTOL (think advanced helicopters) support. A Successors force needs to break into a walled city, search several buildings, then rescue a high value target. There were two APCs attached to the force to evacuate the objective, along with three lances of mechs, some armor, powered armor infantry, and some VTOLs. The Clan defenders had three mech lances as well, powered armor infantry in the city, and some VTOLs of their own.

The Clans decided to defend with one mech lance in the city plus the powered armor infantry, then the two other mech lances plus the VTOLs on the outside of the city. The strategy was to attrite the attackers before they got to the city walls, then hunker down in the city around the objectives. It was a pretty good plan until we started playing! Not being familiar with what we had (Battletech isn’t something all of us own), we put the wrong

The other thing that you have to get used to is that death for your mechs and armor can come about in many ways! From one shot critical hits to taking a barrage of fire that penetrates the armor and starts tearing apart the mech, you never know what the dice are going to do. This means that your plans are constantly shifting due to losses and/or damage. Just when things look bad on one side of the board, a critical hit here and there can even up the score.

The Successors advanced quickly up to the city walls, blowing two holes that allowed them entrance when they decided to press the attack. The VTOLs and armor really surprised the Clan players with their effectiveness. They moved to the center and flanks, bringing one of the Clan forces under fire quickly and then destroying one mech after the other. Each side destroyed a mech with an indirect fire critical hit, once again showing that nothing on the battlefield was safe from taking hits. Both sides were really moving and firing now, seriously damaging each others mechs, but the Clan forces were slowly losing the battle of attrition, even though they still held the objectives.

That changed around the 6th turn, when a Successor mech lance got into the breach of the city walls. This set off a three turn, close range slugfest where even the infantry on both sides got into the fray. Again, you quickly learn that even the powered armor infantry could get a critical hit and bring down the mightiest mech. The Clan forces lost their VTOL support and this is where things started to go badly for them. A counterattack by Clan forces near the city walls eased up some of the pressure, but this lance ended up being forced back into a curved line of defense, meaning that that the city defenders were on their own.

This was the signal for the final turns as once inside the city walls, things went from bad to worse for the Clan forces. Both sides lost a mech inside the city, but



all of a sudden on one fateful turn the Clans lost two more and the handwriting was on the wall. With armor and VTOLs still in the air, plus the Successors outnumbering the Clan forces 7:5 in mechs the battle was effectively over. The Successors could search the buildings with ease and retrieve their high value target for the victory.

A few big positives to note is that all of the infantry, VTOLs, armor, etc., fits in seamlessly with the mech rules that we already knew. Also, the game plays pretty fast considering how much stuff is on the board. The biggest problem for new players and/or those without the rules is just figuring out what is what. There are a lot of different types of mechs with their own cards, but that is a small problem that just takes some time and we will probably revisit this again soon.





Some more images from the big Battletech slugfest where we added armor, powered infantry, and some VTOL support. Despite all of the things on the board, the game plays faster than you would think and the entire battle, from set up to take down was just around four hours for five players.

BKC IV Battlegroups

From time to time, I hope to publish several of these battlegroups for use with Blitzkrieg Commander 4, which will allow gamers to mix and match forces for their games without having to research all of the unit stats, points, etc. These are based off of actual orders of battle where possible, but as many gamers know, there were a million variations to the units in most WW2 formations.

1944-45 Russian Tank Brigade										1675 Points
Unit	Type	MV	AP	AT	CA	Hits	Save	# of Units	Total	Notes
HQ (CV8)	CMD:HQ	40	-	-	3	4	6	1	60	
T-34/85	AFV	25	3/80	4/80	3	5	5	9	1395	Wide Tracked
Platoon (SMG)	INF:LI	10	6/10	-	5	6	-	2	110	Tank Desant
Platoon (Inf)	INF:LI	10	3/30	-	4	6	-	2	80	
Truck	VEH	15	-	-	-	3	-	2	30	

6th Panzer Division Kampfgruppe 1945										3580 Points
Unit	Type	MV	AP	AT	CA	Hits	Save	# of Units	Total	Notes
CO(CV9)	CMD:CO	60	-	-	3	6	6	1	120	
HQ(CV8)	CMD:HQ	40	-	-	3	4	6	3	180	
Pz V Panther	AFV	25	3/80	5/80	4	6	4	9	1935	
Platoon(Inf)	INF:LI	10	3/30	-	4	6	-	2	360	
Platoon(MG)	INF:SI	10	3/60	-	2	5	-	1	80	
Platoon(81mm)	INF:SI	10	3/120	3/120	2	5	-	1	75	
PAK-40 75mm	ART:AT	5	3/80	4/80	2	4	-	1	105	
SDKFZ 251/1	HTR	25	1/40	-	2	3	6	8	280	
SDKFZ 251/9	HTR	25	3/80	2/40	2	3	6	1	90	
SDKFZ 251/10	HTR	25	1/60	2/40	2	3	6	1	50	
Trucks	VEH	20	-	-	-	3	-	4	60	
FAO(CV8)	CMD:FO	40	-	-	3	4	6	1	45	
Wespe	ART:SG	-	4	4	-	3	-	1	120	
Hummel	ART:SG	-	6	6	-	4	-	2	80	

This is a very powerful formation used in Operation Spring Awakening during the relief of Budapest, which included a battalion of Panthers from another division as well. The units were 1/PZ RGT II, 1/PZ RGT .26, II./(gep) PZ-GREN-RGT 114, and 1./(SP) PZ.ART.RGT 76. The makeup of the attached panzergrenadier battalion in halftracks is unknown outside of the vehicle types, so this is a best guess based upon similar units.

I've written a number of times about the popularity of WW3 and Cold War games over the years, especially how the interest level continues on some 30+ years after the Berlin Wall fell. The attraction for wargamers in the 70s and 80s was fairly obvious. Masses of Russian and Warsaw Pact ships, planes, and ground forces slugging it out with their NATO counterparts across Europe. The amount of WW3 gaming we did back then was truly staggering. However, it hasn't gone away.

When Compass Games released the designer's edition of NATO a few years ago, then the ultimate edition of Third World War, you would have thought that finally, everyone has had their fill of WW3 games and its time to move on to other games and periods. Even with the success of GMT's Red Storm and its follow up, Baltic Approaches, you could chalk that up to some lingering effects or just fans of the original Downtown system. Again, you would be wrong in that assumption.

Instead, WW3 games keep coming out and more are due over the next year. Compass Games is largely to blame for this as they will be releasing several for this gaming period that will not die. Volume 2 in their modern CSS series about the Battle for Berlin is due out soon and it's a pretty good sized monster game. In fact, many of the latest WW3 games aren't just expensive, but they're big as well. Up next after that is an updated version of West End Games Air & Armor, which has always been highly thought of, with new maps, counters, and scenarios.

But wait, that's not all. The designers for Air & Armor are now talking about a series of games! Compass will also be reprinting the entire Victory Games Fleet series as well. WW3 gaming isn't just some passing fad (OK, an almost 40 year old fad!), but its booming at the moment and games are hitting their pre-order

numbers without much problem. Are there that many of today's gamers who are really into this period? Apparently so.

In fact, companies like Thin Red Line are producing multiple series for WW3. Their Under and Iron Sky monster game (now out of print) easily goes for \$250-500 on the second hand market, while all of their latest games such as Less Than 60 Miles, Dogs of War, etc., all sell out their entire print run. These games are big, not cheap by any means, and take an investment of time to learn and play. However, that doesn't seem to be holding gamers back who eagerly seek out these games. In fact, their games and fans have just about created their own gaming sub-culture!

Then you have VUCA Simulations and their Red Strike monster game. Going for \$170-200 (depending on source), this is another huge game using Mark Herman's Gulf Strike system, but applied on a massive scale. Here you have ships, aircraft, and hundreds of ground units fighting over Europe, using a fairly complex, interactive system (from my memory of playing Gulf Strike eons ago). The price, size of the game, the time needed to play it, etc., don't seem to be an obstacle for many gamers.

So, why is this a period that refuses to go away? There are actually several answers to this question and many gamers will probably have more reasons that they could add on here. The first and simplest answer is that this is what many of us grew up on. Having played SPI's Next War, Fulda Gap, BAOR, and many others along with GDW's Third World War, these games offer an opportunity to get back into (or continue gaming) a familiar topic. Not only that, they have better researched orders of battles, new ways of doing things, and the graphics are light years ahead of what was available in the 70s and 80s.

The second answer is that this period falls between two things; one is the modern period of warfare and frankly, there aren't a lot of games out

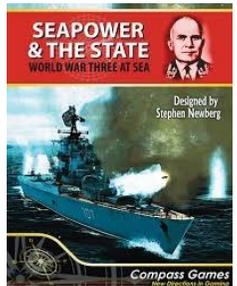
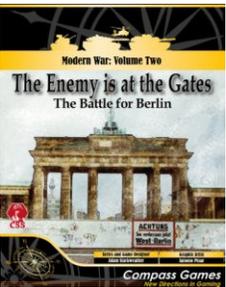
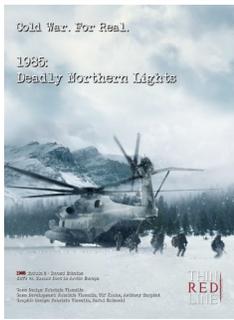
there on the subject. Yes, there is GMT's excellent Next War series and a few others here and there. However, they are usually fairly complex (due to modern weaponry and sensors) and have low unit density, which is fairly unattractive to most WW3 gamers. The second is how many times can you invade Russia in 1941 or try to fight your way to the Meuse in 1944? Been there, done that. WW3 games offer a great alternative as a mid point.

The third answer is that most gamers who are into this period are now older and have disposable income, so the cost of these games is less of a factor. If your company puts out a WW3 game for \$100 and

sells out, guess what, you're going to make more! Game companies have noticed this and have no problem green-lighting more projects for this era. Even Seapower & The State from Simulations Canada is getting the redesign treatment! What's next? SPI's Fulda Gap, Counterattack's Drive on Frankfurt, and perhaps even Avalon Hill's Tac Air?

I think the big question that I have about this era and its longevity in gaming terms is how long can this keep going? My guess is that not a lot of gamers in their 20s, 30s, and maybe even 40s are buying and playing these games. There's no data to support this, but I'm pretty sure most of us who are buying these games are in our 50s, 60s, and 70s. That doesn't sound good for the long term health of WW3 games, so maybe this is the last hurrah?

Then again, this seems to be a theme in gaming, i.e., resurrect old games with a built in audience. My guess is that WW3 soon turns towards sci-fi gaming and maybe we'll see the same pattern play out. TSR's Divine Right is getting a redesign, Voyage of the Pandora is being remade by GMT as Away Team, and there's hints about others being brought back as well. Nostalgia is a powerful narcotic and lots of gamers don't want to let go!



After completing a summer project of adding 1944-45 German and Russian forces in winter camo, it was time to actually use them on the tabletop! One of the units was a battalion of German paras and after reading about battles in East Prussia involving the Hermann Goering panzer division, this unit and some Panthers would form the core of the scenario.



The main counterattack force was an understrength Panther battalion and a mechanized company of German paras. The Germans also had two batteries of artillery in support.

It is January 1945 and the Germans are holding a critical rail station adjacent to a river where the Germans hold the crossings as well. Beyond the river is a sizable town where the German defense is based (out of play-only a part of it is on table). During the night, a Russian infantry battalion mistakenly advanced and almost captured a bridge in heavy fighting. The Russians pulled back and dug in on a hill overlooking the crossing. Three batteries of 76mm guns were rushed to the area and a company of SU-100s is on the way. The Russians also released two T-34/85 brigades to press the attack on the rail station. There were five objectives in the scenario (the hill, rail station, village, and the two bridges) and whoever held three of them would win the game at the end.

The Russians as mentioned earlier, had a battalion of infantry and three 76mm batteries on the hill. Two T-34/85 brigades with supporting assets would enter the board on Turn 1, while another infantry battalion would try to seize the second river crossing. The Russians had two batteries of 122mm off board as well as some Stalin's Organs that would fire every third turn. All of the Russian artillery fire had to be scheduled at least 6 turns in advance.

The German plan was to cross the Panthers and paras, then engage and overrun the Russians on the hill. After that, they would attempt to link up with the Germans at the rail station. The Russians were going to hold on at the hill while the T-34 brigades raced ahead to seize the objectives. This was easily a 6 player game with a lot of stuff on the board, so it was hard to say what would happen in the upcoming battle.

The Germans had an infantry battalion split between the village and rail station, plus a company of Stug-IIIs in support. An understrength Volkstrum battalion guarded one of the bridges while a company of PZ-IVHs would come on turn 3.

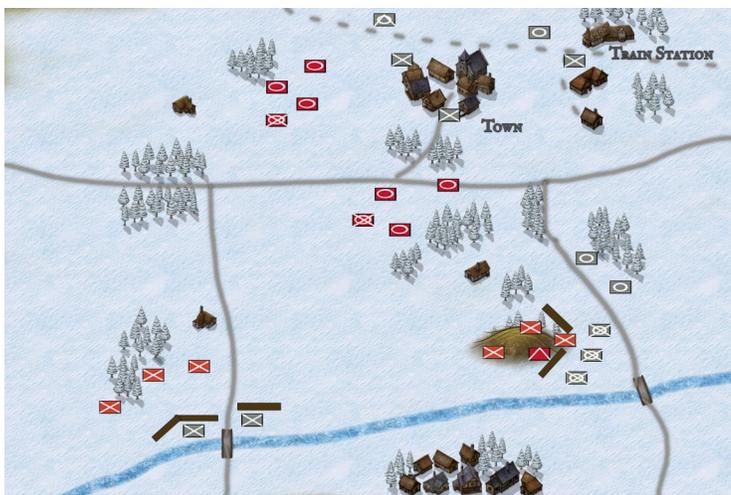
The Germans got into action first, with the Stugs rolling an incredible 5 orders on the first turn! The amount of fire coming from the rail embankment overwhelmed the leading T-34/85s and several of them were quickly burning. The Panthers and

paras crossed over the second bridge and got set up for an attack, so things were going pretty good for the Germans. Then the blunders hit.

First off, the fire from the Russian 76s on the hill was better than the Germans thought it would be. There was a moment where if the Germans could advance with the paras and Panthers, there was a chance to crush the Russians on the hill, but it wouldn't last forever. Stung by the heavy fire, the Panthers retired to the edge of the woods while the paras rolled a blunder and were forced to advance. This started a nasty fight that went all game between the Russian 76s, the Panthers, and the paras trying to get up the hill.



On the far side of things, the T-34/85s started to use their weight of numbers to knock out the Stugs. The Russians continued to move up, but started to take fire from the newly arrived PZ IVHs as well as artillery barrages. For a turn or two things were not looking good for the Russians. The Russians, however, kept pressing and by Turn 7 (cont. on p29)





(cont. from p28) they had finished off the Stugs, taken out half of the PZ IVHs, and were starting to engage the German infantry in the village.

The German blunders kept happening, forcing both the paras in front of the hill and the defenders in the village to counterattack in the open, making things easier for the Russians. The Russians had lost a lot of armor and their supporting mech infantry had taken losses as well. They were, however, driving forward towards the objectives. The Russian artillery wasn't devastating, but it kept scoring hits here and there, which helped the Russians in their battle against defenders in good positions.

Meanwhile, back at the hill the Germans were at a standstill. Two of the Panthers were knocked out, several halftracks were burning, and the Germans

had failed something like 7 out of 10 orders! What was supposed to be a powerful attack and give the Germans the punch to win was now in serious danger of going on the defensive.

The battle continued on through Turn 10 at which point we had to call the game due to time. The Germans had a company of Tigers in reserve and it would be released when the Russians seized three objectives, which they were about to do. However, we simply did not have the time to finish the game, so it was called as a Russian victory, by only by the slimmest of margins!

Large games like this are hard to balance out as points don't tell the whole story. The terrain, artillery, command blunders, and more caused more chaos than one would imagine! It felt like the Germans had enough armor, but did they

in the end? Hard to say. The Russians needed more infantry and we didn't even cover the sideshow that was the other Russian infantry battalion trying to attack the Volkstrum defending the other crossing. That was a fiasco and the Germans easily held onto it.

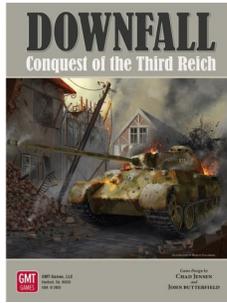
We did use the Dig In action from the errata, which is very useful for infantry in the open and we have to do a better job of providing stats cards for all of the commands as we spent way too much time always looking things up. The game also pointed out that we needed overall command stands that really stand out from the others, which we have for every other period except for this one! It was, however, a pretty good fight from both sides and we were able to get through 10 turns. Now its on to painting more terrain for this period to do battles on larger boards.



GMT's Downfall: Conquest of the Third Reich

Game Review

To say that there have been quite a few Strategic European Theater of Operations (ETO) games over the years would be a mild understatement! From Avalon Hill's Third Reich to GMT's Unconditional Surrender, along with other monsters such as A World at War and World in Flames, you would think that everything about the subject would be exhausted by now. Fortunately, that's not the case and into this crowded field comes a new game from GMT called Downfall: Conquest of the Third Reich.



package and what we've come to expect from GMT over the years. There is also a 3 inch box and mounted map boards sold separately for those who wish to upgrade their game.

Downfall is a high level ETO game with most units being armies or large formations. There are fleet counters, plus submarines for the Germans, but naval operations are fairly abstracted here. Ground units have a series of "pips" (very similar to many block games) along the edges of each counter to represent their current strength.

Most German, Russian, U.S., and British units can get up to strength 4 while most of the minor allies max out at 2. Many of the infantry counters are double-sided with the other side showing mechanized or armor symbols, which allows players some customization of their army and to tailor them for your orders (more on this later).

When you first open the box and take a look at the maps, you can clearly see that this is going to be an entirely new take on the topic. The two 22 x 34 inch maps cover North Africa to Norway and to just beyond Stalingrad, which pretty much fits the theme of the end of 1942 to mid-1945. There will be no Axis advance past these boundaries, so the focus is on the Allies reclaiming territory and entering Germany. There are three action decks and one event card deck, totaling just over 100 cards in all. Several sheets of rounded large counters for the combat units, rectangular counters for the fleets, and finally some smaller counters that serve as the various markers. The large, rounded counters are similar to many block games with various strength levels around the edges of each counter.

There is a rule book with plenty of examples (although the index can be hard to use at times), along with two sets of player aid cards (2 each) and several set up cards. Overall, it's a pretty impressive

Now here is where things get very interesting. The Russian player also plays OKW, or the German forces in the West, while the Western Allied player also plays OKH, or the Germans on the Eastern Front. The object is to delay the other player long enough to where your side grabs enough objectives for the victory. Each player will have action cards for their side plus they will also have a separate hand of cards for each of the German factions. While this works fine in two player mode, handling all of this solo is quite the challenge, although it is possible.

You can see from the map that there are a lot of tracks on the sides of the play area. At first glance this can look a bit complex, however, everything flows together pretty well and by the second turn things get much easier. There are tracks for objectives orders boxes, available orders, strategic warfare tracks (Malta, Battle of

the Atlantic, and Strategic Bombing), then finally the main track where initiative and weather are determined.

By this time the casual gamer will probably be thinking about how the game compares to Third Reich, Totaler Krieg, Supreme Commander, Unconditional Surrender, and many more. Been there, done that. However, that is where you would be wrong! At the heart of the game is a very clever, innovative system that should really be tried if you are into these kinds of WW2 games. I guarantee that you haven't seen anything quite like this and in a good way. Let's dig into

how this works, especially the turn structure.

Each faction (i.e., Allies, Russians, OKH, and OKW) each

have an initiative marker on the main track. The lowest faction is always selected and depending upon its position, the weather marker may or may not be moved as well. While the weather marker is located in certain sections of the track, the weather could be mud, fair, or snow during those initiative phases. For example, in Turn 2, if the weather marker is in spaces 1 to about 35 the weather is fair, then when it goes past that it switch-



es to mud, then later in the turn it will go back to fair.

When a faction has the initiative, it looks at the order track to see what is available. At times you may only have one order for your faction while at others there may be five or more! Each order allows that faction to perform specific functions such as recruit more strength pips, move forces, attack, move and attack, etc. Each time you conduct one of these orders, it moves your initiative marker further down the track. Some orders such as recruiting may shift it 15-21 spaces while others (cont. on p31)



(cont. from p30) may only shift it a few spots. This keeps things constantly shifting from one faction to another. Also, each order has a number of symbols which may or may not be helpful for you at that time!



It also creates an endless stream of decision cycles. You may really need to redeploy forces, but when it is your faction's initiative phase the only orders available are recruit or just being able to move armored forces. Then, do you want to pay a lot of initiative to let the opposing faction possibly going twice before you have the initiative again? This is a very clever mechanism to keep things flowing during a turn and there are a lot of strategies to be employed here.

As the initiative markers move down the track, they will invariably pass their faction's icon, which means an event card

weather, bonuses for combat, retreating from bad situations, and more. Each faction has its own hand of action cards, so you never know what a faction will play against you. The action and event cards provide additional strategies that

can be used with the various orders that are selected.

There are also three strategic warfare tracks that can have an effect on operations. While the Italian navy is operating along with U-Boats in the Atlantic, invasions are going to be difficult, so some orders will have to be spent on moving these tracks to where they are favorable for the Allies. Of course the Germans are going to be trying to counter this, so it is yet another aspect woven into the game that you have to be aware of.

Movement and combat are pretty straightforward. Combat can get a bit involved depending upon how many combat cards one side or the other may play, then 2D6 are rolled with the results being in step losses. Units can then lose pips from their current strength or combine losses with retreats to make up the loss number. The only movement phase that could take some additional reading is how to handle invasions and sea interception, which doesn't occur too often.

On top of all of this there are special event cards for supply, a card that enables all of the turn's reinforcements to get moved into the force pools of the various factions, and various action cards that give extra pips to units. When you add all of this up, there is clearly a lot going on each turn! Trying to time which orders to use, where to place aircraft, should you bring new units into play, use an order for strategic warfare, etc., are just a few of the things you need to be thinking about as each turn unfolds.

There are a few problems here and there, but fortunately nothing major. While the campaign game is only 8 turns (there is a Husky 1943 scenario and an Overlord 1944 scenario that are much shorter), the individual turns can be LONG. Moving the initiative markers, using orders, flipping events, drawing cards, moving units, conducting combat numerous times per turn can take a while. Also, it would have been extremely helpful to have had a play book with this game with a sample turn of play.



In the end, you have one of the more interesting ETO designs to come along in the last 20-30 years. Everything works seamlessly and gives both sides endless options. The first turn is going to take some time to get through, but once each side has done a few orders, handled the changing of events, etc., you start to see what is going on. Just due to the nature of the card draw and ever changing orders tracks, this game has extremely high replay value. If you are into ETO or grand strategic games, then Downfall is not to be missed. Highly recommended.



will be drawn. The event card (shown in the above image) on the left is discarded, then the next two are moved down. Finally, a new card is drawn so that there are always three showing face up. Their effects last while they are face up, plus this determines how many aircraft markers are on the board at any given time. Events also distribute action cards to the various factions. Again, this is a clever method to a) hand out action cards, b) show strategic air operations by limiting what aircraft are available, and c) providing some random events that can change the current situation.

Action cards can provide numerous benefits, from being able to attack in bad



Earlier in this issue there was an Age of Reason battle report using a generic scenario one of our members found, which turned out to be fairly enjoyable. This time, using another generic scenario from that same source, the results were...not quite the same.

The terrain was pretty bland, even for a generic scenario. There was a long road section with one crossroads, plus a village right next to the crossroads. A hill dominated the left portion of the board with two sections of forest. That was it. There wouldn't be too much fighting over terrain as there was hardly any on the board! The crossroads and the hill were objectives and each side was pretty near at least one of them, meaning that both sides would be trying to hang onto that one while pressing the attack towards the other.

The French had three infantry brigades (each infantry symbol on the map is 2-3 infantry units, cavalry are one cavalry regiment, and each artillery icon is one battery), three artillery batteries, and three cavalry regiments (divided into two cavalry brigades). There didn't seem to be any artillery or cavalry types, so the players can pretty much choose anything from their respective army lists. This is good and bad in that the players can choose what they want, but there is the risk of things not balancing out. For example, if an army list usually gives one out of every three artillery batteries as a heavy battery, with this format you could just take a heavy battery for all three batteries.

The Prussians had nine regular infantry units, one light infantry unit (jaegers),



one Guard unit, two militia, two cavalry units, and only one battery of artillery. Just a quick adding up of the forces showed that the Prussians were down one cavalry unit and two artillery batteries, but yet were expected to seize the village at the other end of the table while still holding onto the hill.

The French plan appeared to be a general advance, then assault the center of the Prussian line. The French cavalry would try for a stalemate on their right, while the larger cavalry brigade would try to secure the French left. The French spread out their three batteries across the battlefield to give fire support to each of the three infantry brigades.

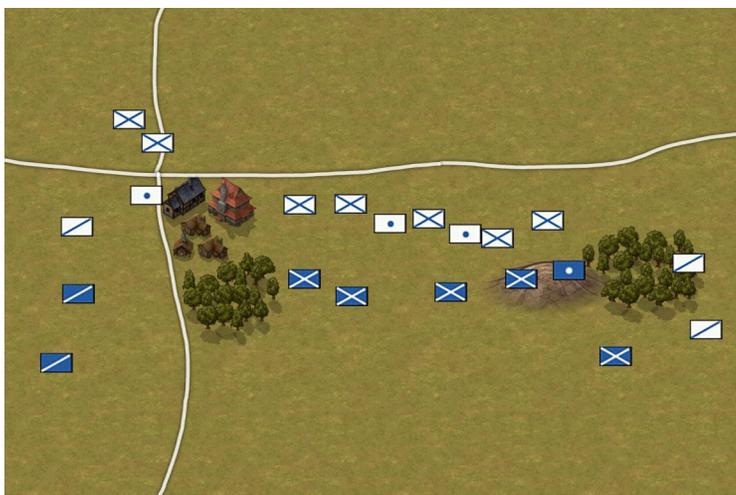
The Prussians started off on the attack, obviously quickly seizing the hill was the first priority, then trying to seize the village at the other end of the board. The Prussians would use the hill and the forest to shield them from cavalry attack while trying to overwhelm the French right flank with their cavalry brigade.

The battle commenced and the first cavalry battle on the Prussian left did not go well for the Prussians and they were forced back. Several charges and counter charges left both sides out of action for a few turns. The Prussians tried for the coup de grace on the village by running an infantry battalion in column up the road, but its attack was repulsed with heavy losses. Elsewhere, each side moved up as quickly as possible, forming multiple supporting lines and getting ready for the main event.

The French were definitely taking their time and the Prussians were about to go after them when the first French artillery salvos landed. Being outgunned three batteries to one, the Prussians came to the sudden realization that the village at the end of the table was an objective too far and they better hang onto the other objective (the hill) for as long as possible. All Prussian infantry movement came to a halt while the French slowly moved up closer and closer to the Prussian lines.

Firefights erupted up and down the center of the board. The French artillery was definitely putting the hurt on some of the Prussian units, but the Prussian infantry not only held the first attacks, but counterattacked in some areas. The French, however, kept moving forward, regardless of casualties. By turn 6 they were just an inch or two from the Prussian front line. Already, several units on both sides were at 25% and moving towards 50%.

The French attacked in a few places, but were thrown back with (cont. on p33)



Age of Reason: Methodical French Assault (cont.) Battle Report



(cont. from p32) heavy losses. The Prussians, however, had two units rout from artillery fire and were slowly losing the center. On the Prussian left the cavalry was done to half strength and that flank was now in a stalemate. The French infantry brigade now began to move down the road to possibly flank the Prussian center.

On the far French left, the cavalry finally negotiated the woods, only to be met with two Prussian infantry units, which created a standoff. Due to limitations with the size of the board and terrain, we encountered the ridiculous situation of the Prussian infantry slowly driving back the French cavalry, who were smartly refusing to charge (in AOR, charging cavalry against infantry in line is a dicey proposition). This flank also turned into a stalemate, leaving the center as the main arena.

Both sides were really causing a lot of casualties now and units started to waver and fall back. The Prussians had no reserves now that were not committed. The French artillery was hurting the Prussian infantry, who seemed to be down to their last man in some brigades. However, the French infantry in the center were down to about 50% strength in many cases and only the infantry brigade coming in from the right was unharmed.

After turn 9 we decided to add up the Prussian withdrawal factors as they were at 30% casualties. The Prussians passed the die roll to continue the battle, but we felt that it was only a matter of time before the Prussians broke. The brigade holding the hill was still in pretty good shape, but whether or not the Prussians could hold out for three more turns and try for a draw was in doubt, so the game ended as a minor French victory.

While the Age of Reason system does a great job with Seven Years War type firefights and cavalry melees, the artillery rules can really play weird at times, which is what kind of happened here. Instead of the slow plodding, firing to prep for an assault, etc., artillery batteries, here instead they were ACW like. Moving quickly, filling in holes in the firing line, causing devastating casualties, etc., which just didn't seem right.

While the game was fun to play, there were some weird events during the game, including the French cavalry situation described earlier. Generic scenarios can work at times, but then again they can generate their own level of strangeness. In the future, we'll need to tailor the army lists to the units listed in these kinds of scenarios, then see how that goes. We've also started talking about trying another sport of Kings campaign!



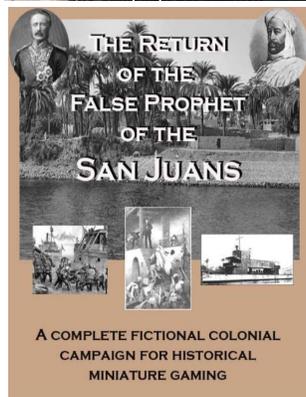
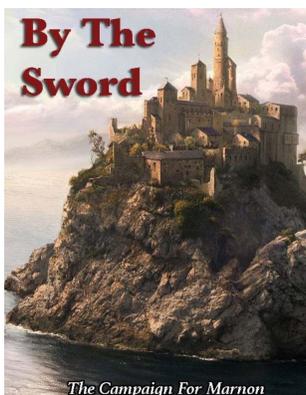
WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meets every other Friday night in the SLC, Utah area. We play a wide variety of games in 1/300th, 10mm, 15mm, and 28mm, 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, DBA, BKC4, board wargames, and more...

Email the editor:
irsikmatt5@gmail.com

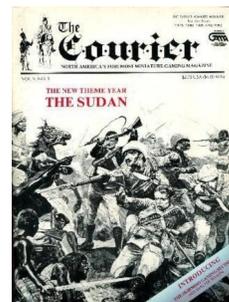
The best in historical miniatures gaming

Visit us on the web:
www.wfhgs.com

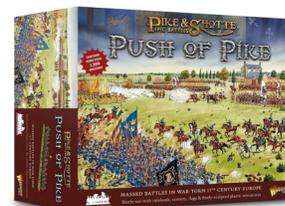


As gamers, we have a really, really hard time finishing projects! Recently, I've seen a number of threads on various forums and sites where gamers are talking about needing to finish some things before moving on to others. Now we all know that this rarely works! Usually a commitment to finish your unpainted figures lasts about 24 hours, then a new release gets you to order figures, rules, or terrain for some other project! The old saying that gamers can't die as long as they still own unpainted figures is getting put to the test! We've discussed this topic to death amongst ourselves for decades now and we all know gamers who have enough unpainted figures to start their own stores. However, there are some new factors that have entered into the equation.

For a long, long time, projects would be influenced by something you read in a gaming magazine. I started a 25mm Sudan project when I read the series in The Courier along with the ads for Ral Partha's new line of colonial figures. That started a love for Victorian Colonial gaming that still goes on today. We all started projects back in the day all the time, but they were spaced out by years and usually there were others in your gaming group who were willing to help out. Once you played the rules that you had chosen, everyone usually kept expanding the forces or maybe you changed the rules. Projects would go on for 3-5 years at the minimum. I remember my gaming group being heavily involved in NATO vs. Warsaw Pact gaming, Starfleet Battles, and Johnny Reb. One or two of us would branch off into Harpoon, WW1 naval, maybe some WW2 skirmishing. We ran campaigns, stayed on task, and projects may have not always been completed, but some major progress was made on them each year.



Today, it takes some extremely strong willed gamers to avoid adding project after project! As I write this I just saw two new 10mm ancient lines, several 3D printed figure ranges, two new kinds of gaming mats, five sets of rules, and at least 10 new historical board games from multiple companies around the world. And that is just for one week! We haven't even delved into the fantasy and sci-fi offerings! Is it any wonder that gamers are posting that they need to finish up some things, but later in the same diatribe mention that they can't wait until these other new products come out? Gamers have become their own worst enemy, but no one really wants to look in the mirror. Instead, we'll celebrate the 50 new products due out this week.



It is after all, a hobby, so if you get your projects finished or not, there's no real penalty one way or the other. For myself, I am finishing off things as I've reached a point where it's apparent that trying to keep up is impossible. I had thought about trying one of the new Warlord epic boxed sets, but realized it would never get done. Instead, I finished off a Saga unit that was sitting on my shelf for a few years and am now onto finishing my 15mm Bavarians for AOE. There is a certain liberating feeling of joy that I'm making progress and sticking to the plan of finishing what I had already started!