



# Wargaming Order

## Building Empires The Growth of Colonial Wargaming

My first exposure to Victorian era colonial gaming came when Ral Partha announced it's new colonial line in an issue of The Courier. About the same time came issue #5 of Miniature Wargames which featured a huge Peter Gilder colonial game on the front cover. I was hooked.

I then bought all the Ospreys, subscribed to Savage and Soldier, and saved every wargaming and uniform article for the Sudan that I could get my hands on. There was always something about a small British force either in the Sudan, Northwest Frontier, Or South Africa, fighting off native hordes with no other option other than to stand and fight.

During the 70's and 80's, the colonial gamer was definitely in the minority. There were Hinchcliffe, Minifigs, Gailla, and Mike's Models ranges available, but the ranges were limited, the figures were adequate, but information and rules were hard to come by. Slowly and surely, though, things be-



gan to change. While there were colonial rules, none had the impact that The Sword and the Flame had. This single set of rules pretty much set colonial gaming on it's current path and it has never looked back.

This was followed by the release of the beautiful Ral Partha figures, a slew of magazine articles, and books by Michael Barthrop on the Sudan, Northwest Frontier, and Anglo-Boer wars. The colonial period was gaining acceptance in gaming circles and saw extensive growth in rules, figures, and terrain.



Perry Miniatures 25mm Sudan mounted British officers.

More figure ranges continued to appear, including Britannia, Essex in both 15 and 25mm, Flacon's German Southwest Africa and

Foreign Legion, Stone Mountain, and more. By the end of the 80's you could complete any number of armies for most colonial wars. Things were improving and the period was attracting more gamers than ever.



25mm HMS Sultan from The Gunboat Company.

The 90's however, did not continue the growth of the period. Stagnation was probably too strong a word, rather the existing ranges and rules continued to introduce gamers into this colorful and exotic period, but no real advances were made. TSATF was still the choice of colonial skirmish gamers, but no other rules set really made an impact. By the end of the 90's the period seemed to have reached it's zenith and the future looked to maintain a certain status quo.

With the start of the new century, however, things began to take shape for a monumental period of growth. (cont. on page 2)

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### Special points of interest:

- Battle reports for Blitzkrieg Commander, Battles for Empire, and Flames of War.
- Reviews of several boardgames, including the much talked about Empire of the Sun.
- Figure and model reviews.
- DVD and PC game reviews.

## Building Empires (cont. from p.2)

One of the reasons for the sudden surge in this period is the variety and quality of figures that are now available. Led by the Perrys with their new Sudan range, the 25/28mm gamer has a variety of options. Old Glory, Copplestone, Redoubt, and Askari are some of the other companies who are producing high quality miniatures for a variety of colonial wars. In both 15mm and 10mm there are now multiple ranges from Peter Pig, Old Glory, Essex, and more that will enable any colonial gamer to do those massed battles that you have read about.

Not only has the availability of figures improved drastically, there are now large selections of buildings in all scales, plus products like the ships from The Gunboat Company and the Old Glory Shipyard are available for a wide variety of scenarios. Add to that a number of recent rules sets such as John Company, Principles of War, Piquet: Din of Battle, Battles For Empire, and Patrols in the Sudan, and you get a gaming period that has seen a huge growth period.



25mm British adventurers from Foundry.

Two of the newest colonial type eras that have seen huge growth recently are Darkest Africa and Victorian Science Fiction. Wargames Foundry and mark Copplestone produced ranges for the Congo and other African theaters that few gamers had ever heard of. Through a series of articles and features, gamers began to realize that there was more to colonial gaming than fighting the Zulus and Dervishes.

The other period that has exploded is the idea of the colonial powers invading mars and carving out empires for themselves on the red planet. Several companies have produced figures for British, German, Martian, and more, including

airships, to enable gamers to fight in this new frontier. Although GDW tried to introduce this era years ago with their Space 1889 rules, it is only recently that this period has taken off.



Airship crew by Gaslight Games.

In fact, there are now a number of companies producing figures, vehicles, rules, and scenery that can be used for both science fiction and regular colonial battles. There is also a movement towards the 1920-30's era, ala Indiana Jones type scenarios, backed by Mark Copplestone's beautiful Back of Beyond 25mm figure range.

There are also a large number of web sites, the most notable being the Major General's site, which describes a fictitious continent with colonial powers fighting the natives and each other. This site is truly inspiring, especially the well done terrain and large battles. You can do no worse than to start here to get an idea of what colonial gaming is about. The fictional continent or set up is a recurring theme with most colonial gamers.

I believe it has something to do with two elements; the flavor of the era and playing the natives. Face it, you can only play Ulundi so many times and realize that the Zulus are going to get killed in droves. In fact, many colonial games can easily turn into native bashing. However, if you start fighting other colonial powers and the natives, then things can get more interesting! I also think that the flavor of the era plays a huge role in attracting new gamers to the period. There's something about a small, colonial force, alone in a remote region of the world, relying on artillery and breechloading rifles to maintain control over large areas. The natives far outnumber you and one mistake could



25mm inter-war truck by Sloppy Jalopy

mean disaster for the entire force. It was an era where a few thousand colonial soldiers could control events that influenced the world.

So, what is needed in this exciting period for the future so that it doesn't go the way of the dinosaur? Research material is definitely one area that needs work. There are a few Ospreys out there, but not much else. Some comprehensive uniform books and maps is certainly needed. In the area of rules I still think that we will see new and hopefully innovative systems come out. A colonial version of Ancient Warmaster would be most welcome!

Also, hopefully as more and more gamers become proficient with digital cameras and web design that there will be



25mm Foreign Legion machine gun team by Askari Miniatures.

some new web sites. I believe that unlike ACW or WW2, where there is so much material available, that seeing a well laid out colonial game provides a ton of inspiration that can carry on for years. As the quality of figures improves I think you will see many gamers take the plunge based solely on that.

Colonial gaming has now moved out of its niche status and has taken its place alongside the familiar staples of our hobby, namely ancients, ACW, Napoleonic, and WW2. The future of this period looks bright, especially if recent trends continue. The beautiful part about this period is that unlike ACW for example, you're not locked into any one particular army or geographic area of the globe. Your British forces can fight the Zulus one week, the Pathans the next, Boxers the week after, then invade Mars after that!

## Crusader Rex

Crusader Rex is a game set in the Middle East during the time of Richard The Lionheart. This is another in the “block” game series from Columbia Games, famous for their hammer of the Scots game, with which this game has many similarities.



The board is good, showing Egypt all the way up to Antioch, with all of the towns and castles clearly marked. The blocks, in green and orange, represent the main fighting forces of the Crusaders and Saladin’s Arab armies. There are 21 cards that are used to determine movement and operations on the map.

The Crusaders start in a bad position and this is where the main complaints of the game have been. Trying to survive the first two years(12 turns) is challenging for the Crusaders and it seems like some gamers gave up too early.

There are six years with six turns per year. Each player is dealt six cards each year which have a number or an event on them. The number, from 1-3, is the number of groups that can be moved and/or conduct combat. Each block is rated for movement, combat proficiency, and has it’s strength around the edges so that they can be turned to show losses. Each player can also draw for reinforcements,



including the Crusaders, who have contingents from England, France, and Germany that have to “stage”(all of them can’t enter until they’ve all been drawn).

This game is very challenging and actually plays quickly. Even though the game could go on for 36 turns, most turns can be over in under a minute if there’s no combat. The random starting positions of the Arab reinforcements, how the Crusader reinforcements are drawn, and the card play makes this a game that can be played over and over again. Playing the Crusaders is probably more difficult, but I think the game is finely balanced and I highly recommend it.

## Tamiya 1/48th Bren Carrier

One of the big debates in 25mm WW2 skirmish gaming is what scale vehicles should be used. While I personally feel that the Solido 1/50th vehicles look good next to 25mm figs, many people like the new 1/56th scale resin vehicles now being produced. The main problem has always been selection in 1/48th scale.



Tamiya has now entered the 1/48th market by introducing a number of new kits. Since I’m involved in a big Operation Sea Lion project I figured that I needed some Bren Carriers for my Brits.

First off, the kits are great in that the road wheels and tracks are all one piece.

## Model Review

But don’t let that fool you, this kit has amazing detail. There are separate ammo boxes, baggage, and weapons that really add life to the vehicle. The pieces fit exactly, meaning that no filler is needed and you can easily figure out how everything fits together. There are also several sets of markings available.

Overall. This kit is highly recommended.

## Revised Phantoms Rules Now Available

Phantoms is a game of modern jet combat based on the Avalon Hill board game, Mustangs. Using 1/300th scale models and flight stands, gamers are able to simulate air combat from the Viet Nam era to the present day. Complexity is kept low and the game relies upon the placing of maneuver markers



to keep each side guessing and to easily simulate jet combat.

This revised version features new rules for stealth, emergency response to missile attack, and includes the missile data charts and examples of play.

The aircraft data cards can

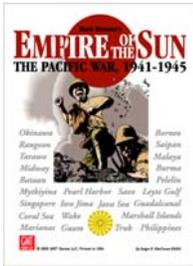
be found for free, same as the rules, by joining the Yahoo Air Pirates group. The Files section there has additional rules for the WW2, WW1, and Korean War versions, as well as scenarios and some great discussion about air combat.

Phantoms and it’s supplement, Intruders, which covers air to ground combat, can be downloaded from the main WFHGS web site.

# Empire of the Sun by GMT Games

# Board Game Review

One of the most eagerly anticipated board games in quite some time has been Mark Herrman's Empire of the Sun.



EOTS is a card driven, one map wargame recreating the entire Pacific War during WWII. The game was all the more intriguing because Herman was also the designer of We The People, which is considered to be a very good game and has a devoted following. Just doing a game on this topic has proven to be a complex undertaking for many designers throughout wargaming history, but doing it as a card driven, hexagon based design was to most gamers an impossibility.

As is their standard fare, GMT has produced excellent components, with a well laid out map and counters in two sizes, which also include set up information, which to me is a big plus.



The rulebook can look a bit daunting, but that's because it contains examples of play, a campaign scenario, plus yearly scenarios. There are also charts and a set up display card. The 150+ cards are also well laid out with historical references to actual events, personalities, and operations. GMT also is into the habit of providing "living rules", which contain the latest errata and changes by the designer. The game is also well supported by Mark Herman on Consimworld and there has been at least 6,000 messages on it so far! So, we have a well produced game, great components, and excellent support. So, how does it play?

I've only played the campaign game, once face to face and three times solo, so I will keep my comments to that and not the yearly scenarios.

The campaign begins by the mandatory playing of two cards, one of which is the attack on Pearl Harbor. The second allows the Japanese player to activate 26 units and basically overrun Hong Kong, the Philippines, and possibly Wake Island. Then cards are dealt to both players and the game begins. The first few turns are critical for both sides. The Japanese will almost always have seven cards per hand until at least turn 9, when strategic warfare starts taking cards away. The U.S. starts with fewer cards, but slowly builds up to the maximum of seven allowed for a turn.

The event cards are everything! Each card may be played as an event, used to conduct operations by combat forces, or saved for a future offensive. The events portrayed on the cards are historical operations, strategic warfare options, or political events. Each card also has an intelligence value where by if the value or less is rolled, the non moving player can react to offensive operations. Each card also has a number on it that determines how far units can move and a logistics value which is how many units can be used in any operation.

Naturally, how you use your cards and when is critical to success in this game. Each turn you are faced by a number of options and most of the time, not many of them are good! Should you undertake an offensive in China? Should you allocate resources to India or to invade Australia? Should the next card be used to attack or strategic move units into defensive positions?

During the first few turns the Japanese run wild and must take as many resource

hexes as possible, while denying the Allies any forward operating bases. By turn four the Allies should have weathered the storm and need to start thinking about offensive operations. By turn six reinforcements are steadily arriving and offensives aimed at the Solomons, Rabaul, and Rangoon begin.

Then you enter what I call the "dangerous" period for both sides, which is turn 7-9, where each side can end the game early by some bad card play or trying to do too much. Allied strength continues to grow and the Japanese perimeter begins to shrink. By turn 10 B-29s begin raiding Japan and preparations begin for the invasion of the Japanese home islands. Of course, by this time the political will of the U.S. could have collapsed and the game ends early. Both sides can move the current level of political will by taking resource hexes, card play, or failing to meet certain objectives.

This is a very good game that takes a few tries to get what the designer was trying to show. Many gamers who think of it as a tactical game have been extremely critical, but it is an operational level game and in that regard, it works well. I also don't think the designer was prepared for all the bizarre strategies and ideas that have been posted, which shows that gamers don't think in normal terms!

Overall, this is a great game and because of the card system, no two games will be alike. It does take getting used to, but once you get the hang of the card play it can be a very challenging game that rewards planning and strategic thinking.



## Downfall

As many of you who frequent this journal know, I am always very interested in the final battles for Berlin and the surrounding areas. I have read about everything I can get my hands on and own several board games on the subject as well. When I heard that there was a new movie (and supposed to be pretty good from most of the reviews), I sought it out.

Downfall is the story of the last few weeks of the Third Reich and its primary focus is on events in Hitler's bunker. The story is told through the eyes of various people, including Hitler's young secretary, a doctor in training with a SS unit, a young boy, and Hitler. Bruno Ganz does a masterful job playing the dictator who keeps crossing from reality to insanity throughout the movie.

The movie is shot in the "Saving Private Ryan" style, with sometimes grainy screens and following the characters as they negotiate the stairwells and corridors of the bunker. You do get glimpses of Berlin in its death throes, from children manning 88's to death squads shooting



deserters and civilians who do not believe in the final victory.

Everything I have ever read about the last few weeks of Berlin was vividly and accurately portrayed. Wielding being named the commandant of the city, Himmler negotiating with the Allies through the Swiss, and Hitler's insane orders for Steiner to attack two Soviet armies with a force of just

a few battalions, thinking it would save Berlin.

While there are some combat scenes, it only shows the fighting around the bunker area itself. Some may be disappointed in the lack of combat sequences, but this really is not about the fighting in the city, although that would make for an interesting movie by itself.

Although I have seen some pretty gruesome shows in my time (I just watched Land of the Dead!), I had to turn away from the scene when Mrs. Goebbels poisons their children because she doesn't want them growing up in a world



without the Fuehrer! In fact, this kind of insanity is a recurring theme throughout the movie. Most of the people in the bunker were living in a dream world, and then when the brutal reality begins to sink in, they resort to suicide and drunkenness. Even at the very end, people were vying for power and the Fuehrer's favor!

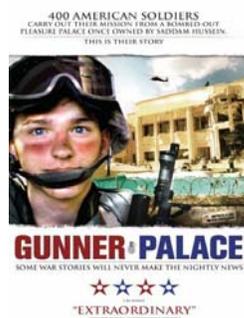
All in all, this is a film that is a must see for any WW2 fan. Incredible acting and drama, played against a backdrop of insanity as the city nears its doom. If you have read the excellent books by Cornelius Ryan, The Last Battle, or by Reid and Fisher, The Fall of Berlin, you will be able to recognize many of the key players and scenes. It also gives you insight into why so many Germans had no idea what was really going on with the concentration camps, occupied countries, and the real state of the war.

This is the kind of movie, like Schindler's List, that you probably will not see twice as it is disturbing. I highly recommend that you seek this movie out and watch it.

## Gunner Palace

Gunner Palace is an unusual movie. A cross between the insanity of Apocalypse Now and Blackhawk Down, this movie tells the story of a journalist who follows a unit of U.S. soldiers who operate out of one of the Hussein families' palaces, hence the name "Gunner Palace". The movie is shot documentary style, with interviews and the camera following the soldiers as they work and live in the palace area.

The most interesting part of this movie, however, is that you get the best look and feel for the city than in any



other news story you've ever seen. You get to see the traffic, the market areas, mosques, houses, and alleys of the city as the soldiers go out on patrols and raids. The movie accurately depicts the lives of these soldiers, changing from sheer boredom to fearing for your life when the action starts.

You get to follow several units on raids, patrols, civil affairs, meetings, and a great party scene at their pool at the palace. I found that this was a side of the story that you'll never see on the nightly



news shows in that you see the good and bad, what is going right, and what is going wrong.

Overall, this is definitely worth watching, if only to get a good view of what is happening over in Iraq. At times it seems like there's major progress and then it devolves right back into insanity. Highly recommended.

## Close Combat: First To Fight

Set in Lebanon in 2006 with a UN force that must secure the city center from terrorists and the Syrians, this is a challenging first person shooter. Players take the role of a U.S. Marine fire team leader, in charge of a four man section that must accomplish various missions.

If you've played Half Life, Call of Duty, etc..., then you'll pick this up pretty quickly. The big difference is that your fire team actually moves like a fire team! Each man has a quadrant to cover and they will actually obey your orders for movement, suppression fire, and



clearing rooms. It takes a few missions to get used to this, but overall I liked it compared to other games where everyone on your team runs around like chickens with their heads cut off.

The missions and terrain are pretty challenging, usually involving rescuing hostages, clearing sections of the city, and some huge fire-fights. You can also call in air support, snipers, and artillery to assist you during the missions.

Now the big change that everyone might not like is that you can and will get killed, probably often! When someone

## PC Game Review

fires a RPG at you that's it, you're gone. No half damage, hiding behind a car, etc... .

I liked this game for the feel of modern urban operations, great graphics of the city, and for having to take each threat, every corner, and each enemy vehicle seriously. Highly recommended.



## Magazine Reviews

Currently in the world of historical miniatures wargaming, there are three heavyweights when it comes to the glossy magazines that sell copies numbered in the thousands. They are Wargames Illustrated, Miniature Wargames, and Historical Miniature Gamer(which used to be The Courier and MWAN, but now combined). These three magazines are what fuels the fire for many gamers with color photos, lots of ads, and games that are meant to inspire.

Wargames Illustrated is probably the most popular at this time and the most glossy presentation of the three. I've been reading it for a number of years and lately it seems to have had an identity crisis. The change from mass combat scenes with huge armies has given way to pictures of games with a dozen or so figures, usually within articles written by the rules authors or loyal supporters of that particular period.

Fortunately, the most recent issue I had showed some truly impressive games and at least for the moment got away

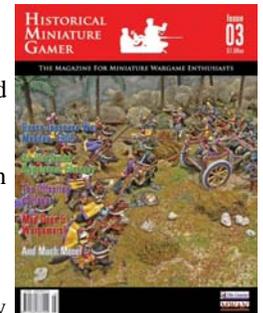
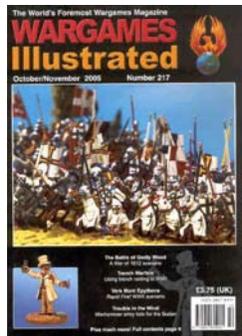
from the "skirmish monthly mentality" that's been present for over a year now. Still a good magazine.

Miniature Wargames is the longest running of the three and the hardest to figure out. You get great articles with pretty good history, but the color photos can sometimes make you cringe. I realize that they may be going with the philosophy of showing what "real gamers" figures look like during games, but it's not very inspiring. I will say though, that the magazine is consistent in what it does, namely trying to promote gaming with a wide variety of topics each issue.

Finally, we come to Historical Miniature Gamer, which replaced MWAN and The Courier. HMG is trying to find it's niche, nestled between the glossy presentation of WI and trying to appease the loyal legions who followed MWAN. The third issue was definitely better than the first two, so progress is being made. I think that there are many gamers, how-

ever, who long for the old MWAN's letter pages and what everyone was up to across the country. Sadly, I think that those days are gone and HMG will try to imitate WI, but with an American slant.

Overall, we are blessed to have three quality magazines that support our hobby, but the hobby right now is in a state of flux and it shows in the magazines. With the soaring costs of 28mm figs, the pictures are starting to reflect games with a dozen figs, which isn't very inspiring and is going to cut into magazine sales. I think the current growth of the hobby is due to the fact that back in the 80's and 90's, WI and MW laid the ground work by showing photos with huge armies and battles, which provided the inspiration to buy a lot of figs, rules, and books. Hopefully this can get turned around or the next thing we know all the magazines will have changed their names to something like "Skirmish Monthly"!



## Old Glory 10mm Egyptians

With the release of Ancient Warmaster, several of our group started looking for figs to use with the rules. What made it ridiculously easy was that Old glory was having a big sale on their 10mm range! We had experience painting this scale for the fantasy version and the look of massed armies in 10mm is hard to beat.



come in small bags of about 100 infantry in strips of 5 figs, five chariots, or 50 individual figures for skirmishers, archers, etc... A pretty good deal at a fair price.

The sculpting on the infantry, archers, and chariots is pretty good. Not as good as the GW fantasy 10mm range, but after painting it looks very good. The chariots go together easily with only a few parts, plus the driver and archer are molded together. Painting the strips is easy

So I ordered a ton of Egyptians as I had always wanted to do an ancient Egyptian army. Old Glory 10mm figures

and you can crank out large numbers in no time at all.

I didn't like having the archers come singly in bags. While great for skirmish stands, painting up large numbers would have been much easier in strips. Also, the allies listed for the range are much too late for the army lists, leaving a gap in your army. Overall, though, they are good.



## Strategy & Tactics #230: Downfall

This issue of Strategy & Tactics features one of the great "what if's" of WW2, the invasion of Japan. Although the subject is fascinating and the magazine articles are a great read, the game leaves something to be desired.

First, the map is average to say the least, with a lot of empty space on the right hand side. Second, the counters are adequate, if uninspiring. Third, the game system is funky, and by that I mean fairly unusual. Each turn each side gets a num-

ber of command points, usually 2-6, but you have far more units than command points to move them. Naturally, this leads to situations where units sit still for days at a time. I understand the supply considerations that it represents, but seriously, when sometimes you get to move four units over 2-3 days it gets ridiculous.



Picture from Bunker Hill Games web site

## Game Review

I really wanted to like this game because of the subject matter, but I cannot recommend it. The designer here, Ty Bomba, did one of my favorite games, the revised Drive on Stalingrad, so I'm not always against him, but this game and his Operation Sea Lion game which uses the same system, needs to have the command system re-thought out.

## ASL Starter Kit #2: Guns

After having reviewed ASL Starter Kit #1 earlier this year, I was a little unsure about getting the second starter kit. I really want to like this game as I played Squad Leader for years before it converted into ASL. I am always interested in small actions involving AA guns, or AT guns with supporting infantry holding positions, etc..., so I bought it.



You get two standard ASL boards, two countersheets with Germans, Italians, British, U.S., Russians, and Commonwealth units, plus large counters for guns and mortars.

There are some great scenarios in here, depicting actions in Greece, Italy, and in Europe. Also, the rule book has been modified to include a large section describing the acronyms used and rules for the guns.



Now here's where the problems come in. Can anyone involved with ASL or MMP write a decent set of introductory rules? The answer is no. This has to be one of the most confusing rule books ever written and the examples of play are so long as to not help at all. There must be a better way to present this and get people interested. Perhaps a small, turn by turn

## Game Review

based example., a cheat sheet with a flow chart, etc... I picked it up as I had played ASL before, but first time gamers must take a look at the rules and wonder why they should buy anything else for the series.

I've also seen comments on Consimworld saying that some of the rules in the Starter kits and ASL aren't the same! Then why have starter rules?

Again, nice components, great scenarios, and a topic that you really want to like, but until they present the rules in a better manner, I'm not going to invest in anything else for the series.

# Thanksgiving Event: North Africa 1943 Slugfest

Our club has been in existence for a little over ten years now and we've had a tradition of playing either a big game on the Friday after Thanksgiving, or two medium sized games. Last year we did a WAB Greeks vs. Persians battle and a Warmaster slugfest. This year it would be an all out battle set in early 1943 in North Africa, using Flames of War.

Although we had played several battles with about 3,500 points a side, this would be our largest yet. There would be close to 6,000 points of British, including a four



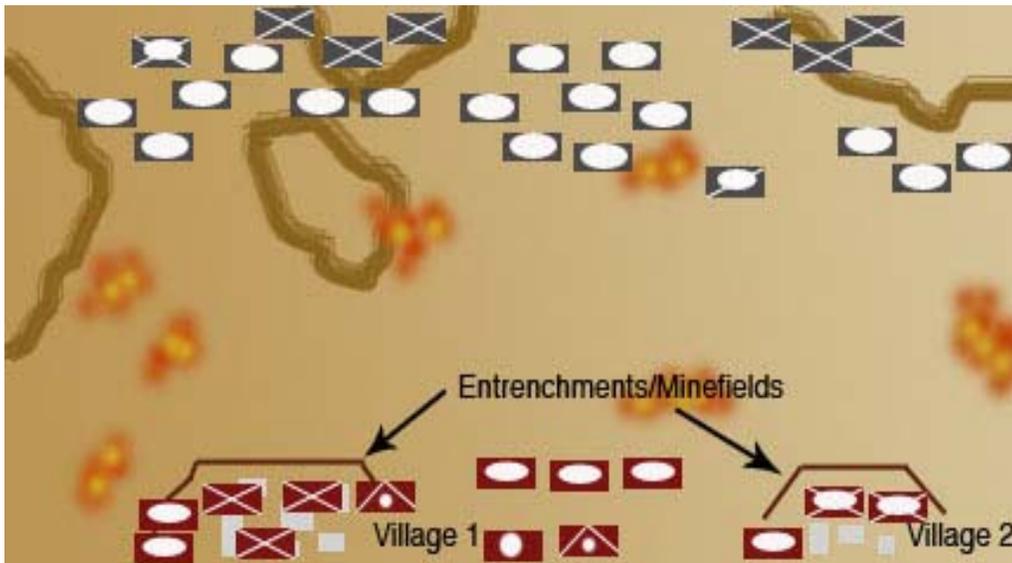
platoon company of Shermans, a light armored company, artillery, Matildas, and all of the infantry entrenched.

To go up against this, we had what we thought to be 8,000 points of Germans to launch the assault. If the Germans

captured one of the villages it would be a draw and if they seized both then it was a victory.

I also created anew air combat system for this big battle where each side got 2D6 worth of fighters and 3D6 worth of attack aircraft. Each turn you could allocate half of your aircraft and they would fight a two round air battle, with the surviving attack aircraft entering the battlefield. Players matched up aircraft and rolled 1D6, with a 5 or a 6 shooting down an opposing fighter or a 4, 5, or 6 destroyed an attack aircraft, but you had to destroy all escorting fighters first. This worked out well and added a lot to the game.

It took about 90 minutes to deploy and organize all the forces. The Germans still had sizeable reserves, which made me wonder about the actual point totals.



## The Germans Advance

The Germans made their main effort in the center, where about 30 German panzers rolled forward to engage the British. On the German right flank, a Tiger, backed up by a Marder platoon took up firing positions and engaged the Matildas. The German left also saw a concentration of heavy armor moving up to pin the British defenders.

The British responded by committing

the light armored squadron, backed up by a platoon of Grants to attack the main spearhead developing in the center. The Shermans moved from their reserve position off board to the edge of the center, preparing to enter on the second turn.



The Germans then committed infantry on both flanks plus supporting vehicles. Both sides started swapping long range fire while attack aircraft made their presence felt on the battlefield by knocking out some vehicles on both sides. The

third turn would see some fierce fighting in the center as the armor of both sides moved up.

# Thanksgiving Event (cont.)

The armor melee in the center of the board began to take its toll on the British. Bad die rolls and poor guns proved no match for the PZ IIs and IIIs, which heavily outnumbered the British defenders. The British light armor, however, dived right in and got in between the rows of German panzers, causing some damage.

The Shermans got off to a bad start, knocking out one PZ III with about 16 shots! The Germans responded with artillery, air, and some hidden PZ IIs, which knocked out two Sher-



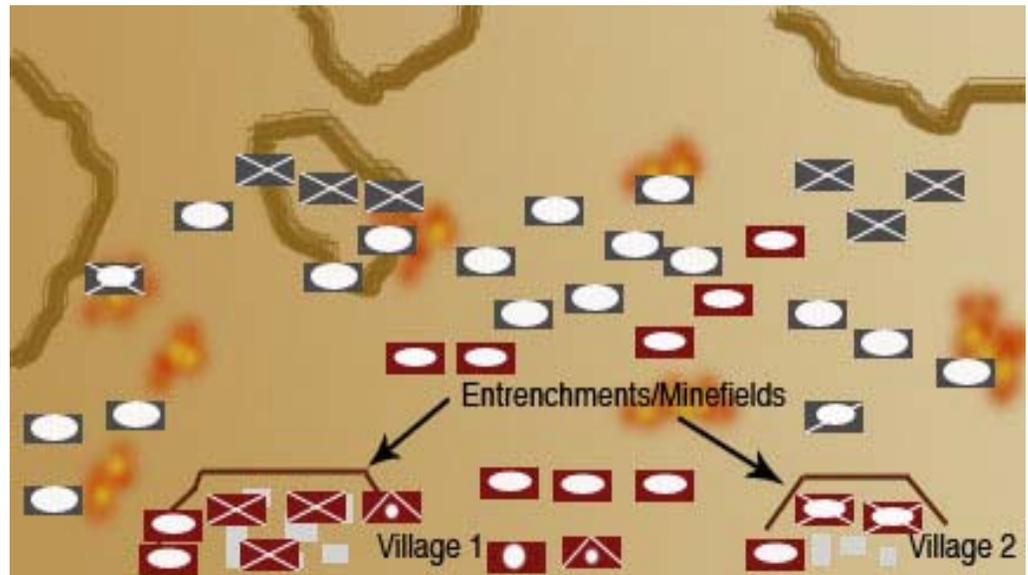
mans. On the German right the heavier German armor was wiping out the Matildas and the infantry and Italian armor was getting ready to break through the outer line of entrenchments.

The armor melee in the center was now for all purposes done. Ten British tanks knocked out for the loss of five German tanks. The Shermans moved up and were met by a withering fire. In the two turn

exchange that followed, the Shermans knocked out two PZIIIs(with over 40 shots!!!) and lost ten Shermans. The British counterattacks had spent themselves and now the center lay wide open for the advancing Germans, who still had not even committed their reserve.

The other flanks were not looking too good for the British either. Despite the fact that all of the forces defending the villages were entrenched, the sheer volume of fire was slowly and surely wearing down the defenders.

After seven turns the German had air superiority, had armor superiority, and were advancing on the villages with a sizeable reserve, so the game was called.



## Summary

What went wrong for the British? First and foremost it was the inability of the Shermans to stabilize the center, then help out on the British left. The woeful shooting by the British during the entire game was also a determining factor, although the Germans and Italians had a good plan and stuck with it.

It was only during cleanup that we realized that the Axis probably had

around 12,000 points! We all had a good laugh because even though the British got hammered they still had their chances and everyone had fun.

Doing a big game, however, pointed out a few flaws in the FOW system, which (obviously) is not designed for this size of

game. In the future we need to assign larger command some kind of break



point, a way to move around reserves, and a system for the overall commanders to issue changes in command. Overall, though, it was a great experience to see the hundreds of vehicles all out there at once.

## Battles For Empire: Relieving Force

There's nothing quite like a good colonial game, especially when there's a horde of natives closing in on you! I had just painted a few new Sudanese units and some more camels and civilians (you can never have too many camp followers!), so it was back to the early days of the Sudan campaign.

The Mahdist uprising is in full swing and many villages/towns are under siege. A heavily fortified walled town is in this predicament, so the Sirdar of the Egyptian army has decided to send a relieving force with fresh supplies and ammunition. The Egyptian force consisted of two units of Egyptian regulars, three units of Sudanese, two units of the 11th Sudanese Gendarmes, a unit of Egyptian gendarmes (old

soldiers and former police), two units of slavers, two units of cavalry, a camel battery of two sections, and a Krupp battery of two sections. All in all, a potent relieving force, even though some of the units were of dubious quality.



The Dervishes and their Fuzzy allies had assembled to meet this new threat and prevent it from reaching the town. There were 11 units of Fuzzies, five cavalry and camel units, plus about 12 units of Dervish infantry, which included three rifle units. The Dervishes also had a two

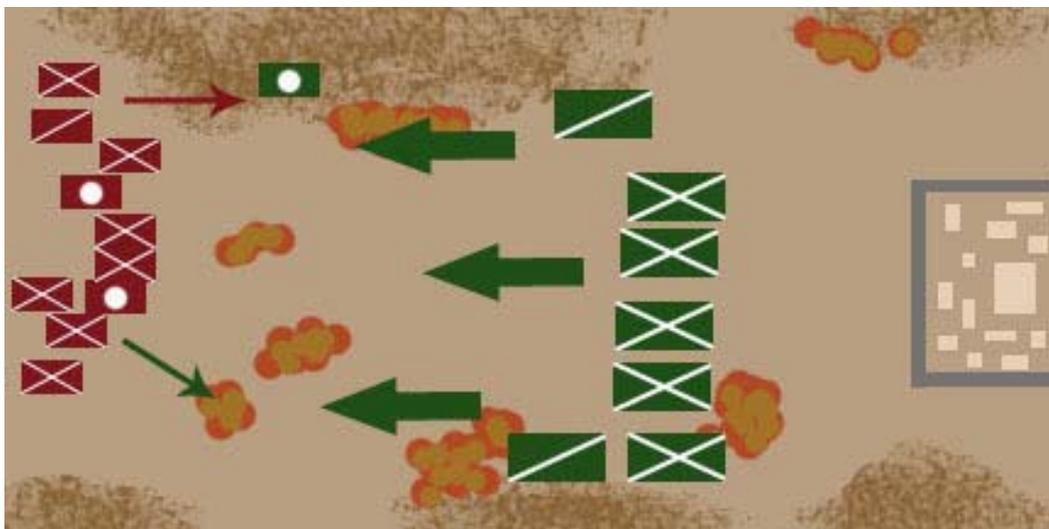
## Battle Report

section battery of brass mountain guns on a hillside, which were eagerly turned around from bombarding the town to engage the Egyptians.

The Dervish plan was simple; use the mounted units to draw fire while trying to envelop the left, pin the center, and put pressure on the right. Somewhere along the line there would be a breakthrough and the reserves would pour through.

The Egyptian commanders decided they would move up, form a line with reserves, then destroy the advancing horde with disciplined firepower and only form square as a last resort.

With both forces deployed the chant of "Death to the infidels!" signaled the start of the game.



## The Battle Begins

The Dervishes advanced as quickly as possible towards the Egyptian relieving force. The Egyptians moved up and deployed into line, but had some problems getting units around to the right flank. The Egyptian cavalry rode out to buy some time for the deploying force and got met by fire from the Dervish artillery.



Two units of Dervish cavalry then hit the Egyptian horse, wiping out one unit and forcing the second to retire, but not before they themselves had been destroyed. The problem here was that the Dervishes could afford the loss of two units, but for the Egyptians it was devastating.

The Dervish attack on the Egyptian left continued, forcing back an infantry unit, but was finally checked by a reserve unit that moved up to plug the hole. The Dervishes regrouped and began shifting to make a more determined attempt.

On the Dervish left the remaining Dervish mounted units prepared to charge while the Egyptian center continued to hold, mowing down enemy units.

## Battles For Empire: Relieving Force (cont.)

## Battle Report

The Dervish cavalry crashed into the Egyptian right flank, but was beaten back on the first attempt. Two attempts by Dervish infantry to support the cavalry attempt were turned back as well. In the center the onrushing Dervishes continued to melt away under the withering fire of the Sudanese Gendarmes.



the center, but could not find a weak spot.

Then, the Dervishes got two breaks that decided the battle. The first on the Egyptian left were the Krupp battery fired in support of a unit facing a charge and scored no hits. The Egyptian infantry unit

also scored no hits and was forced back in hand to hand fighting, opening a hole in the defense. On the Egyptian right flank a second charge by a cavalry unit overran an Egyptian infantry unit as the Dervish reserves poured around that flank.

Although the center was still holding,

both Egyptian flanks were collapsing. Two units formed square, but were hit on two sides and joined a rout behind the center line. The remaining Egyptians on the left flank put up a tenacious defense, but were being forced back as the center came under pressure as well. The 11th Sudanese gendarmes, who had done a marvelous job of keeping the center free now came under heavy attack. Despite repelling two charges, they had suffered casualties and were in danger of breaking.

Dervishes poured around both flanks and the remaining Egyptians were forced into some back to back defenses as the Egyptian army dissolved into a number of small pockets. At this point the game was called as the end was not in doubt.

It was at this point that the game was in doubt for both sides. The Egyptians were just barely holding on, but had a stabilized firing line. The Dervishes had taken some frightful losses, especially in



## Summary

Definitely one of the best colonial games we've ever played. Both sides did an admirable job in using what resources they had available. The Egyptians had a lot of firepower, but some of the units were of poor quality and in prolonged fighting, it was a deciding factor.

Although the Dervish army was victorious, it was a lot closer than it appeared. There were several points where

it looked like a breakthrough would not be achieved and that the relieving force might actually make it to the town.

As I've mentioned many times, it is great fun to command some of these less capable armies. The Egyptian gendarmes, slavers, and Sudanese add a lot



of flavor to the period and are a far cry from the efficient British troops.

Although it takes a lot of time and investment to get to this point(around 1100 figures), the effort is worthwhile as you get to do some truly spectacular battles and the native hordes do look like a human wave.

# Blitzkrieg Commander: German Offensive

The thing that most of us like about Blitzkrieg Commander is that there is command and control. Sure, you can argue over the combat system, ranges, etc..., but the simple c&c system of BKC really makes the game go.

This was one of those games that



every club has from time to time. It's during the holidays, several members cancel out at the last second, then you need to find something and set it up quickly. Well, BKC is great for that, so we adjourned after dinner to a member's house and threw together a quick game which turned out pretty good!

The scenario is set during the Normandy breakout. A British battlegroup has seized a strategic village and is deployed to await the eventual German counterattack. The British have a company of Shermans, a platoon of Cromwells, a platoon of Churchills, a 6lb. AT battery backed up by Archers, plus an infantry company with support deployed in the village and the surrounding farms.

The Germans have a hastily formed

# Battle Report

armored kamfgruppe consisting of a company of PZ IVHs, a battery of Stug IIIs, panzergrenadiers in halftracks, and they're backed by some Panthers and Tigers.

This scenario is pretty straightforward in that the Germans need to seize both the village and the large walled farm for victory. Since we set this thing up on the fly, we didn't have time to work out points, air support, or any kind of assets for both sides. Each side did have some artillery deployed off board and several observers. We also used the optional recon rules which is one of the best ideas I've seen in gaming.

The British deployed their forces to cover both avenues of approach and the game began.



# The Battle Begins

The Germans moved around both flanks simultaneously, with the heavy armor going for the farm area while the infantry, Stugs, and other armor moved to cut off the village. The British reacted by splitting the Sherman company into two parts and moving to block the armored thrusts.

The British actually drew first blood when a section of Shermans

knocked out a Panther. The Cromwells had also moved up to engage the German armor as it rounded the corner of the farm. Then the Germans returned fire and thanks to several good command rolls they continued to fire, leaving a Sherman company



in ruins.

Pressure was now building along the entire front as the Germans began to probe the defenses around both objectives. The British had terrible command rolls and were unable to react to the German threat.

## Blitzkrieg Commander Battle Report (cont.)

Two companies of Shermans then tried to stop the Stugs and PZ IVs from racing around the opposite flank and scored some success. This was short lived as the follow up attacks never occurred because of, you guessed it, bad British command rolls! The panzergrenadiers and the British infantry in the village got into a huge melee as the Germans tried to seize the outskirts. At this time there was combat all along the front.

The Germans continued to press forward, even in the face of British reinforcements in the shape of another Sherman company and some Churchills, which went immediately into a counterattack. For one turn the Germans missed their command rolls and the British strung together a series of rolls and it

looked for a moment that the British might pull this off after all.

Then the hammer fell on the British right flank. The Panthers and German recon cut through the defenses and engaged the Churchills in a long range gunnery duel, leaving the Churchill company in flames. The farm was now cut off and the last Sherman company on that flank was now fighting a two front battle.

Figuring it was now or never, the British launched yet again another counterattack on the left flank, hoping to knock out enough Ger-

man armor to force them back, then transfer units to the right flank which was rapidly falling apart. Again, the command rolls failed at the worst time, leaving a company of Shermans right out in front of the main German thrust. They were quickly dispatched and the Germans moved to encircle the village.

By this time the British had only one Sherman company more or less intact, facing up to four fresh panzer companies. The British conceded the field and withdrew.



## Summary

The Germans had a good plan and stuck to it. As the British player I may have made the mistake of splitting my forces a little too much, instead of delaying one thrust, then crushing the other. Unfortunately, I was plagued by incredibly bad and timely (for the Germans!) command rolls. This made my counterattacks go in piecemeal where the Germans gladly cut them up.

This is one thing that I do like about BKC, namely that there is some semblance of command and control. Things won't always go the way you want them and so you have to have alternate plans. Again, unfortunately, my alternate plans didn't come out as I blew the command rolls on my reserve units as well!

BKC is a great game and I hope that it has continued success. If you have not taken the plunge yet, you should. Unlike most WW2 games currently, artillery and air power is deadly, recon performs a function, and the command system is very challenging.





### WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meets every other Friday in Salt Lake City, Utah  
We play Age of Reason, Age of Eagles, Sword and Flame, Mustangs/Phantoms, Harpoon, Katana, Flames of War, Command Decision 3, Blitzkrieg Commander, Warhammer Ancients, and more...

Contact: Matt Irsik  
mirsik1@juno.com

See a battle report and pictures of our last game by visiting the Friday Night Update at: [www.wfhgs.com](http://www.wfhgs.com)

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*I'm really glad to see the success that Age of Eagles is having, and not just because our group helped to playtest the rules! I really hope that this is a start to reverse the trend of everyone buying thousands of figs, particularly in 25mm, then running games with 10-12 figures a side. Like many historical gamers, I was always inspired by the big battles featured in magazines like Wargamer's Digest, the early issues of Miniature Wargames, and until recently, Wargames Illustrated. There is nothing like seeing a well laid out Napoleonic, ACW, colonial, or ancients wargame with hundreds and possibly thousands of figs. I'm not buying this theory that "it takes to long to paint", "it costs too much", etc... . Gamers are getting lazy in my opinion and want everything done for them, which goes along nicely with current trends in society. As evidenced by our big Flames of War game in this issue, a group can pull off massive games if everyone contributes.*

*Also, it's time to dispel the myth that Flames of War is attracting new gamers into other historical periods. I'm sure people have some anecdotal evidence of a few instances, but I'm not seeing any mass migration. Let's face it, it's a well produced WW2 game with a big following, but it's just that, another game for people to get into. Much like Warmachine came out of nowhere, then people drifted off, the same will happen with FOW. The current crop of gamers are looking for the next greatest thing and they will gladly migrate there. For a few months it was Starship Troopers everywhere, now people are moving on to Axis and Allies. Historical gaming takes some commitment. You need to do research, paint figs, create terrain, etc..., and most of today's gamers get easily distracted. I keep hoping that things will turn around, but I'm not seeing this in the immediate future.*

## Call of Duty: United Offensive

Yes, I know that by the time many of you read this you will have been playing Call of Duty 2 on your Xbox or any one of the variations of the game that will be out. Since I do most of my gaming on a Mac, I need to wait a little longer for titles to come out!



After playing games like Half Life and Medal of Honor I was a little bit skeptical about Call of Duty. After all, hasn't this been done before and what improvements on this kind of game engine could be made? Well, Call of Duty definitely is in a world of it's own.

First, let's start with the graphics, which are gorgeous to say the least. Snow covered landscapes, beautifully rendered buildings, and the vehicles look like the real thing. Second, the characters

and enemy move with a purpose which basically means that they are trying to kill you every chance they get and if you don't come out to play they will come after you!

If you've played any one of the hundreds of shooters out there, you'll catch on to the key commands pretty quickly. I do like the "leaning" features built into the game, but there could have been a better way to inventory what weapons you are currently carrying.

In this version you get to play as a 101st trooper in the Bastogne area, which includes a particularly nasty firefight in a bombed out farm against German halftracks, tanks, and grenadiers. You also get to fly as turret gunner in a B-17, a SAS trooper in Italy, then finally sev-

## PC Game Review

eral missions as a Russian soldier on the Eastern front. To say that most of these missions are challenging would be an understatement. I got killed off so many times I lost count!

Now for the bad. First, many of the missions are scripted and scripted heavily, offering little to no room for alternate solutions or improvisation. I realize that they're trying to show off the game, but it can get tiresome at times. Second, and the biggest I feel, is that there isn't much "fun" factor here. During the game you get stressed out and afterwards you're wondering aloud, "Shouldn't I be playing

games to alleviate stress?" The game is realistic, plays smoothly, is very historical, has great graphics, but not necessarily fun. Recommended.

