



Warning Order

Air Combat: A Primer for Wargamers

Like moths to the flame, wargamers cannot resist the urge to partake in air combat. Whether it's the thought of men dueling one on one in the clouds with jets over Vietnam or flying canvas and wooden aircraft over the trenches in WW1, there is an entire host of games on the subject. Actual air to air combat is a very complex subject, so it should be no surprise then that in gaming this is what creates the most arguments amongst gamers. So, what kinds of games are out there for gamers that deal with air combat and how complex are they?

As with Ancients, ACW, Napoleonic, WW2, and others, this will depend greatly upon what you are trying to simulate, what resources you or your gaming group have, and how much time that you can invest. There are so many miniatures rules, board games, and card games that it would take a book to detail all of them and how they simulate the subject. This doesn't even include the vast number of flight simulators for computers that are available.

In this article we will look at several sets of miniatures rules and board



Ken Chandler F-4 art from the USAF web site.

games, how air combat is portrayed, the complexity level, and the overall game play value. Again, this will be highly subjective depending upon your point of view. If you're just a casual air gamer, then discussions about the turn radius of an unloaded F-4 Phantom in 1969 will bore you to tears, but if you're into that era, then you will keep reading on to determine if this rules set is how you envision air to air combat.

First, there have been air combat games since the hobby really got going in the 60's and 70's. Richtofen's War by Avalon Hill and Foxbat and Phantom by SPI were two board games that many air combat gamers trace their roots

back to. Mustangs & Messerschmitts was one of the first miniatures rules that crossed the barrier between board games and miniatures by using flight stands. These first few games along with some others that are long forgotten, formed the core of air combat gaming for that era. Gamers were pretty knowledgeable about the periods, had time to invest in research, and many long hours were spent discussing the performance of the P-38 against the Zero in the Pacific Theater.

Times have changed and today's air combat gamer has many choices, but limited time to enjoy the hobby.

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- WW2 North Africa battle report.
- Editorial on card driven wargames along with plenty of board game reviews.
- Huge section on air combat gaming with two battle reports.

Interview With Patrick Wilson of TVAG

The Virtual Armchair General
Exclusive Provider of Unique Wargames and Collectible Miniatures & Accessories

What's New in the General's Unmatched Collection?

- 21407 *Waken The Storm!* The only Officially Licensed Miniature Fantasy Battles ever released to TSATF. by Chris Ferrer, now available through TVAG!
- 21407 *Three New Mean Sets: The P1's Apartment, The Signal Tower, and the Small Towns Best!* See more wares on the "Mean Sets" Photo Page!
- 110007 *Heaven's Ship* releases 2 new Janks, 2 Ormsen Quaboids, & a Pleasant Turpedo Boat!

For Earlier Announcements Click on the General's Cigar

The Old Boy's Current Featured Product:

SCIENCE VS PLUCK
OR TOO MUCH FOR THE MIND!

Science vs Pluck Sale!

Patrick Wilson, the owner of *The Virtual Armchair General*, or TVAG as it is affectionately known, is one of the driving forces behind Victorian Colonial wargaming. TVAG has many new and interesting products coming out for gamers and Patrick was kind enough to answer a few questions about TVAG.

1) How did you get started in the hobby?

Like so many, from infancy I played with toy soldiers (particularly all the old classic Marx figure sets of the 50's), and then board games like "Conflict," "The American Heritage Game of The Civil War," "Dogfight!," and the like.

I had begun reading military history (primarily WW II) when I was around 11, and eventually acquired some 500 titles in paperback. I read "Rise And Fall of the Third Reich" when I was 13--but make no claim to full appreciation of all the history and related subjects involved at that time!

But it was in 1962 that I asked for and got for my birthday Avalon Hill's "Stalingrad." From that point, there was no looking back--"serious" wargaming was my passion. I owned every AH game after that, and the first non-AH boardgame was Lou Zocchi's classic "Battle of Britain."

I had been buying and painting the old Airfix figures and ROCO Mini Tanks in the early 60's, but never quite tumbled to the means of gaming with them in any sort of regular fashion.

In 1970, I subscribed to "Strategy And Tactics" Magazine, and when James Dunnigan took over, and offered Lifetime Subs

for \$75.00 (serious money back then!), I bought in immediately--my membership number was "001"--and my game designing interests became more serious. That same year, I met a certain madman--Mr. Jeff Key--who was just forming up the "Southwest Regional Association of Wargamers" here in Oklahoma City, and through him and his own circle of gaming friends was introduced to "Diplomacy" and other games. In that same year, we collectively decided to try our hands at the (then new to us) Fletcher Pratt Naval Wargame, and our first annual Convention--WarCon I in OKC in July of 1970--was given over to it almost entirely. It was a case of mass love-at-first-sight.

The next year, the one-and-only Duke Seifried was our GOH, and he introduced us to that other great narcotic, Napoleonics. A year later, our 25+ regular membership--way too big for our usual game rooms--groaned under the weight of lead. But being of wider appetites--some would say simple gluttony--I was the first to buy into ACW (the classic K&L 20mm figures produced in Shawnee, Oklahoma), and then Ancients, as well as skirmish gaming via Mike Blake/Ian Colwill/Steve Curtis' classic "Rules For Western Gunfights" in '71.

In '75, a group of us collaborated on the first miniatures game I wrote and sold, "Cordite And Steel" through TSR. Other titles followed, some published, others not. In 1981, I tried my hand at a "brick and mortar" store, The Armchair General selling not only all manner of historical wargames materials, but Militaria (God, what I'd give for some of the treasures I sold just to make the rent!). After two years, I closed the doors--debt free, but almost "cash free," too.

Still, by that time other developments had set me in the groove that I have called "home" for some 25 years now.

2) How would you describe The Virtual Armchair General?

Well, two answers come to mind. One is somewhat basic--my food source. The other

is requires a bit more explaining.

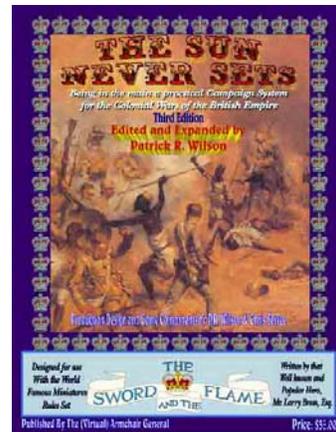
In 2000, I was offered the job of U.S. Retail Sales Rep for The Foundry. This was an amazing period when my long standing Anglophilia was tested, and though it has survived, it is a more mature relationship than before. When, however, after an amazing ride, Foundry switched its business model to direct sales from Nottingham via the Internet, I was "let go." I must say, for a few days there, I didn't exactly feel "emancipated"--or at least no more than the little guy does who's getting thrown out of the lifeboat by the big guys.

Still, for some years I had become dependent on the job and too fond of being at home, so the logical step was to go free-lancing, and The (Virtual) Armchair General (TVAG) was re-born. I had the great good fortune to become acquainted with Bobby Jackson (easily one of the industry's top four or five sculptors), and we collaborated on producing a line of figures based on the historical (not movie!) Gangs of New York he had started for his own enjoyment. With my long time gaming companion and creative colleague, Mr. Chris Ferree, we read the book and developed our first dedicated set of rules for sale via TVAG.

At the same time, I collaborated with the late Spyros Koumoussis in Piraeus to act as his U.S. Distributor of his unique 15mm figures lines for the War of Greek Independence, The Balkan Wars, and subsequently some remarkable Hoplites, and ultimately his ground breaking Footballers.

The design for TVAG was largely based on my spending as little cash as possible--not a bad deal for a business if you

can do it. I acted as the "go between" from customer to manufacturer. I take a portion of each sale, less than if I were paying a Distributor or Wholesaler's break, leaving more profit for the manufacturer. In return, I handle all sales issues, created the original TVAG site, and promote the products. All collected postage goes to the product's provider for mailing himself directly to the customer. Thus--especially for Overseas products--there is no extra shipping time from manufacturer to me and then to the customer. Similarly, with little or no inventory here, there's never any danger of an



Interview With Patrick Wilson of TVAG (cont.)

item being out of stock and having to wait to be shipped to TVAG to fill a languishing order.

All in all, it seems to be a plan that has worked for some four years now. Of course, as I have been able to produce my own products ("Mean Streets", "Mean Sets," "B'hoys Towne," rules sets and accessories), my profit margin is much higher as I don't have to share any--or not much! I have been able to find some remarkably talented artists, rules designers, sculptors, and no less than Howard Whitehouse as an "in house" painting service ("Brushes With Danger!").

But maybe the best thing going for TVAG is that there is nothing in my now considerable "catalog" that is available anywhere else in the world. I'm the fellow who either makes it, or has the manufacturer working for me exclusively. It's nice not being the umpteenth provider of the same dozen or two product lines that can be gotten anywhere.

3) What is your relationship with The Sword and The Flame game series?

In 1979, I had been playing a set of Colonial Skirmish rules (cleverly called "Rules For Colonial Skirmish Games") by the self same Mike Blake and his two collaborators. I loved the game, but it was a decidedly complex system (typical of its time), and didn't practically allow more than a few figures in a game.

Then I was told of a new set of rules, The Sword And The Flame (TSATF), and promptly went out and bought them. Eagerly, I gave them a read--and quickly founded on concepts I just couldn't comprehend. Variable movement distances? Drawing cards to determine order of movement? Nah, this guy's gotta be nuts.

Then, in early '82, I decided to host a Colonial Wargame at my then wargames shop in the big game room and use these rules since they did, after all, accommodate a lot more figures and players.

Before the end of the first turn, I had my "Road to Damascus" moment. In a blinding flash, I knew the truth--I'd seen the light! Gaming was supposed to be FUN--and as

realistic as anything in life and history by being uncertain. From that moment on, those Gawd Awful sets of rules which I had played--and written!--that had processed out everything that made gaming fun and unpredictable were relegated to the ash heap of history. Since then, I have embraced--if not always comfortably--"Chaos Theory," the idea that the unknown and unexpected are not only the missing ingredients in most "Old School" gaming, they are the very soul of the subject.

So, to continue an abused metaphor, I figuratively changed my name from "Saul" to "Paul" and began to convert the Heathen from the very faith I had held before.

Years later, while running the BY JINGO! Colonial Games Website with my Faithful Indian Companion (Chris "Don't Call Me "Tonto" Ferree), I contacted TSATF author Larry Brom about writing a column discussing the history of the rules and their many spin-offs. Generously, Larry did write a brief

"historical" piece (which now appears on the Sergeants Three Website), and generally provided comments and answered rules questions as he could.

When in 1999, the 20th Anniversary Edition of TSATF was being prepared, I had the distinct honor to prepare a set of Unit Record Sheets which act as Quick Reference Sheets for play. These were included with the final printed sets are still in use. Later, when Larry acquired the rights to the classic Colonial Campaign Rules for TSATF, "The Sun Never Sets," from Dave Waxtel, Chris and I were given permission to update and expand the rules along the lines of the variants already worked out by the OKC gaming group some years before.

One thing led to another, and for a while there, some six or more sets of rules written or edited by Chris Ferree and/or I were being sold as part of Larry and daughter Lori's catalog of Colonial and 19th Cen-

tury Games.

However, when the Broms family chose to pull up stakes and move to New Orleans (just in time for bloody Katrina!), we all agreed to simplify our arrangements, and the rights to all the old titles reverted to Chris and I, and subsequently were sold at first as PDF's on CD, and later as professionally printed editions. All of these have enjoyed good sales, partly due their having their chances to be reworked and greatly improved.

None of this would be possible without the generosity and unstinting support of Larry and Lori Brom--and the Little Mem-sahib, his daughter Christy. TVAG supports Sergeants Three in whatever capacity we can and there will always be preferential treatment for their efforts. After all, to a great extent, TVAG would not be growing as it is without their help and the opportunities they have given me.

4) What is your favorite gaming period and why?

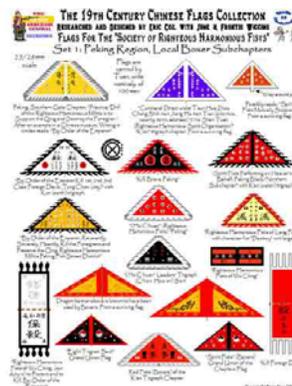
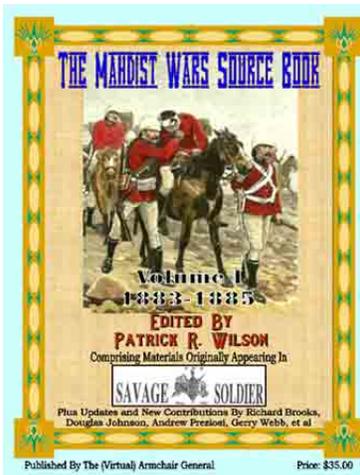
That's easy--Colonials!

I was raised on "Gunga Din," saw "Zulu" when it was first released, "Khartoum" a few years later, "Young Winston," "The Four Feathers," etc, and have always had a romantic appreciation for the Era of the British Empire. When TSATF gave me the means to explore all the campaigns, Native Armies, weapons, tactics, and more that characterize the subject militarily, it was rather like a marriage made in heaven.

Part of the charm of Colonial Era wargames is the nearly infinite variety of armies--not merely organizationally, but their visual splendor in miniature on a beautifully terrained table.

And who can read of disasters like Maiwand, Isandlwana, Khartoum, Majuba, and "near run things" like Chillianwallah, El Teb and Tamai, and not want to be vicariously in the thick of it, trying like mad to prevent a repeat of history?

I'm aware that many gamers (and unfairly, I



Interview With Patrick Wilson of TVAG (cont.)

think) put down the most recent remake of "The Four Feathers." Well, it has plenty of things I would like to have seen differently, but that overhead shot of the British square being swarmed from all sides is the very soul of what Colonial Wargamers live to see and experience on their table tops.

My personal collection of Colonials is now rather old--but has the charm of largely being painted! I have several thousand Ral Partha and MiniFig 25mm figures, with leavenings of Iron Brigade, Frontier, "old" Foundry, Falcon, and more.

Something in which I take inordinate pride is that brought together Chris Ferree and the legendary Richard Houston and the old "Houston Collection" Colonial Lines resulted.

Chris had been sculpting some key figure types for our then ongoing "The Sun Never Sets" campaign back in about '91, but there were just so many Native Armies not available. But with Richard agreeing to produce what Chris would sculpt, they produced a huge range of Chinese, Tibetans, Abyssinians, Ashanti, and ultimately the most complete line ever of British/HEIC and Sikh figures for the Sikh Wars. I suggested "Battles In A Box," and the pair of them produced large lines of figures for the SP-AM War, including Moros and more for the Philippines, as well as Zulus and Redcoats all in 15mm.

Only when Richard retired some years back and sold his casting equipment and many of these lines to The London War Room did Chris stop producing new lines and figures.

Of course, I do have other interests. Naval Wargames, particularly of the Pre-Dreadnought Era, is always a soft spot (in heart, if not head). I've had hundred plus fleets of Napoleonic Era ships in 1:1200, a fortune in the models made in Germany for WW I and before in metal, and even some Triremes.

The American Revolution is almost the only other period for which I have kept my old 25mm Hinchliffe figures. I haven't been able to use them in years, but they're keepers, and I will get back to them.



5) What recent developments in the hobby have excited you?

Well, the first that comes to mind is that we do indeed live in The Golden Age for Historical Miniatures Wargaming. There is hardly a period or army not represented in multiple scales, and supported by rules and accessories. The variety seems to be ever increasing--and indeed I'm trying through TVAG to do what I can to keep up the momentum.

There is also, over the last number of years, a growing appreciation of the importance of terrain and making tables as beautiful as possible. For so long, gamers painted exquisite figures with the greatest care to accuracy and craft--and then used flat tables with crepe paper roads and streams! I've seen games where miniature trees were set up, then on turn one taken off because "they get in the way (!)"

Fortunately, we seem to be moving past that and realizing that the hobby cannot be limited to buying, painting, and organizing miniatures alone. Wargaming is a hobby that can draw on our every imaginative and creative ability, and to arbitrarily draw a line at one's commitment is terrible loss--to one's self and our gaming friends.

Finally, I am also glad to see that uncertainty and the unknown are increasingly becoming part of wargames rules. I give full credit to the movement to Larry Brom and his honorable imitators. Many new rules have also begun to realize that complexity of game mechanics does not equate at all with "realism." Speaking from shameful experience in the 70's into the 80's, if 25 common Firing Modifiers average a "+3" to the dice roll, then why not roll two dice, and add or subtract their difference? The results in such ways can be identical, but now more time is spent moving the troops and finding out who takes the hill.

6) What recent developments in the hobby concern you, if any?

Well, that's a truly personal opinion being asked, so I'll give it as such.

I HATE "Pseudo-Historical" Wargaming. I don't mean an artificial British-French Napoleonic Action in Spain--those happened. But--and this is especially true in Colonial gaming over the last several years--games were Mahdist Steam Camels attack Kitchener's wind powered supply column while Gordon lifts from Khartoum by zepelin and drops electric bombs on the Mahdi's wrought iron tents where the Ansar are busily assembling their magnetic powered submarine to control the Nile, and call it a "Colonial Game!"

There is a tendency, I think, among those who play what has come to be called "Victorian Science Fiction," or "Alternative History" games to just throw elements together, but have no interest or respect for the history itself. After all, there's no way to play the ridiculous scenario above and be "wrong".

Mind, games involving Nemo's Nautilus or Wells' Martians are one thing. But to make vast fruit salad out of fact and fiction--requiring no appreciation of either--seems lazy to me. And perhaps my attitude makes me "Old School," too.

I have never found a person or event in fiction more interesting, frightening, heroic, brilliant or stupid than I have in history. All fiction pales when you know enough of the facts, and that's plenty for me to base my escapism on.

To quote old Carl Sagen, "Some people come to the fountain of truth to drink, and some come just to gargle."

7) Where do you see the hobby five years from now?

The hobby is definitely getting "greyer"--when it's not like Your Servant, simply getting "shinier on top." The amazing things that Computer games are capable of, both as reasonable simulations which providing eye catching--even stunning--images simply don't bode well for the true Grognards of the hobby.

The "need for speed" and instant gratification (which is part, I suspect, of the trend towards "Pseudo-Historical" gaming) is perfectly served by the computer, and the



Interview With Patrick Wilson of TVAG (cont.)

games will only get better.

When the day comes that for a fee, one can enter a virtual reality Waterloo or Marathon, and flit about the life sized battlefield like a Valkyrie, experiencing the combat from every level of command and participation, I don't think spending thousands of dollars on miniatures, taking years to paint them, mount them, store them, making or buying terrain to complement them, is going to have much appeal.

Don't know that's going to happen in five years, mind, but it does seem the ultimate future of the hobby--and likely of most entertainment itself.

8) What is your definition of "Old School" gaming?

At the risk of splitting a hair, while I am not of the generation of game players and inventors like Donald Featherstone, Jack Scruby, or Larry Brom, I've been around long enough to distinguish not only what I can call "Old School" gaming, but "Ancient School" gaming, and probably "Pre-Cambrian School" gaming for that matter.

That being said, I find "Old School" gaming is characterized by rigid systems of rules writing and playing, where players have total control over every aspect of their forces. When, for example, rules are based on "statistics" that are not really understood by the designer, when weapons are deemed the ultimate determinant of battles, and the human element is dismissed as being impossible to measure, so is ignored, wargames become an exercise in fossilization. Too often egos are at work trying to prove the author's--and sometimes players'--total grasp of a period's minutiae. Again, these are games with everything entertaining and truly challenging "processed" out. Like a bag of chips whose principal ingredients are scientifically prepared artificial flavors and preservatives, it's an experience that may be filling, but is empty of nutrition.

"Old School" gamers have played hundreds or even thousands of games--and played to a real conclusion maybe one or two (but probably not).

"Control Freaks," tend to be "Old School," and panic when they have to think on their feet. If they can't use the wording

of the rules to win, they're lost. They're not dishonest, or even just crafty. The games they play depend on one or more "super rules" or "facts" that whenever applied bring success, so they spend more time looking at the rules than considering the situation on the table.

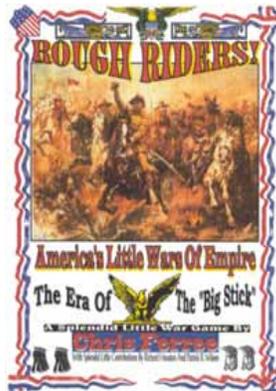
Mind, "Old School" gamers are commonly knowledgeable--encyclopedic--in their areas of greatest interest, and should be considered a priceless resource.

Just don't ask to play their games.

9) It looks like TVAG has a number of exciting products on the way. What are the future plans for TVAG?

Short and sweet!

- We will continue our publishing program of the last year. There are several sets of rules in different stages of being re-designed, or new altogether. These include Chris Ferree's "Rough Riders!," Scott Saylor's "We Only Kill Each Other," and several new titles by the indefatigable Howard Whitehouse, mostly in support of his wildly successful "Astounding Tales!"



- The newest item is, of course, "The Mahdist Wars Source Book," and it has already been the most successful title by far in my Subscription Publication program. Several other titles also in cooperation with Richard Brooks of "Savage And Soldier" Magazine are in the discussion stage, and he and his son, Ben, are working on a book about terrain for Colonial Wargames.
- A book by Mike Blake on the Mexican-Revolution of 1911 is in the works.
- It appears that TVAG Publishing will be the busiest component of our products this coming year, but the Historical Flags Collections are continuing to grow as well.
- The Mahdist Wars Flags Collec-

tion, designed by Mr. Eric Cox, is being released about the time this interview will appear. These will be over 250 of the most authentic and well researched flags for units of the Ansar and the Egyptian Army yet. Like all of TVAG's flag sets, these will be offered in 54mm, 28mm, 20mm, 15mm, and 6mm scales to satisfy the gaming itch of any collector.

- Eric will also be returning to the Manchu/Qing Sets that are part of the 19th Century Chinese Flags Collection. The nearly 1000 flags that are available for the armies of the Tai-P'ings and the "Imitation Foreign Devils" (such as the famous "Ever Victorious Army"), and the four currently available sets for the Boxers are all the best researched and most authentic flags of their kind ever offered to wargamers. I look for many more sets of obscure and exotic flags from Eric over time.

As soon as I can take a break from the latest publication, I mean to revisit "Mean Sets" and produce the long delayed Nightclub/Casino. I've also been collecting sources for the Egyptian Tomb and other Sets that will be of value to Pulp Fiction gamers, whatever rules they prefer.

- And then there's the long delayed "Send A Gunboat!" line of 15mm and 25mm card stock gunboat designs for Colonial and Adventure gaming of all kinds.
- And if I can get around to making a deal, there's the return of Chris Ferree's 15mm lines--including brand new items--as "Splendid Little Warriors," hopefully sometime later this year.

The beauty of the thing is that I have no end of projects and opportunities for new and original products at TVAG. Now, if only I had the time each deserves!

For more information on TVAG's products, visit their web site at:

<http://home.att.net/~patrick.wilson33/VArmGenIndex.html>

Paths of Glory *Game of the Year Edition*

Board Game Review



There's not much more that can be written about what is thought as one of the greatest wargames of all time. This is the latest edition of Paths of Glory, a World War One card driven wargame by GMT.

The map covers all of Europe and the Near/Middle East with a point to point movement system. Units are armies and corps that represent all of the armed forces that were involved in that conflict, including Turkey, Greece, Italy, and many more than you would ordinarily see in a WW1 game. The map and counters are up to GMT's high standards and have a great degree of functionality.

The cards are broken out into Early, Mid, and Late



War. Each card can be played as an event, to redeploy units, for replacements, or to move and fight with pieces on the map. As certain events happen, they trigger the addition of the other cards to be added into the deck.

Now, what makes this game great (and this goes for many good card driven wargames) is that you have a number of decisions to make each turn. In fact, the choices can be overwhelming, so a plan needs to be implemented and followed through on or you will get yourself into a mess rather quickly. Should you play a card as an event? Or, should you use the card for reinforcements to bolster a section of the lines? You also need to "burn" through the cards by playing the events



quickly, so that after reshuffles you can get to the good cards faster than your opponent.

Of all the games I own, Paths of Glory has so many different strategies and options, that trying to make a choice is more difficult and challenging than anything else I've tried. There are so many fronts,, so many needs, and so many threats that the cards in your hand can't address them all! The events and options could take many plays to work out a good strategy. In several games I've sometimes just sat there, not knowing really where to go and hoping that my opponent did something dumb!

Granted, WW1 isn't everyone's favorite subject (me included), but this game is so good that gamers should be able to see past that and enjoy it for what it is, an excellent game.

Britannia



Britannia has always had almost a cult like following in the gaming world. Part wargame, part Euro-game, the Avalon

Hill version is thought of as a classic and is seen in a number of tournaments and championships as it is ideally suited for multi-player games. Now Fantasy Flight Games has released a new version with even better components.

The board is a beautiful map of England broken up into areas that regulate movement, population, and scoring. There are quite a few nations involved and each one has a card that lists their victory objectives such as areas that must be held or occupied, enemies that have to be de-



stroyed, and special rules. Each player will control a number of nations throughout the game as the centuries progress (each turn is about 75 years).

Each round starts off with a sequence of going through each nation by checking population, adding armies, moving, combat, and on some turns there are scoring rounds where objectives that are met gain victory points. Combat is almost like Risk and the rules are pretty easy to understand once you see the game played.

The only problem, and it's minor, is that there are a lot of special rules covering the Romans, Saxons, and a few other odds and ends that players need to be on top of.

The game is designed for 4 players and that is the ideal set up. The 3 and 5 player games work, but not as well. Each side will have its day and each side will have

Board Game Review

turns where you feel helpless, so the idea is to score as many points as you can while you have momentum. For example, on the first turn the Romans land and pretty much overrun most of southern England, crushing everything in their path. However, they're gone on Round 6 and the Yellow player who has the Romans isn't left with much. Then the Red player, who has been beaten up gets a huge Saxon invasion force and beats up on the others. This cycle follows with the Scots, Danes, Normans, and more.

Overall, I can easily see why this game is so popular. Great components, fairly well balanced, and the constant ebb and flow of player's fortunes makes this a great multi-player game. Highly recommended.



Card Driven Wargames: Are They For Everyone?



When We The People was released in 1994, designer Mark Herman started a trend in gaming that has seen explosive growth in the last few years. We The People is regarded as the first of what are

now known as “card driven wargames”. Up to this point most wargames used hexes, counters, and had usually medium to high complexity rules regarding movement and combat. Events were either rolled for on a chart or scripted into the game. The entry of cards into wargames has changed all of that.

So what exactly do the cards do? In most card driven wargames the cards handle a number of functions, including events, reinforcements, operations (moving and combat with your forces), redeployment, and more. The trick is that each card can in most cases be used for more than one thing. So now gamers are faced with a multitude of choices. It may be tempting to play that card as an event, but you may need the replacements listed to shore up a threatened sector, or redeploy a unit to a critical front, or any of a number of other things.

This is what separates the genre from other wargames and what is the most argued about in the gaming community. This leads to the question, “Are card driven wargames for everyone?” The answer depends upon what type of gaming you like best and what you are familiar with.



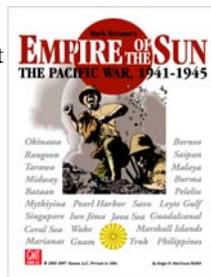
Let’s say for example, that you enjoy Pacific WW2 games. You have Empire of the Sun, a card driven wargame and Fire

in the Sky, a conventional wargame. Each game is fairly recent, have above average graphics and components, and they roughly handle the operational level of the Pacific campaign.

With Fire in the Sky you know what reinforcements you will get, how far units can move, what their combat strengths



will be, and you can plan with almost chess like precision, your campaigns as the Japanese or Allied player. With Empire of the Sun, you may get additional reinforcements through certain cards, weather cards may postpone operations, events might assist a defense of a strategic area or provide additional assets for a large operation, and you never know what you may or may not be able to do each turn. Basically with Fire in the Sky there’s not going to be many surprises, but with Empire of the Sun you will need to react differently each turn depending



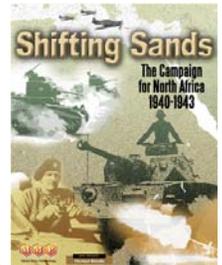
upon your card draw. Both games are good, offer similar strategic choices, but one offers a reasonable amount of certainty and the other offers the potential for chaos.

This is what clearly separates card driven from conventional wargames. This is what has also created three groups of gamers; those who love the card driven games and can’t get enough, those who will play either, and those who hate card driven games. The arguments aren’t over components, graphics, subject matter, etc..., but rather they focus on the cards themselves and how they handle the history of the period while either giving players too many choices at times and no choices at some point in the games.

It is true that in some of the games the cards are somewhat scripted. For example, in Shifting Sands the German player can insert the Rommel card in his 1941 deck, almost guaranteeing that it will be played shortly. In Empire of the Sun the initial attack cards must be played and in Paths of Glory the only real choice on the first turn is to play the card for the Central Powers to attack in Western Europe. In defense of these cards, however, you do have to create triggers to get the game going or to provide certain elements in

history. In all of these type of games that I’ve tried I have not seen any major imbalance by having these types of cards forced to be played.

I think that the major sticking point comes down to that there are some gamers who like certainty and some like to have options. The certainty group likes the comfort of knowing that all of their panzers will roll forward with a movement of 6 and can attack all units in their ZOCs. The card driven gamer knows that there might not be enough cards to get an offensive rolling, so he better do what he can and use the remaining cards to shore up a future position.



From my point of view I find that card driven games are challenging in that they add another layer on top of just playing a wargame and that is card management. This can almost become a skill in itself and bad card play can quickly doom your position in the game. I also understand the argument that a bad draw of cards can ruin the game for one player, but good play can sometimes offset this. Most card driven games I’ve tried are balanced and each side has the potential to use their cards to win the game.

Card driven wargames are clearly not for everyone. They do add the unknown to a game and can be much more decision heavy than a normal game. However, if you are looking for something different or new challenges in wargaming, I would suggest picking up Paths of Glory, Shifting Sands, or Wilderness War to get started and see if you like them or not.



British Probing Attack

This WW scenario was set in the later stages of the North African campaign. The British forces have run into a heavily fortified German position in Tunisia and are probing for an opening into which they can launch a full scale assault. The British side had several objectives that were located just beyond the center of the board and the Germans were allowed to set up first, with their 88's behind defensive positions.



represented by a company of infantry, a company of motorized infantry, a full company of Sherman IIIs, an AT battery, a mortar platoon, a MG platoon, and a light company of Stuarts, plus a 25 lb. artillery bat-

tery.

The Germans and Italians had several armor platoons, a section of 88's, two self propelled anti-tank platoons, some artillery, and about two companies of infan-

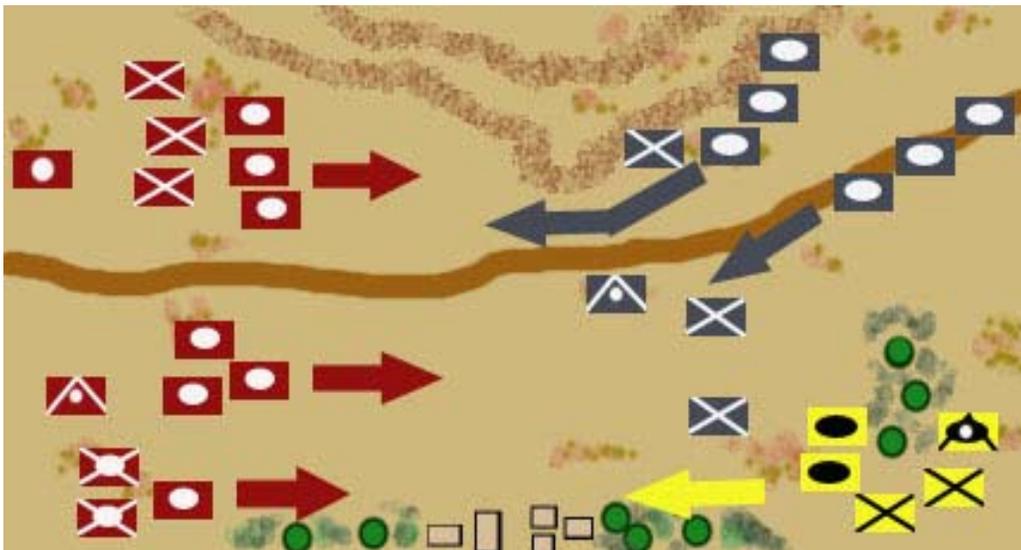
The British had a sizeable force, repre-

Scenario Replay

try, with one dug in around the objectives.

The British plan was to pin the left flank with the light armor, then establish a base of fire in the center-right with the Shermans. It was hoped that this would allow the motorized infantry to seize the village on the right and move into the objectives from there. A sound plan that went bad from the beginning!

The German plan was to counterattack with the German armor in the center, supporting the dug in defending infantry, with the Italians moving into the village to secure that flank. The German plan was more about disrupting the pace of the Allied attack.



The Battle Begins

The German 88's had been placed too far forward and they started to attract fire right from the start. As the British moved up the weight of fire began to tell on the German defenders and by turn three the British were firmly established in the center of the board, with the Shermans commanding the entire center and the 88's having been knocked out.

However, the amount of units on the

board created traffic jams and the supporting infantry units could not get into the village in time or prepare for the second phase of the attack.



The Germans now launched a massive counter-attack with at least a company of panzers in the center and the Axis left. The Italians move and the Germans on the right move towards the village, engaging the Shermans at long range while the infantry establishes themselves in the town outskirts.

British Probing Attack (cont.)

The Shermans have some initial success, knocking out a platoon of Mk. IIIs and knocking out a few Marders and Mk. IVs. The traffic jam, however, prevents the full weight of Allied fire-power from overwhelming the Axis forces.

Meanwhile, the British light armor company has taken a beating and the supporting infantry attack on the Allied left has ground to a halt. Things are better in the center as the Shermans are still in a good position, but they are being whittled down ever so slowly. The British motorized infantry tries desperately to get inside the village,



but it's too late and several close range firefights break out.

The German armor keeps coming, and despite heavy losses they erase the

British light company and the Shermans are down to half strength. The Allied armor and supporting units make one final attempt to re-establish themselves in the center and press on to the objectives. Some long range gun duels break out between the Shermans and the remaining

Scenario Replay

panzers. The Germans in the center and the Italians on the Axis left have taken grievous losses, but they continue to block the Allied advance.

Finally, one more platoon of Shermans goes down and the remaining two are under a blistering fire from the German center. The AT battery is now stuck in the traffic jam around the village and they lose several vehicles and guns to a determined Italian counterattack.

The Allied forces keep pressing the attack, knowing that several enemy platoons are near the breaking point and one more push might do the job. The Shermans position themselves to meet a flank attack from some Mk. IIIs.



Finale & Summary

The Allied forces by this time have lost the momentum and are down to their last few tanks. The continued German fire makes it impossible for the British infantry to advance, so the game is called as a narrow German victory.

The British had a good



plan, but gamers have a bad problem in wanting to get right into the game and shooting things. This caused a huge traffic jam and blocked fire just when it was needed to stem the German counterattacks. The Axis players barely

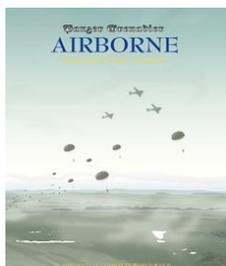
escaped with a victory and recovered

nicely from the disastrous first few turns. The game did show that we needed to cut back on stuff as there were too many figs and vehicles on the board. Although it looked good and everyone had plenty of stuff to run (it was a seven player game), there wasn't enough maneuvering space (even on a 6 x 10 board!).

Still, it was an exciting game that went down to the end.

Panzergranadier: Airborne

Board Game Review



For years if you wanted to do WW2 tactical combat you basically had two choices. The first was to sell everything that you own, quit your job, and dedicate your life to playing Ad-

vanced Squad Leader. The second was to play Avalon Hill's Panzer Blitz or Panzer Leader, both of which were showing their age. Now there's several alternatives.

One of these alternatives has been out for several years and that is the Panzergranadier system from Avalanche Press. To get more gamers into the system they have created an introductory boxed set called Panzergranadier: Airborne. For \$20 you get a boxed game with a nice looking mapboard, the counters that Avalanche is famous

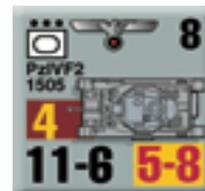
for, rules, and a booklet of scenarios depicting airborne actions in the Normandy area in June of 1944.

The Panzergranadier system is at the scale of one counter equals a platoon of infantry or vehicles or a battery of guns. There are also counters for individual leaders, who help to control units and can influence morale. The rules are well laid out, although I'm not sure that beginning wargamers will have an easy time figuring everything out. Fortunately, after a few games the system gets pretty easy to use. The combat tables can take some getting use to in that it is a 2D6 system where all the middle numbers produce no results.



Although the scenario book comes with quite a few scenarios, you soon realize that there's only so much you can do

with U.S. airborne forces on one small map! This is my biggest complaint with this boxed introductory game.



However, for \$20 there's not much to complain about. You get enough counters, scenarios, and basics to give you hours of playing time and it's a great way to get into the system while teaching others who might be interested in this level of WW2 combat.

Of course the big reason that this module exists is to get you into the Panzergranadier system, which is quite extensive. From actions on the Eastern Front to scenarios with just South African units, you will someday be able to game almost any historical tactical level operation during WW2. This series has been one of Avalanche's strongest and it's easy to see why. Good components and a wide variety of games make gamers happy.

The History Channel: Dogfight

Review

I, like many others, often find The History Channel annoying, rather than informative. The constant stream of experts who seem to know nothing about the period they're talking about, the sensationalism of some episodes, and the utter disregard of anything but the PC version of history can at times make the channel unwatchable.



So, when I sat down to watch my first episode of the new Dogfight series about four F-4s over North Vietnam, I was pleasantly surprised! First, the CGI graphics are well done and the way that the maneuvers are plotted on a virtual map of the airspace is good. The interviews, background history, and file foot-

age are also welcome additions to each episode.

So far, I've seen several episodes and I eventually plan to collect them all. The episodes about the dogfights over Guadalcanal and the introduction of the Hellcat to the Pacific Theater had some amazing renditions of islands and

interesting battle sequences. The other episode I saw featured an engagement of where one F-8 held off five Migs!

The only complaint I have, and it's pretty small, is that every time they come back from a commercial they have to revisit the overall situation. I understand that with today's ADD society that might be necessary, but let's cut to the good stuff!

Other episodes feature the

hunt for the Bismarck, featuring some incredible CGI of the Swordfish flying into the Bismarck's AA, Israeli jets in the Middle East Wars, the death of the Yamato, and more. Hopefully the series will be successful and more episodes will be created to chronicle some of the lesser known air combat theaters such as the Eastern Front, Finnish-Russian War, and others.

If you don't catch these episodes on TV, it could prove to be a substantial investment if you have to buy them at around \$25 an episode. I'm sure at some



point you will see the seasons in boxed sets at your local Wal-Mart or Costco for a good price as they are not to be missed.

Battle of Vittoria

Scenario Replay by Dave Marks

Hi All. Well in sort of keeping with the 'Friday Night' battle reports that feature in this web-mag, I thought I would do my own write-up on the wargame battle we fought 'Saturday Night'....well all day Saturday if I'm honest. We staged a re-fight of the Peninsular battle of Vittoria using a 10' x 6' table and thousands of 1/300th scale Adler figures.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF VITTORIA

Here is a brief outline of events. Anglo-Portuguese and Spanish army totalling approximately 80,000 men. Commanded by the Duke of Wellington. French army totalling approximately 57,000 men. Commanded by the King Joseph of Spain and Marshal Jourdan.



Painting of the battle of Vittoria by William Heath.

King Joseph of Spain and his army were forced, by the advance of the Anglo-Portuguese and Spanish to vacated Madrid on the 17th March 1813. This was the third and ultimately the last time Joseph would leave the capital. The French withdrew to Burgos, which they quickly abandoned and continued their retreat to the Ebro. Wellington continued to out manoeuvre the French, who in a effort to avoid being out flanked pulled back to Vittoria and established a camp on the left bank of the Zadorra river.

The French army covered each of the three roads that converged on Vittoria. Joseph expected a straight forward frontal attack from the west and deployed accordingly. On the road to Bilbao he placed the army of Portugal under Reille. On the Burgos road, he placed the Army of the South under general Gazan at the

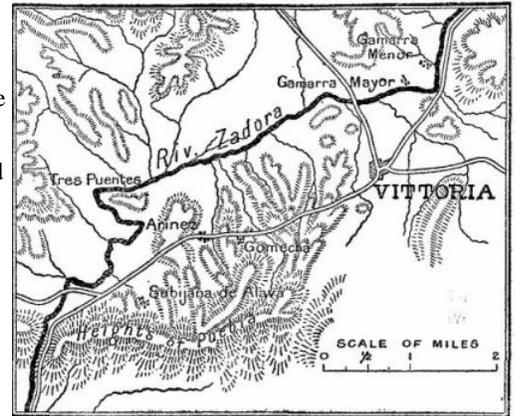
front. Behind Gazan was placed the Army of the Centre under General d'Erlon. Last of all he positioned the army of the North under Clausel on the road from Logrono.

On the 20th June Wellington arrived on the Northwest intending to give battle, knowing that the French numbers were far less than his own. The day was spent in a reconnaissance of Joseph's position. Judging by the French disposition, Wellington assumed that Joseph was expecting a frontal assault, but he had no intention of undertaking such action.

Based on his reconnaissance information Wellington decided to divided his army into three columns. On the left Graham was to carry out a huge northward swing to engage Reille and to cut the road to Bayonne. On the right Hill was facing the Army of the South and the centre was commanded by Wellington himself. At 4 am on the morning of the 21st the Allies attacked along the entire front.

Amid fierce fighting Wellingtons plant went as hoped. By the afternoon the French had abandon the valley and began an orderly withdrawal towards Vittoria. It was late afternoon when Graham's force arrived on the field. News soon reached the retreating French that the enemy was at their rear. French moral soon started to falter and it was not long before the entire army was panic stricken and fled the field.

This was a decisive Peninsular battle, total Allied losses were 5,158, and the French 8,400. Joseph's army was shattered and the French left the battlefield in an unparalleled state of confusion, abandoning everything including every gun except two and the entire baggage and treasury, which choked the French lines of retreat. It was the result of so much booty falling into allied hands that the pursuit was so ineffectual. Wellington was outraged at the conduct of "our vagabond soldiers who have got among them about a million sterling in money. Instead of getting rest and food to prepare them for pursuit they spend the night in looking for plunder". The consequence was



that they were incapable of marching in pursuit of the enemy.

Because much of the Allied army was engaged in finding plunder and the subsequent lack of pursuit, many French prisoners were able to escape while those who had fled the field were left to retreat unmolested. As a result the loss of artillery was quickly made good from the arsenals in southern France and the French army was soon in the field again.

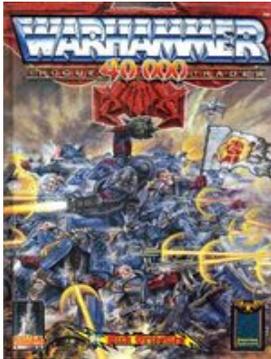
THE WARGAME

The refight was played using 'IN THE NAME OF GLORY 2006' rules and resulted in an Anglo-British victory, so history remained unchanged. The troops were laid out in their historical starting positions and the Allies won the choice to go first or second, the Allied team went first and started to advance their units into position, supported in places with some fairly ineffective artillery fire. The French response was also very no-plus.

By about turn 3 it appeared that both armies were building-up their cavalry. It looked liked both teams were so eager to get to grips with each other that they could not wait until their artillery and infantry was in place, so totally unsupported cavalry melees were the order of the day. This resulted in most of the cavalry of both armies being decimated in the early stages. Good job this was a one off battle and not a campaign. The loss of so much of the cavalry so early on had a great impact on the overall battle as neither side was able to fully exploit any gains that their artillery and/or infantry created in subsequent game turns.

Memoirs of a Miniatures & Board Wargamer Pt. 4

Although I had lost a lot of friends and had just married, I was still very much into wargaming. Unfortunately, entering the 90's historical gaming was at its low point. Board game manufacturers had run out of ideas with the Cold War being played out, Avalon Hill, SPI, and Victory Games were gone, and historical miniatures needed some new ideas.



So now the 40K universe gamer had everything he or she could want. The local stores were swarming with battles in both scales and people were buying the latest releases as fast as they could. After about three years I had several armies in both scales and had played around 50 games of both. It was at this point I started to notice the changes that would one day drive me out of playing WH40K and what would later be called Epic.

It started with the Eldar Harlequin. Warriors in pink striped outfits running around the battlefield at first seemed kind of strange, but were ignored as Eldar players were far and few between. But then came the "Weapon/Monster/Vehicle of the Month Club" where each issue of White Dwarf had the latest item that you had to have and the following month there was something to offset that and so on. Game play at the stores became wacky, with everyone using every special rule they could find and I, along with many others, began to lose interest quickly. I think that the final straw was when the new version of Epic came out and all of the existing army organizations were blown away. I got so mad seeing that I would have to spend another few hundred dollars that I simply swore the game off

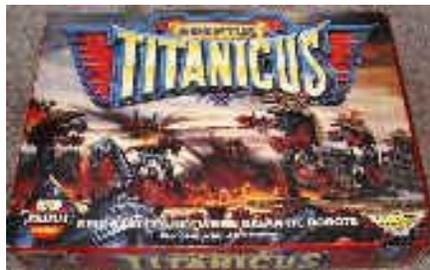


and sold everything. WH40K followed quickly after that as it too had gotten way out of hand.

Fortunately, I had met several gamers at a local store who were also

Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending upon your viewpoint, I blundered across the original Warhammer 40K rulebook called Rogue Trader. I think I've mentioned this before, but I am a big sci-fi guy and after reading the introduction I was hooked and picked up the book and a box of marines. Today, people have a hard time believing that you could get the rulebook, a box of marines, a box of Rhino APCs (3 in a box!), and a box of Land Raider tanks (2 in a box!) all for under \$100! Now this is not the WH40K that we know today and it was not marketed towards twelve year olds as it is now. This was hard hitting, dark future, science-fiction tactical combat.

It grew quickly and my friends and I played several games, plus there were local tournaments and campaigns being run at the local stores. White Dwarf quickly changed into a much more professional magazine and Games Workshop took off. It is still ironic that to this day I think that they owe a lot to the adult gamers who originally got into this game and propelled it into what it has become today.



into historical miniatures. We discussed similar interests and I was asked to join their group, starting an association with many that has lasted to this day. Like myself, they had gotten into the entire WH40K and Epic games as they had appealed to adults at the start. The constant change had forced them to reconsider their investment into these games and they decided that it was also now time to move on.

GW quickly followed up on the success of 40K by releasing Adeptus Titanicus, which was the 1/300th scale version of 40K and designed for big battles. Again, the boxed set was incredible as it had beautiful rulebooks, six well designed titans, and plenty of game aids.

To this day I still wonder why GW never came back with an adult orientated version of their games. Certainly there's interest in a hard core sci-fi skirmish game that's done well and most adults have the money to lay down for the figs and books. I can still recall the excitement and fun of those first few games, but the current state of GW operations has left a bad taste in my mouth.

As I slowly started to get back into historical gaming I did invest in one last GW product and that was Space Hulk. Probably one of the most tactically challenging games I have ever owned, it was original and produced not only fun, excitement, good game play, and tension,

but it looked good and you could get players involved in just a few minutes. To this day I will forever regret selling this game and it's supplements off, but it was done at a time when I was just so sick of GW that I dumped everything.

Although that was not the first time I had ventured into sci-fi and fantasy gaming(I had played Starguard in the 70s along with D&D), it wouldn't be the last either. However, it had the outcome of making me more determined than ever to focus on historicals, buy more research and uniform books, and try to improve my painting skills. It had the effect that has stayed with me to this day that to make a period look good on the tabletop you need to invest time in the miniatures and the terrain (something that the sci-fi gamers were beginning to forsake), plus with historicals you know that in two years a Tiger tank will still be a Tiger tank.

So that ended about a four year fling with sci-fi gaming and while it had been fun for awhile, it did provide me with a few more life lessons in that 1.) Nothing lasts forever, 2.) Always have a core period or two that you can fall back on, and 3) Gaming companies are there to make money and don't care about your past support.

Blast From The past Pt. 3



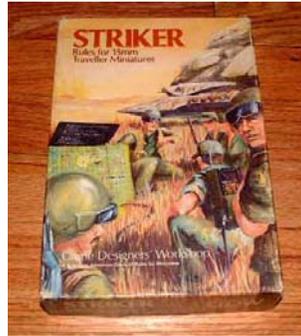
Leningrad by Decision Games

This is the old game from the SPI days that has been given new life by Decision Games. The graphics on the map are average and the counters are satisfactory, but definitely not on the level of COA or Avalanche's recent releases. The Rules are written in that SPI/Decision Games style from yesteryear, but are picked up quickly and there's not much that will leave you scratching your head. So, despite the average box, average map, and below average counters, what's so great about this game?

First, there aren't many games on this subject, namely the drive on Leningrad by the Germans in 1941. Most games have this as the northern part of larger scenarios and it quickly becomes a side-show. With this game you get to see how the Russians threw themselves at the Germans at the opening of the campaign, then watch the Germans chew up huge sections of Northern Russia, then see the Russians desperately dig in around the city of Leningrad.

The Germans are under a strict timeline and must reach the area around the city quickly before Russian fortifications and counterattacks make taking the city impossible. Also, German replacements don't come in fast enough, so the German player sees his force strength being slowly grinded down. The final few turns see a desperate struggle by both sides with the few remaining forces.

Overall, the game has those late 70s graphics and with the small map doesn't look like much. But don't let that fool you as this is a great game and ideal for teaching someone new to wargaming or for a quick two hour game.



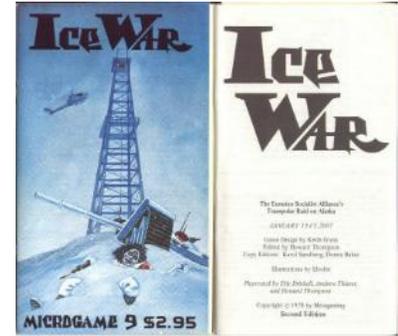
Striker

"Back in the day", there were only two kinds of role-playing games, D&D and Traveller. While I never thought that the latter was much of a role-playing game (TOO much paperwork!), I did like some of the spin off games that came from its universe.

One of these games was Striker. Striker came in a boxed set with three booklets and several charts. It was an entire ground combat system for the Traveller universe that primarily focused on mercenary units. Not only did you create the units, but created their backgrounds, technology level for equipment, and then you had to purchase their vehicles and armament. As was standard with everything in the traveler gaming universe you had to do a lot of paperwork and re-calculating. Usually this is a turn off, but in the case of Striker it was fun.

The ground combat system was way ahead of its time and the tactics and technologies it addressed would almost come to life in the Gulf Wars. True, there were no plasma or rail guns, but the integration of mechanized warfare, training levels, hi-tech equipment, and air support were all there and it was first stressed in these rules.

So why didn't Striker succeed? As with many of the Traveller spin off games, the requirement to do a ton of paperwork put off a lot of gamers. Add to that the fact that the rules were not for beginners and you had a double dose of problems. What was needed was time and patience and even in the 80s there wasn't enough. It's a shame as this system had some good ideas and deserved better.



Ice War

Besides putting out classic games like Ogre and Melee, Metagaming had several other microgames that were quite successful and to this day still enjoy an almost cult like following. One of these great games for only \$2.95 was Ice War.

The Cold War was great for the board game industry and Ice War took it a step further by taking place in the near future. The Russians are going to strike at the Prudhoe oil fields by coming across the polar ice cap. They are armed with infantry, tanks, and APCs that have all been heavily modified to move across the ice. The U.S. defenders also have tanks and infantry dug in around some of the main oil installations.

What makes this game great is that the game play is fast and furious, but a number of different strategies can be used each time that you play, so there was great replay value. The Russians charge across the ice and try to launch missiles that the U.S. satellites try to shoot down. Too much firepower in some hexes can melt the ice, creating a virtual minefield of obstacles for both sides. The game usually comes down to the last few turns as both sides desperately try to meet their victory objectives.

The great thing about Metagaming games, especially the early ones is that for \$2.95 you knew that even if the game was mediocre, you hadn't wasted a lot of money and more often than not, you had bought a great game. The maps, counters, and rules were just the bare basics, but no one really complained because the games were really that good. Hopefully someday these will be reissued so others can enjoy them.

Air Combat: A Primer For Wargamers (cont.)

So what makes a good air combat game? In my view the game needs to meet the following criteria to meet the bare minimums of at least trying to be realistic. Now, this is not saying that games that don't meet this criteria can't be fun or enjoyed by gamers. Rather, to be taken seriously as an air combat game and as a simulation of the subject, the rules should allow for the following:



combat has always been about using the advantages of your aircraft in a dogfight and minimizing your disadvantages.

purposes best, miniatures based games or board games.

Miniatures Based Games

The attraction of miniatures based games is readily apparent, namely being able to see the aircraft, their position, and get a good picture of the overall situation in a 3D environment. Unlike board games, however, where you can just open the box and start playing, miniatures games will take some work. First, you will probably need a game mat marked out in hexes, then miniatures (usually 1/300th scale), followed by some kind of flight stands, and finally you will probably need to copy all of the game materials needed to play for the players.

All of the above will take an investment in time and money, with the more spent of both the better the overall appearance will be. Again, there will only be so much that you can do with flight stands, so although it will look good you may not achieve your desired level of complexity, especially compared to some of the more detailed board games. Here's where you may have to sacrifice some realism for the sake of visual appearance and game play.

There are many sets of miniatures rules for all periods and aircraft models are readily available in a variety of scales.

From plastic models to 1/600th aircraft, the air gamer has many choices. There are also several good air gaming groups and sites that

have ideas about creating flight stands, mats, and putting on a good air combat game.

Board Games

Board games have a distinct advantage in air combat in that they can portray all of their altitude, angles of attack, and maneuvers with markers, control panels, or paper logs. Like miniatures rules, they run the gamut of complexity, from the old SPI Foxbat & Phantom to the Clash of Arms Fighting Wings series. Naturally, the big thing is that you don't have to

4) Combat Needs Modifiers

When I look through the gunnery, missile, or air to ground combat section of a set of rules, I start checking the modifiers. If there's only one or two or sometimes it's just a roll a D6 and on a 6 you hit from the front, 5 or 6 from the side, etc., then this thing is going into the stack of rules on my shelves and will never see the light of day again. There must be modifiers for angles, altitude differences, number of guns, and countermeasures if using missiles. While this adds a layer of complexity to any rules set, it is necessary and historical.

5) Suitable For Group Play? (Optional)

Because most of our games are done with a group of anywhere from 4-10 people on game nights, this is a huge part of the evaluation process for me. If your group is small, you play solo, or there's only one other person that's interested in this era and wants to try some air combat with you, then you can ignore this last requirement.

Game systems like Air War, Downtown, and others do not work for group play. To succeed with those kinds of systems everyone in the group must own a copy, they must know the rules reasonably well, and they must be able to dedicate several nights of gaming for a single battle. The odds of that happening in any group are slim and none. So the trick is to find something that grognards and casual gamers will enjoy, plays relatively quickly, is historically accurate within reasonable tolerances, and will make people want to try it again. A tall order.

Now we need to decide what suits our



1) Use of Altitude

Above all, this is the major item I look for in a set of miniatures rules or in a board game. If you try to tell me that altitude is not important in air to air combat then I must respectfully tell you that you are an idiot. Altitude, speed, and power are everything in air to air combat and they must be represented in the game. Every great ace and combat pilot makes use of what is called "the vertical". Gamers who know how to use altitude much like real pilots do will finish off gamers who fly in horizontal circles in no time at all. However, this is also the one area that turns off casual air combat gamers or others who might be interested in this subject area because it will add on a layer of complexity to the game.

2) Maneuvering

Barrel Rolls, Split S, Half Loops, Side-slips, and more must try to be reasonably represented in the game. The mechanism for this can be complex (The Speed of Heat) or relatively simple (Phantoms or Blue Max), but gamers have to be able to maneuver their aircraft, have multiple options, and must be able to understand what those maneuvers will accomplish.

3) All Aircraft Are Not The Same!

When I open up a new set of air combat rules or a board game on the subject, one of the first things I look at are the stats for the various aircraft. If they are all the same or the differences are relatively minor, then it's going up on Ebay pretty fast! I don't want a game where an F-4 and a Mig-21 have the same horizontal turn radius, a P-47 flies the same speed as a ME-262, or a F-15 performs the same as a Mig-29 over 30,000 feet. Air to air

Air Combat: A Primer For Wargamers (cont.)

paint anything for the game. If you want to do a WW2 East Front action you just pick out the Russian and German counters for the aircraft.

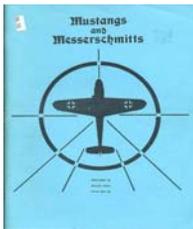
Although I've always believed that miniatures games look better and portray battles in periods such as Napoleonic, Ancients, etc..., better than board games,

in air to air combat the reverse is probably true for this period. There are no constraints for scenarios, complexity, or types of aircraft, which can be a problem in miniatures gaming.

In this next section we're going to take a look at some miniatures rules, board games, and card games, listing the posi-

tives and negatives of each along with a short commentary. This list is by no means comprehensive as we could not hope to comment on every rules set or game produced. Rather, we hope to give you a good starting point if you're interested in this era and try to show the many ways that it can be gamed.

Air Combat Miniatures Rules



Mustangs & Messerschmitts

This is pretty much the first set of rules that tried to use three dimensional movement to simulate air combat. Having played in quite a few of these games back in the 70s and 80s I can attest that they do a good job of giving gamers the impression of flying in a WW2 aerial dogfight. The rules are of average complexity, but it takes a few tries to get the hang of it. Probably the biggest obstacle to getting into the game is having to create the wheeled stands that are used to regulate movement, height, and angle of attack for the 1/72nd scale aircraft. Today's gamers aren't interested in investing that kind of time, which is a shame as they are missing out on a good gaming experience.



Hostile Aircraft

This is to WW1 air combat what Mustangs & Messerschmitts is to WW2 air combat. Basically, you're using smaller sized models (usually 1/285th) with flight stands to regulate movement, height, and angles in relation to other aircraft. The rules are not the easiest to teach to a gaming group, but they do a great job of simulating 3D air combat. The rules are comprehensive in that they cover almost every aircraft that flew in that period and have some great scenario ideas. They are very hard to find now, as well as the aircraft and the supplement. Definitely worth getting, but like M&M above, they do require an investment in time and money if you want to play them.



Canvas Eagles

I have only read through these rules, but I have played Blue Max, from which they are based upon. Again, playing these rules will require an investment by the gamer in preparing models, markers, and flight stands. The rules are much simpler than the two sets listed above and are ideal for group play.



Phantoms/Mustangs/Mig Alley/Flying Circus

In the interest of full disclosure I developed the revised edition of these rules, so yes, I like them. Based off of the Avalon Hill Mustangs board game, this innovative system uses 1/300th scale aircraft with maneuver markers that are placed in front of the flight stands. Once an aircraft reaches that marker, the maneuver is performed. Besides Phantoms there are WW2 rules (Mustangs), rules for Korea (Mig Alley), and WW1 (Flying Circus). There is a dedicated Yahoo group and best of all, the rules are free! As with all of the rules listed above you will need to invest in models, flight stands, printing materials, and a hex mat of some kind.



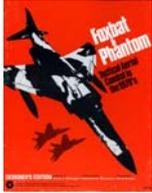
Red Sun/Blue Sky

In the mid-90s this system became very popular and spawned a number of supplements including Red Star/Blue Sky and White Star/Blue Sky. Designed for 1/300th scale aircraft on flight stands, it was more operational in nature and hard to describe here. The game was used to, for example, portray a full strike on a carrier, but meant to be quick so many of the tactical details were kept to a minimum so that you could have a large number of aircraft on the game board.

Board games, card games, and others continue on the next page.

Air Combat: A Primer For Wargamers (cont.)

Air Combat Board Games



Foxbat & Phantom

One of the first wargames I ever owned and also one of the first air combat games. This came out at a time when SPI was pumping out games as quickly as possible and although many were awful, this was one of the good ones. The F-15 and F-16 had not come into service yet, so it was like playing “next war” type scenarios with Vietnam era aircraft. Still, it was a good system that gave everyone their first taste of jet combat.



Air War

Essentially this was Foxbat and Phantom on steroids. Still one of the most complex games ever designed with each turn being 2.5 seconds of real time. I remember spending days just trying to figure out how to fly your aircraft, let alone engaging in combat. The errata that came out was the size of a novel and later editions did little to improve the game play. However, there is no denying the realism of the game, it’s just that it will take you 15 hours for a two on two dog-fight!



Air Superiority

This is what Air War should have been. Designed by a former pilot, this game was still complex, but it was very playable. It used a unique flight system and although combat was still tricky with missiles, it worked. There was a sequel called Air Strike and a module called Desert Falcons, then the designer and GDW parted ways which led to the Fighting Wings series being published by Clash of Arms. My friends and I played dozens of scenarios when this game first came out as it was realistic, playable, and worked well even for multi-player sessions.



Flight Leader

This game had the misfortune to come out just a little bit before Air Superiority and was one of the last of the Avalon Hill games before they went under. It was a good game and could be likened to Foxbat and Phantom with easy to use systems, although you always had the feeling (much like in F&P) that everything was so generic. We played a few games of this and the system wasn’t too bad, but when Air Superiority came out it got shelved.



The Speed of Heat

Probably the best air combat board game that I own, even though it only covers jet combat from the 50s to the early 70s. The designer of Air Superiority created this system and it works well, although it is not for the beginner. You really get the flavor and feeling of being in an F-4 high over Vietnam dueling it out with Mig-21s. Air to air, recon, bombing, SAMs, and more are all covered in a very playable and user friendly system. There is still hope that further modules will come out for this, but it’s been quite awhile since this game came out and nothing yet.



Downtown/The Burning Blue

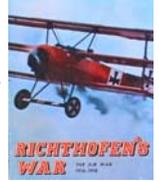
Both of these games represent some new thinking in the air combat genre, namely how to model the operational aspect of air warfare. Downtown focuses on the USAF/USN aerial campaigns over North Vietnam from 1965-1972 and The Burning Blue covers the Battle of Britain. Surprisingly, the air to air combat between aircraft is only part of the game. Players take the role of air tasking officers and must plan a large raid, then execute it, with the defending player doing whatever they can to disrupt the raid. In the case of Downtown, for example, this means plotting ingress and egress routes on a small map, tasking aircraft with SEAD, MIGCAP, Strike, IRON HAND, and recon roles, plus coordinating electronic support. The raid then begins with intercepting aircraft, flak, SAMs, and more all adding to the chaos. Add into this the fact that many of the scenarios and campaigns have multiple objectives which lets you play these games for a long, long time without getting bored. Not for the meek as the system is complex and will take a few runs to get the hang of things, but the pay off is worth it in the great game play and a better understanding of air warfare. Also, since it’s published by GMT there are great components and excellent support.

Air Combat: A Primer For Wargamers (cont.)

Air Combat Board Games (cont.)

Richthofen's War

Again, this is one of the earliest air combat wargames produced and it still enjoys an almost cult like following. The original game, while playable, had a level of predictability that was solved when the sets of maneuver cards came out. Simple, quick, and did a good job of portraying WW1 combat in a 2D environment.



Blue Max

This game was essentially a better version of Richthofen's War and is still very popular with many gamers. The movement and combat systems were novel for their time and coupled with good playability made this game an instant classic. The basic system has been modified into many other rules sets and games as it can be grasped easily by any air combat novice.



Luftwaffe

Probably the first operational level air combat wargame. One player took the part of the U.S. forces that were trying to bomb a series of targets while the second tried to stop the bombers with a variety of German aircraft squadrons. If you played the original rules the game was not very realistic, but most players misunderstood the combat rules, which meant that by playing the game wrong it was actually better! Still, this is a classic game that should be on the shelf of every WW2 air combat game collection.



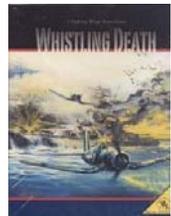
Air Force

When this game first came out it had a huge following. It was pretty much the first really detailed WW2 air combat board game and in an age of complex games most gamers ate this up. The charts, movement, and combat were all pretty unique for its time and I can recall many an enjoyable game the first few years it was out. The data cards were what really stood out in the game and many an hour was spent comparing the cards from different aircraft. A sequel for the Pacific called Dauntless, was also released and was well regarded "back in the day".



Fighting Wings Series

J.D. Webster, designer of The Speed of Heat and Air Superiority, moved over to Clash of Arms Games to produce this trilogy (so far) of air combat board games. The three games are Over The Reich (Europe '44-'45), Achtung! Spitfire (Battle of Britain), and Whistling Death (Pacific). They use the Air Superiority/Speed of Heat system, so gamers familiar with those will be able to adapt quickly to any changes in the WW2 rules. Be forewarned that these are not for the beginning gamer! It will take awhile to get the hang of this system, but it is very good and while it may not be the last word on WW2 air combat, it's pretty close.



Ace of Aces

This is certainly one of the more novel games on this list. Both players had books for their aircraft and the illustrations on each page showed your view of the enemy aircraft. By cross-referencing your maneuver with the enemy's you got a view of where you ended up. Very fun and we spent years playing this thing with sometimes up to four planes on a side!



Zero

Zero is listed here as for \$20 you get a lot in the box and a great introduction to this card driven air combat game from GMT. Each player has an element of two aircraft and all maneuvers and combat are done by playing through a special deck of cards. You can do a dogfight in 15-20 minutes and a four mission campaign in a few hours, making this ideal for those nights where you really have no set gaming plans. Average complexity and great game play.



Air Combat: A Primer For Wargamers (cont.)

Air Combat Board Games (cont.)

Wings of War

This is a new game system where you lay out maneuver cards for each aircraft and then resolve movement and combat. The simplicity of the system means that it is great for large groups or casual air combat gamers. Optional rules allow for altitude and there are several boxed sets and supplements that include almost every aircraft and balloon that fought in WW1. Excellent components.



London's Burning

I reviewed this game as part of an essay about solitaire gaming a few issues back. You essentially play the role of an element flight leader in the tactical part of the game, but the role of a general in the operational part of the game. As a solitaire game it features great game play with medium complexity. Probably not for everyone, but the campaign game is tough to survive and the game is well worth whatever the going price is on Ebay.



Again, there is no way to possibly go over all of the games that are dedicated to air combat. I went through a Geek List on Boardgamegeek.com and there were well over 50 board games, not to mention how many sets of miniatures rules that there have been published. In fact, two recent sets, Wings of Fire and C:21 have gotten favorable reviews by users, but I have not had the

chance to try them out yet. There are also several sets of rules coming out for the Tumbling Dice 1/600th scale aircraft line which seem to be gaining some traction.

As you can clearly see, however, there are many ideas, philosophies, and ways to game air combat. From low complexity card and board games, to 1/72nd scale models dueling on a gym

floor, there are more than enough options. The big problems for most gamers is finding the right game that offers the complexity, historicity, and feel that you or your gaming group is looking for. This may take a few tries and test games to find the right one. Or, if you're like me, the Holy Grail of air combat is still out there and my search goes on!

The Future of Air Combat Gaming

While air combat wargames are definitely not as popular as Napoleonics, ACW, or Ancients, they do have a dedicated following. It is also easy to generate interest as the topic, while it can be complex, has definite appeal. With the tremendous improvements in technology, however, ultra-modern air combat will not be able to be accurately portrayed on the tabletop. This will essentially force air combat gamers to focus on the period from the First World War up through the Cold War. Aircraft such as the F-22 and F-35 have completely changed air combat as we now know it and there is little enjoyment in playing a game where two F-22s knock down ten SU-27s in under a minute!

Rules and games systems will continue



to run the gamut from low complexity to rules that will require a degree in physics! I am actually surprised that no one has come out with a Memoir '44 or Battle Cry type air combat game. On the other end of the spectrum, the Birds of Prey board game is still under development and it looks to be the most complex, detailed treatment of jet combat ever.

Of course much of this will depend upon the gamers themselves. What kind of group you're in, the level of complexity that you enjoy, and time constraints are all

critical factors in making a decision about what rules or game system that you want to try. Miniatures will require some painting, research, and materials while board games come ready to play.

So, the future of air combat gaming looks like it is in pretty good shape. There are more than enough rules and board games to suit gamers of all persuasions. More games, figures, and rules will continue to come out, much like the WW2 side of the hobby. Already in the past few years there has been an explosion in the number of 1/300, 1/600, and 15mm models that have come out. Add to this all of the die-cast models in varying scales and the air combat gamer has more than he could ever want. This period definitely looks like it is ready for a big leap into the forefront of the gaming hobby.

Duel over North Vietnam/CSAR Mission

Scenario Replay

To go along with this issue's theme, our gaming group did two Phantom scenarios, both set over North Vietnam in the late 60's. As with many gaming groups we play too many periods and then when we do something we really like, we wonder why it took us so long to get back to it! We had not played Phantoms in over a year, so we were a little rusty with the rules during the first game.



Scenario 1: MIGCAP

The first scenario was strictly a MIGCAP operation, with four F-4Bs and two F-8s out trolling for some Migs over North Vietnam. The NVAF, in the form of four Mig-21s and two Mig-17s came up to play. By all means it was not exactly a fair or balanced scenario, but with several new players it was decided to give them the better aircraft, which worked out well in the end.

The game began with one of the pairs of Mig-21s guessing wrong and turning into the missile arc of a pair of Phantoms. One Mig-21 went down in flames quickly and



things were not looking good for the NVA right off the bat! Fortunately, the NVAF side recovered and a ferocious aerial duel began.

All of the Migs began turning tightly into the USN aircraft, trying to break them up into smaller groups and shake up their plan. The F-4s were having a hard time staying with the slower Mig-17s as every time they thought they had the angle the Mig-17s would turn inside of them. The Mig-21s almost lost a second aircraft, but the Sparrow missile fell off the rail and went into the ground (we use the optional rule to see if the missiles actually launch and track-a big problem

in the 60s and 70s). After realizing that the Mig-17s weren't going to play fair, the F-4s disengaged and moved off, using their incredible power to create some separation. Both pairs turned back

from opposite ends of the compass and began lighting up targets with their radars. The Migs, which were trying to stay close to the F-4s and dodge the pair of F-8s at the same time, were caught in the unenviable position of being in the middle with a wave of Sparrows coming at them. However, several missile failures, tight turns, and lucky die rolls saved the Migs. However, one Sparrow did finally catch up to its target, another Mig-21, and destroyed it.

Although the Migs had damaged a few aircraft, they were now outnumbered 6 to 4 and totally on the defensive. When a Mig-17 got heavily damaged it was time to disengage and run for home!

Scenario 2: CSAR

The second scenario was a CSAR mission into North Vietnam to rescue a downed pilot. Four F-8s were flying top cover for a CH-53

helicopter with two A-4s armed for close support/IRON HAND missions. The pilot was surrounded by several NVA infantry platoons with some mech units crossing a pontoon bridge to help with the ground search. The entire area had AAA defenses, particularly around the bridges in the center of the board.

On the first turn the two Mig-21s in the area went for a high speed pass on the F-8s while the Mig-19s dove low and tried to strafe the chopper. This soon developed into a low level dogfight, with the Migs trying to get at the A-4s and the chopper while the F-8s tried to keep them busy.

Both sides were able to damage an enemy aircraft and the chopper changed course to get out of the combat area. The two A-4s had launched a pair of Shrikes which heavily damaged a Fire Can AAA radar that was targeting the USN aircraft. The Migs and the F-8s were still dueling when the pair of Mig-19s broke for the deck and tried to engage the A-4s.

Now this started what was a pretty exciting sequence. The A-4s turned at the river and started their attack run on the AAA defenses. The Mig-19s accelerated to try to catch up to them with a pair of F-8s trying to break off to intercept them. The A-4s ran a gauntlet of AAA fire which damaged one aircraft, but they successfully delivered a load of cluster bombs that knocked out three AAA positions. The Mig-19s fired and damaged a second A-4, but they had to break off when the F-8s arrived. The A-4s reversed course and with 500lb. High drags, knocked out two more AAA positions. By this time they were both damaged and out of ordnance, so they headed for home.

After some tough maneuvering the F-8s damaged the Mig-21s and knocked down a Mig-19, leaving the area free for the chopper to pick up the downed pilot, just before the NVA ground forces got to him.

Two very exciting scenarios that gave everyone a good taste of jet combat. The Phantoms system is easy to learn and new players can get up to speed very quickly. Our group uses a few house rules, such as hidden maneuver markers which adds greatly to the game play. Log on to the WFHGS site and download the Phantoms and Intruders rules!



German Raid 1940

After playing a few Vietnam games the group decided to try a WW2 game. We had a number of guests come by that night and we ended up with ten players for this game! Naturally this means that rules like spotting and the AA had to be thrown out or we would have been there all night long!

The scenario is set in the summer of 1940. A German strike consisting of four JU-87s and four HE-111s are on their way to bomb an RAF airfield. They are



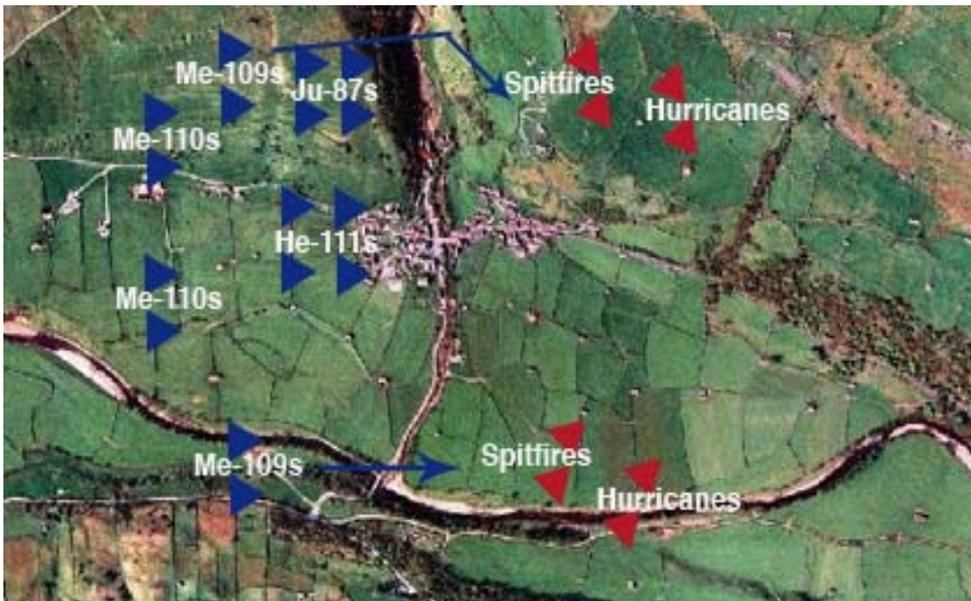
escorted by four ME-109s and four ME-110s. The German players positioned the 110s behind the bombers and the 109s in the middle, hoping to trap the attacking British fighters in between them.

The British side had four Hurricanes and four Spitfires. The British fighters were positioned on an intercept course and attempted to come up on the sides of the German formation. The Hurricanes,

Scenario Replay

which stood little chance of success against the German 109s, decided to head straight for the bombers, while the Spitfires just wanted to engage anything that came their way!

On the first few turns the German 109s moved out in front of the bombers while the Spitfires raced to intercept them. The Hurricanes maneuvered to line up for a firing run and began to change altitudes for optimal firing distance. In hindsight, the ME-109s probably came out a little too early and one pair took a bad angle which let the British fighters through to the bombers a little too easily. The HE-111s droned on towards the target while the JU-87s dropped altitude and headed in.

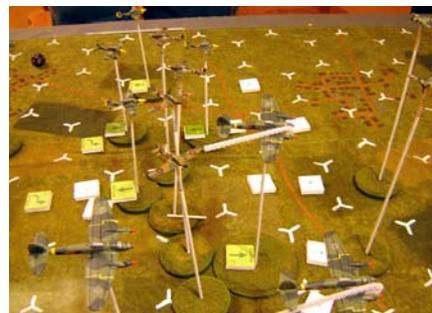


The Dogfights Begin

A pair of Spitfires started off the festivities by taking some long range fire in a head to head position with a pair of 109s. An incredibly lucky shot and second roll started an engine fire on one of the 109s. The Germans turned into the Spitfires and this started a several turn duel over on the right side of the German formation.

The Hurricanes that were with the

Spitfires dove into the bomber formation, twisting and firing as they tried to get into better positions. They scored several hits, but none were severe enough to knock down a bomber.



On the other flank the Spitfires and the escorting 109s got into a turning dogfight while the Hurricanes moved around the bombers and took a long range shot at a pair of 110s, causing an engine fire and disrupting the German plan.

German Raid 1940 (cont.)

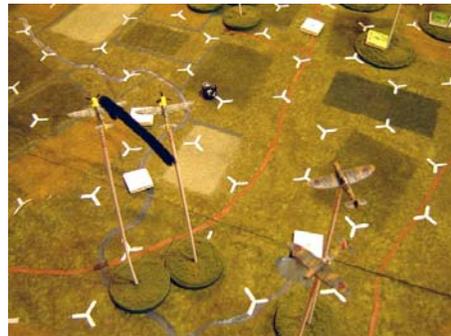
Scenario Replay

Both the 109 and the 110 with the engine fires crashed into the ground and at this point the Germans were having a bad day. This was reinforced when a pair of Spitfire raced through the 111s and damaged two of them. The 109s, however, came back with a vengeance. First, one Spitfire was blown apart by some incredible gunnery, then a second Spitfire was damaged by another 109. The 110s were making life hard for the Hurricanes as they tried to line up on the bombers.

At this stage in the game the Germans were in good shape, even though they had lost two of their escorting fighters. The combat moved on with the British fighters returning for more passes on the HE-111s. After another series of passes, all

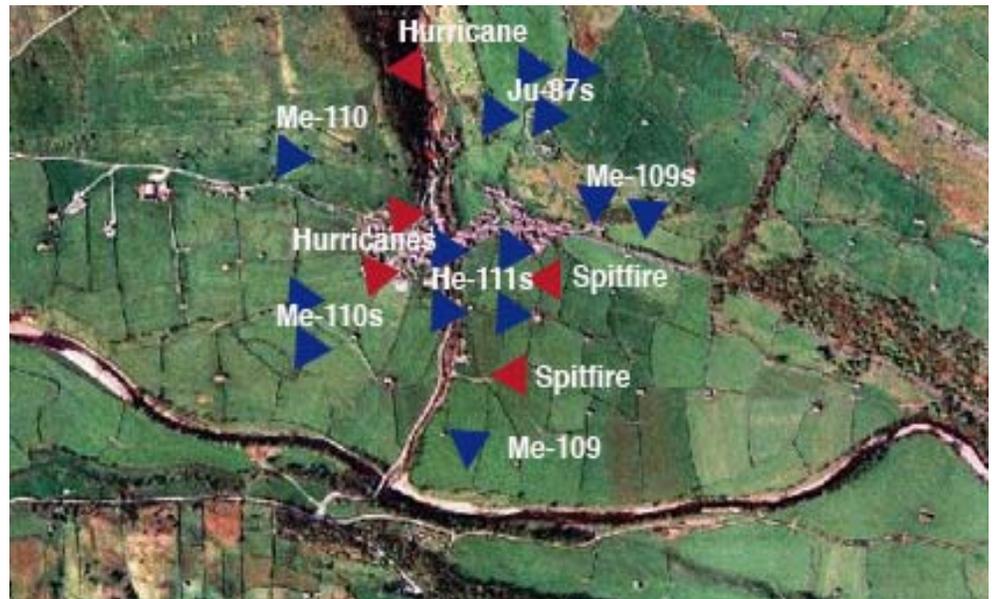
four were damaged, with two in serious shape. The British lost another fighter to the 109s and one pair of Hurricanes ran out of ammo and disengaged. The remaining British fighters continued to close on the bombers, pumping more machine gun fire into several of them, but taking a few hits in return from the defensive gunnery of the bombers.

The remaining 109s were still on the prowl, making life difficult for the British



fighters and denying them easy routes to the bombers. The 110s as well were taking shots at the fighters and the Stukas remained untouched.

Finally at the end there were only five British fighters left out of the original eight and only two were undamaged, plus most were out of ammo. The British fighters disengaged and the Stukas raced in towards the airfield, scoring several direct hits and putting it out of action. None of the HE-111s made it back to France as they had all suffered severe damage.



Summary

Despite the early setbacks and the bomber commander crying for help, the German fighters performed well, knocking down several British fighters and disrupting attacks on the bombers. Even causing a fighter to have to attack from a side angle instead of directly behind a bomber can be



considered a success in this type of battle.

For their part, the British fighters did well in scoring a lot of hits on the German fighters and bombers, but most of them were non-critical, meaning that they could not finish off the 111s fast enough to go after

the Stukas. They also at times suffered from target fixation in that they kept giving German fighters a shot at them so that they could take a shot at a bomber.

All in all, a good game that was pretty exciting. Even though we had ten players and 24 aircraft flying around there were no problems with the game play. Next time we're going to try some German jets against a B-17 formation.

More Wargame Downloads Games!

In the last issue I reviewed several games from a great website called Wargame Downloads (www.wargamedownloads.com). For this issue I was sent several more games to review, with all of them being quite different.

Malaya: V-Mail Postcard Game #1



Yes, from the title and the size of the board this is a “back of the postcard” type wargame. There is a small board representing Malaya with Singapore at the bottom and around 20 double-sided counters, all of which fit on a 8 x 11 sheet of paper. The Rules can be read in under two minutes and play can begin right away. The game covers the Japanese invasion of Malaya and goes for six turns. The combat results table is a little unpredictable, so my two games had vastly different endings. The great thing is that you can be done in 15 minutes and set it up again! As far as I can tell the game is free (the price lists \$0.00) so you have nothing to lose in trying it out! I would like to see a whole series of these as they are great to introduce people to the hobby.

Riachuelo’s Naval Battle



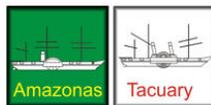
Now here’s a gaming topic that you don’t see every day. On June 11th, 1865, during the War of the Triple Alliance, a crucial naval battle was fought between Brazil and Paraguay on the Parana River in

the province of Corrientes, Argentina. This battle, fought between wooden river gunboats, barges turned into artillery platforms, and land based artillery, resulted in a Brazilian victory and ensured their naval dominance of the region.



The game comes with an 11 x 17 map, 45 counters, player charts, and the ship charts for each fleet. For \$12 it’s a pretty good deal, even if you have to print it yourself. The rules only take up a few pages and despite some problems with the English translation, it’s pretty easy to figure out how the system plays.

After checking for initiative, each side moves and fires its ships. The charts do cover the widely varied armament and penetration, so there is an attention to detail here not usually found in this small of a game. Hits and critical hits are marked off on the separate ship charts until ships are ei-

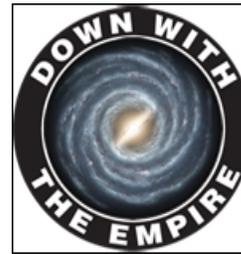


ther sunk or put out of action. The game is pretty wild (much like the actual battle!) and the islands in the middle of the board add some interesting tactical elements. The Brazilian fleet has a number of options of how to engage the Paraguayan fleet, either by masking themselves from the shore batteries by hiding in the island area, or going for a head to head confrontation. The game is very playable and can be finished in around two hours.

My only problem with the game is that after two or three plays I think that you will have pretty much exhausted all avenues of approach and strategy. However, I highly recommend this for introducing people to wargaming or to naval wargames as it is worth the price. Hopefully we’ll see a few more of these unusual actions.

Game Reviews

Down With The Empire



OK, warm up your printer! Down With the Empire (here afterwards referred to as DWTE) is a massive two player game simulating a rebellion against an interstellar empire. Just think about the setting in Star Wars and you’ll be alright. It lists a 20 hour playing time and after seeing the components and the rules you’ll probably agree that is probably a fair assessment.

We’ll start off with the components as this is what will drain your printer of ink or boost the price of shares at Kinko’s! First, there is a 3 foot by 5 foot map of the empire, broken into planet boxes, jump routes, and districts, with a lot of information. The map is truly impressive and can make you want to play the game just by itself. Next are 1400 (!!!) counters representing characters, missions, fleets, ground units, and more. The

Battlestar	Starcruiser	Starcruiser
8/16	6/12	6/12
H Cruiser	H Cruiser	L Cruiser
4/8	4/8	3/6

counters aren’t bad and will do for a game of this size as there are so many of them that will be in

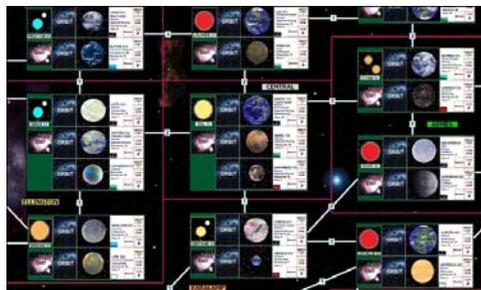
play that the artwork is not that critical. Following this you have some displays, money in several denominations, scenario info, and then a 108 page rulebook. Most of the rulebook is filled with examples and information on the various characters, planets, monsters, and more, so it’s not as complex as it sounds. The biggest complaint here is that the rules are in the A4 format, which makes re-sizing and printing quite the challenge. Finally, there are about 200 cards representing ships, items, treasures, events and characters. In my view this is the weakest part of the components as the cards are functional, but they won’t win any awards for artwork.

So, you’ve spent quite a few hours printing, cutting, gluing, and poring over the rules, charts, and map. Everything is set up, so how does it play?

More Wargame Downloads Games! (cont.)

Game Reviews

Because of the deadline to get this issue out I have not had the chance to play a full game of DWTE, but I have set it up and tried out a few turns solo, so I have a fairly good idea of how the system works. First off, the Rebels don't start off with much, so a good part of the first game is to nurture the rebellion and avoid going up against the Empire's fleets and armies which are pretty good.



Small section of the DWTE map.

Basically, each side has a number of characters with weapons, ships, etc..., who run around the empire trying to complete missions. These missions influence the support and ever shifting alliances as the rebellion grows. The game also features a full economic system and a military system that could be a game in it's own right. As the rebellion grows the amount of forces that each side has continues to increase until full blown war opens up across the empire.

Again, there's no way I can possibly describe the amount of detail and thinking that went into this game. As I've stated before, the rule book is huge, but it

makes such interesting reading that most gamers will have no trouble getting right into the game. I will say that the sheer size of the game can be daunting and it

will probably take a serious commitment to finish a game. I've only tried a mission or two and some of the combat examples, but the game plays pretty well, especially when you consider that not only are you trying to simulate a rebellion, but economics, events, characters, and military operations.

The only game I can think of that is close to this is the old SPI/AH Freedom in the Galaxy, which was a knock off of Star Wars, but still enjoys an almost cult like following. This type of game is truly a rarity in the gaming world and for \$20 it's hard to go wrong, although printing 50+ color and another 50+ pages in black and white could set you back easily another \$20-30.

Now this is the only point of contention that I have with this kind of game. If it's going to cost you around \$50 or more to buy the game online and print the components out, wouldn't it be better to have

had a gaming company produce a professional version? I can see if you're paying \$10-12 for a PDF version and have to print out a few maps and counters, but when a game is this big I'm not sure this is the best way to go. I know that I and probably quite a few other gamers would gladly pay \$100 a copy to see a professionally produced version of this game, even if it just sat on my gaming shelf! After all, Decision games just released a new version of War in the Pacific with its dozens of maps and 5,000 counters for around \$350 and they're going to sell around a thousand copies (in the gaming world that's a huge success!). Gamers like big games, especially if they're as good as this is. A little more time spent on the art for the cards and professionally produced components would certainly generate a lot of interest in this game.

Finally, I think that for \$20 it's a bargain. This is a rich, full game with so many outcomes and interesting pieces that you can't help but love it. Playing it will take some time and commitment, but these kinds of games should be supported.

Also, I would like to thank Greg Moore of Wargame Downloads again for sending me these games to review. The site is a great place to try out wargames and get them delivered to your computer pretty quickly.

Battle of Vittoria (cont.)

So by turn 5 the French and Allied players had brought up their infantry and artillery and started to engage each others forward elements, with the few scraps of cavalry that were still on the field being withdrawn to the rear of each respective army.

Turns 7 to 10 saw the days bitterest fighting; the French had been cleared from the Puebla Heights and were falling back towards the city of Vittoria.

So by the end of turn 11 the French army was in full retreat, fighting a strong

rearguard action as it went. With the French army on the defensive, the French players spent a lot of activation counters on trying to consolidate their position in an attempt to stem the steady advance of the Allies. But the French plans were once put into turmoil. More allied troops (Cole's division) started to make their presence felt and at this critical time disaster struck. A large French gun battery, that was supporting the French centre, was overrun and destroyed by the few remaining British light dragoons.

I was surprised to see that the British

Scenario Replay

cavalry had suffered no damage and asked Bob, who commanded the artillery, how he had managed to miss the cavalry. Bob explained that he had not fired at the British light dragoons because he thought they were on his side. Well, that mistake really did recreate the fog of war and ultimately lead to the collapse of the French centre and subsequent French withdrawal from the field.

So an Allied victory, so history was not changed this time.



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Recently I've been taken to task on one or two threads on TMP regarding my rants in previous issues. Fortunately, from at least my perspective, more people have agreed than disagreed with my editorials. One of the common themes is that I keep saying that the "old days" were better than gaming is today. Actually, I've never said that in any of the editorials that I've written. What I've been trying to show through features like Blast From The Past, Memoirs, and occasional editorials are the **differences** in gaming over the years. There has been a steady progression in the number of companies producing gaming products, there are more miniatures of higher quality, and the internet has created explosive growth in the hobby. My theory is that some of this has been good and some of it has been bad for the hobby. Nowhere have I said, "Burn all of your copies of Flames of War, melt down all of the Perry miniatures in your collection, and let's go back to Tractics, masking tape roads, and playing NATO vs. the Warsaw Pact in battles that lasted three days!" Rather, I'm trying to get people to look at why we used to spend a week getting ready for a battle on a Saturday and now we open up boxes of pre-painted miniatures, throw some stuff on a board, play a game in 60 minutes, pack everything up in a trendy carrying case, and go home to repeat it again in a few weeks. For those who have been gaming for a long time, the articles bring back fond memories of the social aspect of wargaming that didn't just exist for an hour or two every now and then. Many letters, phone calls, exchanging research materials, etc., happened between games that helped to establish friendships that may even last to this day. No one wants to go back to the days of all figures in the same pose, rules on mimeographed paper, only one or two gaming magazines, etc., but I still think that something is missing in today's gaming hobby and my editorials will keep trying to figure out exactly what that is.

Paper Terrain 10mm North African Set

This has to be one of the hardest product reviews that I've ever written. I've been building up my 10mm Ancient Egyptian army for Warmaster Ancients and needed some buildings to go along with the era. After trying other 10mm ranges that either were too expensive or the wrong scale (being closer to 15mm than 10mm) I decided to try the 10mm North African set from a company called Paper Terrain.

The 10mm North African village set goes for \$30 and many gamers might be thinking twice about ordering paper buildings for that price. However, what you get is definitely worth the price. I ordered my set the week before Christmas and received it in around 4 days, so already you have excellent customer service.

I was quite surprised by just how much you get in this package. There are about a dozen sheets of

thick paper (almost to the level of thin cardboard) with numerous buildings, sheds, gates, walls, and awnings. As in the picture below, there is more than enough to make two completely separate villages. The other thing I liked, besides the selection of buildings, was that they are in a darker tan color that was prevalent in the biblical Egyptian era, so they were ideal for the ancient period. Also, each building has a destroyed version that fits under the outside shell.



Building set picture from the Paper Terrain web site.

Product Review

So, what's the problem, if there are any?

For one thing the large buildings will take some time to build. There is a cleverly designed system for the roofs that have entrances to them that requires a healthy dose of patience. In 10mm, some of the tabs are very small, so again, it can be difficult to finish the archways, awnings, and the stairs can be a nightmare. You will also need some thin foam core for the walls that is not sold in all craft stores.

Having said all of that, the buildings do look good when finished and I like the destroyed parts under the outer shell. You have a wide choice of buildings and can arrange your village in dozens of ways.

Overall, a good product with excellent service, but if you're looking to finish the entire set in an evening or two, then you're in for a surprise.