

Warning Order

ISSUE #31

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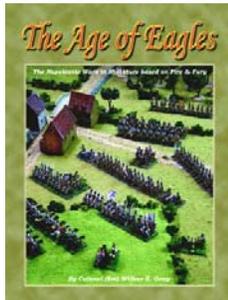


Warning Order

Playtesting: What is the Process and is it Fun?

Whether it's because of the vocal nature of our group members on various Yahoo Groups, our game night updates on our club web site, or just that we've been gaming for 30+ years, we do get asked from time to time to playtest various sets of miniatures rules and board games. Playtesting is a unique and challenging experience, but it's not for everyone. At times it can be frustrating, exasperating, and you begin to wonder if the time being spent is worth it. Then, however, you get your complimentary copy and see your name or the names of your group in the credits and it suddenly all seems worth it!

Playtesting for board games and miniatures rules are two different things entirely, so I will try to go over the process for each of them. Also, much of what I'm trying to describe depends if you got in at the start of the playtesting or later on after things have evolved. If you get started from scratch there



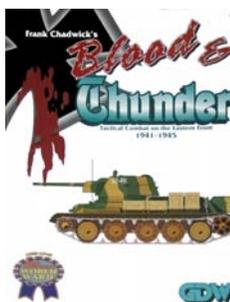
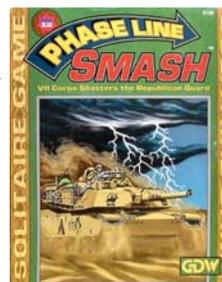
is a long road ahead while if you are involved at the end there may not be much that you have to do other than send in a few comments.

If you get involved in board game playtesting the first thing that you receive is a playtest "kit". This usually includes a crude map, copied counters with varying degrees of artistic quality, some more copied charts and tables, plus the rules, which are usually in the form of pages upon pages of text.

You usually then set up the map, mount the counters, try to make heads or tails out of the rules, then set up your first game. Now here is where you need to be patient and write down any questions or problems that you find. Getting things set up can be a frustrating exercise as many of the counters

will have wrong unit numbers on them, there's no set up info for various formations, the hex locations are wrong, or the map doesn't have the terrain type that is listed. Somehow, you get through a game and send in your comments. In the old days this was through the mail, so playtesting was either a long process if the designer cared, or a short process where they took the first comments, fixed the game, then published it! Email and forums have made this process much easier which in my opinion has allowed for much better playtesting in the board wargame side of the hobby.

The playtesting kits can vary in quality as well, with some games have professionally done components and others that looked like they used crayons to color the maps! You will then need to do a second playtest, possibly a third, and depending upon how many scenarios are in the game, you may need to do up to a dozen playtest sessions, carefully keeping track of any problems. If



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Special points of interest:

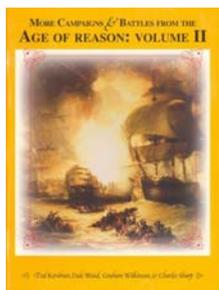
- Several battle reports for Warmaster Ancients, Age of Discovery, Fire & Fury, and Phantoms.
- Several board game reviews including Yalu, Infidel, and the monster game Battle For Normandy.
- Regular columns, reviews of some interesting books, and the new Blue Moon ACW figure range.

Playtesting: What is the Process and is it Fun? (cont.)

you're thorough with this part of the process chances are that you will be called upon in the future to do it again. Designers and developers love to get feedback that is organized, concise, and actually points out problems in the game.

Miniatures rules playtests are a different matter as there are a number of differences from board games. For starters, the playtest kit often just consists of text! The rules will come to you in a Word or text file that you will need to print off for your club and this is where the fun begins. There are usually a large number of errors, both in grammar and explanations of the rules. Just getting ready for the first game can be a time consuming process and then it's doubtful if everyone in your group is on the same page.

When we did a series of playtests for Age of Eagles our entire collections of 15mm Napoleonic armies had to be rebased. This is not always the case in playtesting, but we had been using Empire/From Valmy to Waterloo and there was no way to really playtest the game without rebasing. This was a huge decision for the group as rebasing is always approached with much trepidation and gnashing of teeth. However, we were burned out on all 1:20 and 1:50 scale



rules, we liked what we saw in the playtest rules, and we were ready for a change, so the project moved forward. Thankfully, we really liked Age of Eagles and we were proven right as we still play that set today after well over a decade from rebasing our figs.



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Again, the playtesting process with miniatures rules depends upon where you come in during the process. For Age of Eagles we came in on the ground floor and it took over two years for the entire process, from the first set of rules to seeing the published product. This will

again depend upon the designer, where you come in during the process, and how long it will take to get the product finally published. For a few other projects we were asked to playtest certain sections of the rules, modules, or scenarios. In some of these the product was basically finished, but they needed a few last minute items checked out.

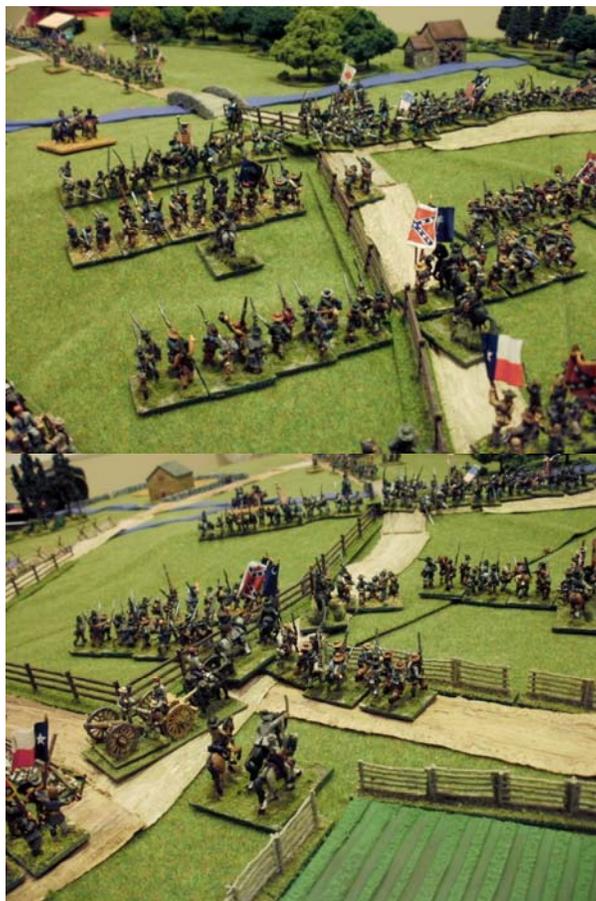
In those cases the playtesting is pretty easy as the rules are done and even if you don't like or agree with the rules, you don't have to worry about that aspect of the playtest! You just set up the scenario or part of the rules that need to be tested and forward your results back to the designer.

Where things can get tricky is if the designer and the playtesters aren't on the same page. I've only seen this a few times and in one of those cases we submitted our findings, never heard anything back, and the rules were never published. For example, if the designer thinks that French armor operations in 1940 was the ultimate in command & control, firepower, battlefield coordination, etc., then you could be in for some difficult playtesting sessions. Even if you cite historical examples, comments from your group about the games are imbalanced, etc., chances are that the rules aren't going to be changed. In this case you can only forward your suggestions and quietly go on about your business. These kinds of rules will either never get published, or they will just be added to the long list of non-descript sets of rules that are only played by the designer and his friends.

Most designers, however, are usually accepting of suggestions, rules clarifications, and ideas if they are present

ed in a positive manner. Saying that the combat system sucks doesn't help anyone. Explaining why the combat system needs to be modified because of certain modifiers, historical results, etc., will be readily accepted and usually the next version of the rules will reflect that.

Playtesting is not for everyone, but gamers should try it at least once. It is a great opportunity to be in on the ground floor of a project and see how it develops. It can be a lot of work at times and you will spend hours interpreting rules, coming up with changes, and some of your games might suddenly end mid-game. Still, it is a worthwhile experience and the effort will help the hobby out as a whole, so if you see someone asking for help in this area next time, try it!



Two images from a recent playtest of a forthcoming brigade level ACW rules set. This was from the main assault in a refight of Cedar Mountain with Jackson's forces attacking the Federal units on the ridge.

Ever since I first looked at the army lists in the Age of Discovery rules for the early part of the French Wars of Religion, I was intrigued. You had two very different armies and styles of fighting which at the time I thought would be interesting to see play out on the tabletop. However, that idea remained just that; an idea. I built up my Renaissance armies over the years and we've played a large number of battles, many of which have been featured in this magazine.

This year, however, I was determined to do something about it. Late this summer I began painting up the extra arquebus units I would need (about 80 figs) and the various German reiter units (another 48 mounted figs), plus a few



gendarmes with pistols. I would also need some French pike infantry as well, so while it wasn't a daunting task (around 200 total figs for the project) it would take a while to purchase the figs and paint them up.

Meanwhile, I tried to learn more about the period, looked into some of the

battles, and did some uniform research. Unfortunately, there just isn't that much out there! The Perfect Captain web site did have some uniform info and the flag sheets that they offered for the Huguonots is outstanding. Other than that, however, it was an exercise in frustration. Armies were transitioning to a new way of fighting, but had not quite got there just yet and it seems as if the relevant history of that era got bypassed.

The two armies, Royalist or Catholic, and the Huguonots, were composed of widely varied forces. The Catholic army had several units of pike that consisted of various units of Swiss, Spanish, German, and French pike w/ shot. The Swiss were still high quality troops, but not as good as the early days of the Renaissance era, while the Spanish and German were average. The French pike were very low grade and there was apprehension about using them for anything other than cannon fodder. The cavalry arm consisted of fully armored gendarmes with lances and one light cavalry unit. This was the Catholics main striking force and if they could get into close combat there was not much on the board that would stop them.

The Huguonots had a force that was almost the exact opposite of the Catholic army. Ten units of arquebus backed by some German pike were the main infantry force. The cavalry consisted of six German reiter units backed by two heavy

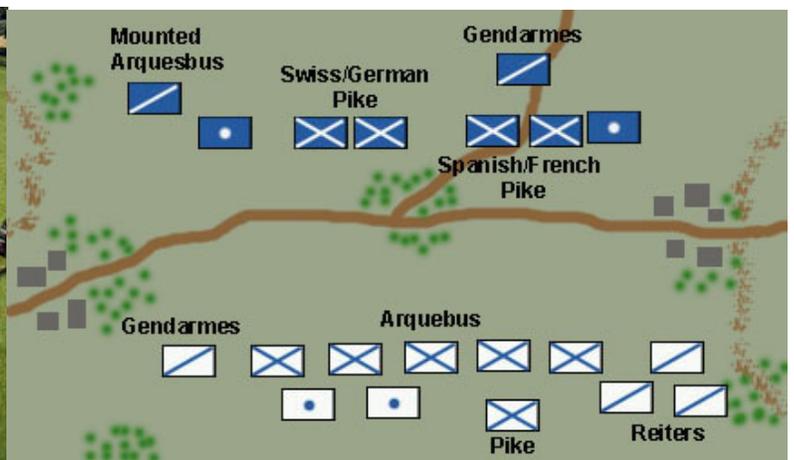


ly armored gendarme units with pistols. Both sides also had three sections of artillery.

The Huguonots deployed with the plan of holding on the left, moving up and defending in the center, and then overwhelming the right flank with the masses of reiters. The Catholics were going to hold on their left, advance in the center and use the Swiss to launch a decisive blow on the Catholic right. The fully armored gendarmes would advance in the center and then deploy to whichever area seemed to pose the gravest threat.

The reiters moved out on the first turn, moving around the right flank to threaten the Catholics on that side of the field. This move forced the Catholics to send the gendarmes to that flank as they had been hoping to hold those for the decisive blow elsewhere. All other units moved forward to get into contact.

The first action occurred when the pistol armed Huguonot gendarmes





charged and chased off a Catholic mounted arquebus unit. Unfortunately, the pursuit led them right into a unit of Swiss pike, which forced them back. The Swiss and Germans advanced to turn the Huguénot left, but were eventually repulsed by a combination of artillery and arquebus fire. The Swiss and German pike came dangerously close to turning the tide of the battle, but these were not the units of 25-30 years ago and they ran out of gas at the wrong time.

On the Huguénot right the reiters tried to go head to head with the fully armored Catholic gendarmes, which did not turn out well. While the reiters caused some casualties, the counterattack by the gendarmes decisively defeated

several reiter units and sent them streaming back to their lines.

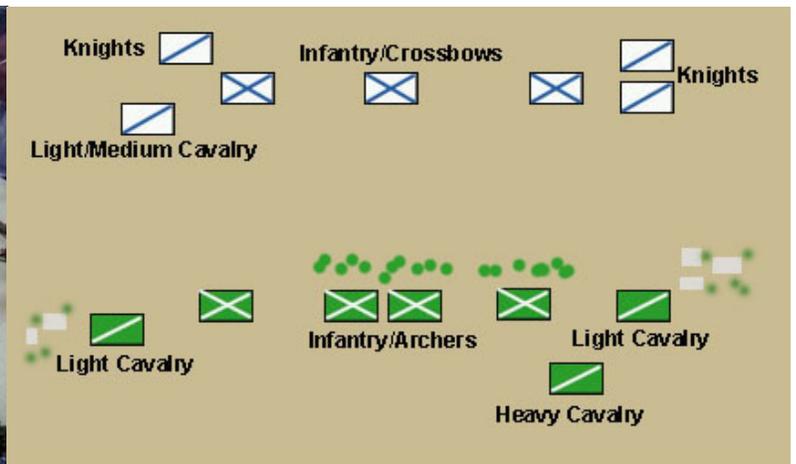
In the center the Spanish and French pike tried to advance against the Huguénot arquebus units. After several exchanges of fire the Catholic pike units fell back with the arquebus units in hot pursuit. The Spanish and French pike units had limited staying power and it began to show as several units took off in rout. When the game was called, the Huguénots held the left flank, were in full retreat on the right, and had decisively won in the center. Although we didn't play the game until one side or the other withdrew, it was clear at this point that the Huguénots had the edge.

Both sides had a difficult time coming

up with the right combination of units to use in the battle. There was such a wide variety of infantry, cavalry, and artillery that it was a real "rock, paper, scissors" type of battle. The pike units that we've been used to over the last several years of games where the Swiss and Germans ran over everything were gone. These pike units were more fragile and needed a lot of support.

One thing that needed to be addressed is that the pistol armed cavalry didn't really pack a punch, but yet this is what led to the demise of the pike style of warfare and the heavily armored units of cavalry, so the rules for that need to be changed. Overall, however, it was a very interesting and unique battle.





We've been working on improving the size and scope of our Warmaster Medieval armies, namely the Crusaders and the Saracens. For this battle I had recently finished (actually the night before!) two new units of Saracen cavalry, so I was anxious to see them in action. We were able to set up and play at GAJO, which is an outstanding historical gaming store in Sandy, Utah. You won't see too many pictures of the Crusaders in this battle report as Gary, who has that army, only brought part of it by accident and instead brought along a lot of his Romans!

Both sides had a little over 1600 points, so there would be a wide variety of choices available to each army. The Crusaders went with the standard fare, namely several units of knights, which can be devastating on the first turn of a charge. They also had a few units of pilgrims, infantry, and crossbows. A

smaller army than the Saracens, but one that had a lot of striking power.

The Saracens went with a sort of "Let's swamp them in numbers" type of force. There were a large number of infantry units, several fanatic units, a few units of archers, and some light cavalry. The backbone of the army, however, would be the three units of Saracen heavy cavalry. The Saracens had a break point of 11 and the Crusaders 9, so the Saracens definitely outnumbered the Crusaders.

The basic plan for the Saracens was to hold on the left, achieve at least parity in the center, and then use the heavy cavalry to demolish anything on the Saracen right, then turn the flank of the Crusaders. The Crusaders had almost the same thing planned, just on opposite sides! This would result in a series of fierce melees with several heavily armed and armored

cavalry units from both sides later in the battle.

Both sides did not have the best of starts as a series of commanders failed their command rolls. By the second turn things had improved somewhat, with the Saracens moving their center up and the light cavalry on the right, but the left was still at a standstill. The Crusaders moved up all of their cavalry, but their center, with most of the infantry and crossbows, was barely moving. By the third turn it was time for the first cavalry clash, which went to the Saracens as they drove off the first attempt by the Crusaders to seize a flank.

By turn four both sides had cavalry units which were ready for a series of charges across the battlefield. Unfortunately for the Saracens, this resulted in several lost combats, particularly on the Saracen right. The victorious Crusader





knights now wheeled and slammed into the Saracen infantry which was moving up to engage the Crusaders center. The Saracens gave as good as they got, but in the end several units were overrun.

The Saracens, however, counterattacked and finished off a few units of knights. The Saracen archers moved up and began to cause casualties on the crossbow units and infantry in the center. The Saracen left, however, was still trying to move up and having extreme difficulty. If the Saracens could just get everything to move forward for just one turn they could overwhelm the Crusaders who were at that point dangerously spread across the battlefield.

The Crusaders regrouped and launched a series of attacks in the center

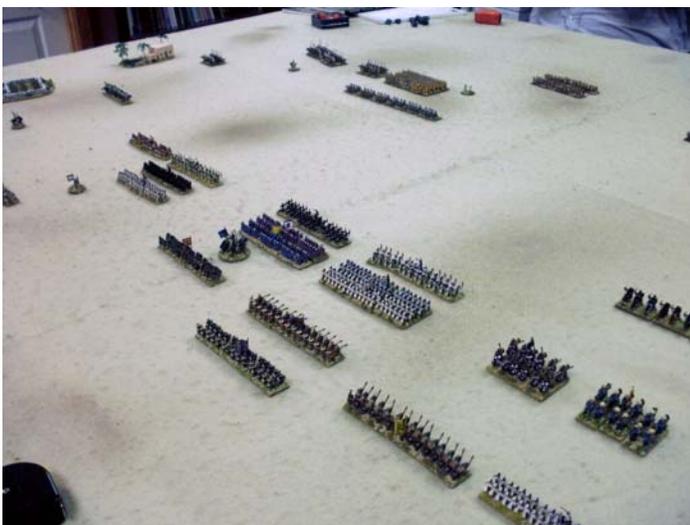
with everything they had, which crippled a brigade of Saracen infantry. Saracen light cavalry raced in and threw themselves at the depleted Crusader units, killing off several of them. By this time both sides were nearing the break point and the next turn or two would be decisive.

This is where the command rolls really went the Crusaders way, allowing them to attack up and down the line, while the Saracen response was extremely limited as commanders failed roll after roll. By turn 7 the Saracens reached their break point and were forced to withdraw.

As usual in WMA and WMM games it comes down to the final turn and this battle was no different. The Saracens inability to get all of their commanders

going even for a few turns was a huge factor in the loss. The Saracens had a numbers advantage and while they were taking a beating, due to the Crusader knights charge bonus, they were causing sufficient casualties to win if they could just launch a few counterattacks. Still, a very close run game (I think we've only had one or two blowouts in about 40 games!).

One final note is that we're still trying to find the right mix of troop types with the "huge mass" type armies such as the Indians, Egyptians, and Saracens. There is something to be said about numbers, but there is usually a trade off in quality, plus you don't seem to have enough commanders for all of the units. It's been tough coming up with a solution, but we'll keep trying.



On the list of classic wargames that have stood the test of time there should definitely be a place for Yalu. Originally published by Conflict Games, then GDW, it was designed by John Hill who gave us the immortal Squad Leader. Yalu generated quite a lot of press back in the day, most of it centered around the

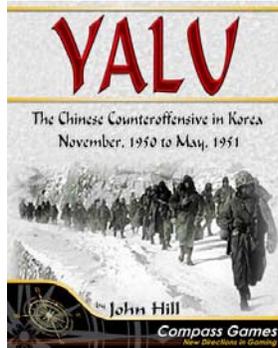
“design for effect” argument. There were a few historical problems with the map, units, questionable strengths, etc., but you couldn’t argue that it wasn’t a good game!

After having been around for over three decades, Compass Games has reissued this classic and given it a much needed facelift. Having read about Yalu since I got into gaming in the mid-70’s and having always wanted a copy, I saw this a perfect chance to get the latest version of the game.

If your familiar with Compass Games there is one thing that you can’t complain about, and that’s the quality of the components. With Yalu you get a sturdy box, two 22 x 34 maps (more on this later), two counter sheets with the larger style counters, set up cards, combat/terrain tables, and a well done rulebook. The bonus is that Compass has given you both the Classic and Deluxe versions of the game!

Yes, there are two maps in the box and it’s difficult to really tell the changes between them, but they’re giving you the extra map, so there’s not much to complain about. The counters are double-sided, with the Classic counters on one and the Deluxe on the other. The set up cards are done the same way and the rulebook can be flipped around as the Classic and Deluxe rules are treated separately in the book. Some of this is good and some not so good, so let’s get into details.

First, the Classic rules are pretty short (about 8 pages), but most of the rules are contained in the detailed sequence of play, which is weird and you will find yourself looking for things in the Supply section, only to find out more about it in



the Sequence of Play section! Fortunately, the game is pretty straightforward and with only eight pages to sift through you can find things pretty quickly. The Deluxe version adds some extra chrome, with rules for Communist artillery barrages, Ridge-way, supply, and more. It’s kind of a 50/50 on whether this really adds to an already great game, but that’s for the gamer to decide.

Where the versions really differ is in the counter mix. The Deluxe counters have different factors on them for many of the North Korean units and the support units have silhouettes along with their factors. It looks as if there were some changes in unit ratings due to new research and play balance. What creates the problem here is that when you’re setting up the game some counters aren’t used by both games. This means that you have to look and sort through things carefully lest the wrong counter ends up on the set up card. It’s not a serious problem, but it can be annoying at times.

I think the best way to learn the game is to play the Classic version first and just go through the turn sequence in the rule book. The turn sequence on the player’s aid cards tells you very little and is only good if you’ve played the game a number of times. The turn procedure in the rules is very detailed and this will get you quickly through the first few turns.

Yalu covers the Chinese offensive at the end of 1950 and into the spring of 1951 with weekly turns. Just from the set up you can see that the UN forces are in



for a world of hurt. Sure enough, Chinese divisions quickly surround and cut off many UN units and things look bleak. Two of the more interesting rules are Infiltration where Chinese and NK units can slip through UN zones of control and Bug Out, where UN units can withdraw from combat and run away to fight another day. Both rules do a great job of simulating this campaign in the early stages.

The weather in this game plays a HUGE role, with floods making movement and combat nearly impossible, blizzards, etc., that all influence movement and more importantly for the UN player, air support. A

few bad weather rolls by either side can be catastrophic.

Combat is done with units on defense “firing” first, which consists of rolling on the combat results table against either a stack of attackers or one unit. This is a big change from most games and takes a few turns to get the hang of it. Likewise the attackers can attack the entire stack or the units separately, which opens up some new thinking in how to use your forces. Communist forces also receive a limited amount of attack supply so that by the end of the game they need to save their supply for important attacks to win the game.

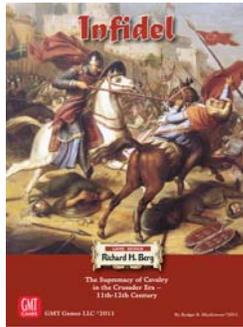
I found the first half of the game tense and exciting as the Communist avalanche cuts through the UN defenses and the UN side desperately tries to form a line. Once you reach the halfway point in the game the front stabilizes and Chinese attacks began to dwindle and the UN gets its units in better defensive positions. It usually comes down to the last few turns for the Chinese to seize Seoul and Inchon to win the game. Overall, a very good re-release by Compass Games. There’s a lot of good game play here with a very high replay value.

GMT's Men of Iron proved to be a surprisingly popular game, so naturally it spawned a sequel. Infidel is based on the same game engine as in MOI, except that instead of European battles the focus this time is on the Crusades.

The game comes in the standard size GMT box with two 24 x 32 maps that are backprinted, two countersheets, charts, rules, and a scenario book. The maps are well done, but there simply isn't that much terrain on them as many of the battles portrayed here were in fairly open ground. The counters are functional, showing the unit stats and being color coded for each command. The rules have cleaned up some of the more questionable points in MOI and this presentation was much better. There are a few examples in the rules which help greatly and the scenario book is well done. All in all, there's not much to complain about in terms of components. They aren't the best that you'll ever see, but they're functional and work well.

In Men of Iron and Infidel, units are rated by type (knights, pike, archers, etc.) with their melee (called shock in the rules) bonus printed in the upper right hand corner and movement. Leaders are rated for their command ability, command range, and movement. There's nothing here that is too complex to grasp and while some of the systems may seem a bit strange at first, once you start playing it becomes almost second nature.

There really are no "turns" in the MOI system. Instead, there are a series of



activations where one player picks a commander and tries to activate their command by rolling a D10 and the number needing to be lower than the commander's rating (usually a 3 or 4). Once a command has been activated, all units under that commander can move, fire, or shock (think melee) in any order desired. Once a command is finished, the player can attempt to activate a second command and the other player can attempt to steal that activation. If the player fails to activate a command, then the opposing player can activate any of their commands without rolling. If a player tries to steal an activation and fails, the player who was going to attempt a further activation can then activate any command for free.

Naturally, this keeps the game flowing along pretty quickly, and certainly luck plays an element in the game. If one player gets several activations in a row they can do some serious damage to another player's line of battle.

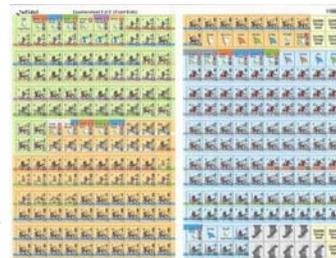


Combat is done by comparing a matrix, adding in the target unit's shock factor, then checking down a list of modifiers. A D10 is rolled and a chart is checked for the result. There can be no effect, attacker disordered, defender disordered, defender retreat, defender retired, defender eliminated, and a combination result of any of the above with a continued attack where the attacker moves up and fights again. Disordered units are flipped and have worse stats until they are rallied. Retired units are moved back to the army's standard (usually centrally located behind the main line of battle) until they can be rallied.

Infidel introduces several rules for knights which makes them particularly nasty. Also, some of the rules force them to charge after units shooting at them, so keeping your forces under control can be tricky at times. Also, only knights and heavy cavalry can charge, which does

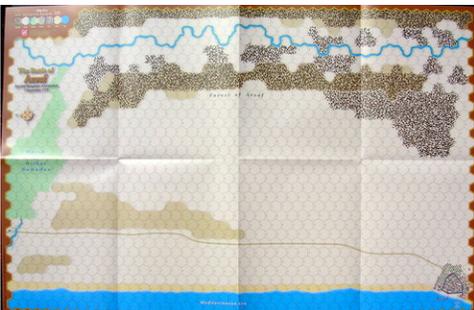
place limitations on the Arab forces as they usually have quite a few light cavalry units.

The game comes with six scenarios; Dorylaeum (1097), Antioch (1098), Ascalon (1099), Harran (1104), Montgisard (1177), and Arsuf (1191). Each battle comes with deployment maps, listings of units, special rules, and a few have variations that can be added. It's a good mix of scenarios that feature several different Arab forces. I've played two of the battles so far and they were pretty well balanced. Most of the games feature a small, high quality Crusader force against an avalanche of Arab units. In most of the games the Crusader knights are usually the difference and as they go, so does the fortunes of the Crusader player.



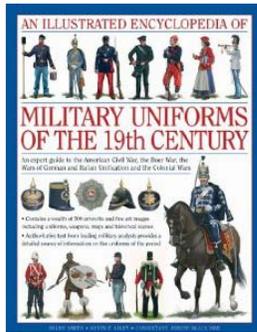
Now this is not to say that the game is not without problems. As with MOI set up can be a frustrating experience trying to determine which units are being used. The color coding helps to an extent, but you usually have to search through the units to find out which colors are being used! Also, the command activation system can really imbalance the game if one player is rolling some hot dice. You can literally sit there for awhile while your opponent's forces surround and run over you, without your forces being able to do anything in response. Also, the ability of units to run all over the place regardless of facing, some confusion over which units are matched up against who in the case of multiple attackers/defenders, and the freewheeling command system makes for a chaotic game at times.

Overall, this is a game where for 2-3 hours you get two medieval era armies bashing each other. It may not be to everyone's tastes, but it is fast, furious, and fun to play. I'm already looking forward to the third game in the series when and if it ever comes out.

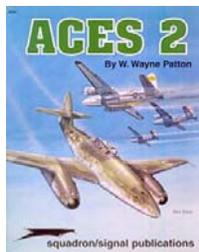


Product Reviews

First up is a beautiful hardbound book entitled *Military Uniforms of the 19th Century*. This is not one of those hastily thrown together uniform books where there are literally hundreds of the same drawn figure with different colored uniforms pasted on, but rather it is a high quality book that far surpasses even the Osprey color plates. As the title suggests, the 19th century wars take precedence here, so expect a good dose of American Civil War, Franco-Prussian War, etc. I was a little surprised that the various colonial wars weren't represented better, but there are several very well done uniform plates from those wars. The figures are almost life like and are about as close to a photographic likeness as you can get, so this definitely takes the standard uniform book that many of us are used to and takes it up a notch or two.

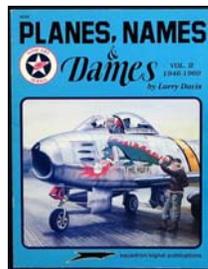


ment. Besides selling thousands of models in every scale imaginable, they also sell accessories, paints, tools, and yes, books. I always look at their sale page in the back of the book and from their online ads as well, searching for books. They not only produce the wonderful In Action series, but have a number of other books as well. In the past few months I've picked up about twenty titles for around \$70, which is hard to beat! These books usually go for around \$12-20 each and they were on sale for \$2-4 each!



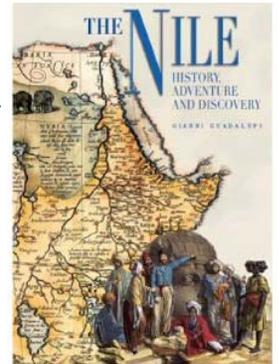
The first set I got was a series called Aces and there are three books in the series. Each book has black and white illustrations of the ace and a short history/biography. There are also a large number of color plates representing the aircraft, tank, or even submarine that the ace used. The color plates are well done and usually include FS color information, which is especially useful for gamers or modelers who wish to paint their miniatures and/or models as they are shown in the book. I found the series fascinating as there were many aces that I had never heard of and the series covers everything from WW1 to the Vietnam War.

Another three part series that was on sale is called *Planes, Names, and Dames*. As the titles suggest, these books detail the nose art that has appeared on thousands of aircraft over the last several decades and is great for modelers and/or gamers looking to detail their aircraft. The series is broken up into various eras and includes hundreds of interesting aircraft photographs.



If you're into the colonial period, then there is a must have book entitled, *The Nile: History, Adventure, & Discovery*. This is a large, coffee table book that is

currently available in many of the sale sections of bookstores or at Amazon. I was able to get a copy for around \$17, which is a pretty good deal for this size book.



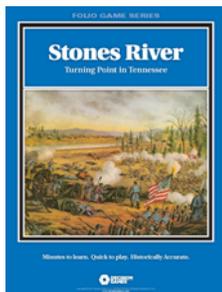
Besides a history of the Nile region along with artwork of the villages, people, ruins, etc., there is an extensive section on the Mahdist rebellion. This section at the end of the book includes many color images, including several of gunboats that I had not seen before, making it worth the price for that alone!



For my French Wars of Religion project (see the battle report in this issue) I needed some Millers, or French gendarmes armed with pistols in 15mm. Luckily, Essex has a few packs that fit the bill, so I ordered in several

packs to create a few units. In this era of the hobby, with all of the new figures coming out you sometimes forget just how good the Essex 15mm stuff is! The figures take very little clean up, paint up easily, and look great on the tabletop.

Finally, 2012 is my designated "Colonial" year where I will be expanding my collections in 15 and 25mm. To start off with I needed more Mahdist camel units in 15mm and decided to turn to Peter Pig this time. The figures are slightly larger than 15mm, but will fit in great with Old Glory figures. Good, clean castings that are sold four to a pack with great service from Brookhurst.



Next up is another in the folio games series by Decision Games, which are re-releases of the old SPI quad games with a few new titles thrown in. A few issues ago I panned the Aachen game and sadly, this is no better. While the maps have undergone a much needed facelift from the 70's era graphics, the game systems have been tinkered with too much. Instead of just issuing the tried and true rules from the previous editions, we have an entirely new set of rules for the ancients, horse & musket, and mechanized eras. Unfortunately, the new systems add a lot of rules that add absolutely nothing to the game system. My advice is to stay away from the various folios and invest your money elsewhere.

Many gamers are modelers as well, or at least stay in touch with the plastic modeling hobby. If so, then you probably already know about a wonderful online store called Squadron.com and it's colorful once a month catalog supple-

4th Annual WFHGS Warmaster Ancients Tournament



Once again, we set up a Warmaster Ancients tournament during the last week of the year. We usually meet for breakfast on the day of the tournament, then set up and play a three game round robin type of format. Certificates are given out for first through third places and a Master of Mayhem award is given to the player who caused the most casualties during the tournament.

Each player chooses a 1,000 point army from any of the lists and we did allow Medieval armies this year to give everyone more options. Three random territories are generated from the campaign system and these are used to enhance each player's army list with free units. This year we had armies of Hittites, Indians, Normans, and Saracens, which was quite the interesting mix!

I decided to bring back the Indians even after their dismal showing two years ago and they again proved to me that I should have chosen a different army!



The choice of a unit of elephants will be second guessed for quite some time, but needless to say, things did not go well for the Indians who went 0-3 for the day. The surprising winner was the Hittites, who seemed to have the right balance of forces that went along with some good die rolling during the tournament.

The Saracens and Normans terrorized everyone with their armored cavalry forces, but they simply could not defeat the Hittites either. The

Hittite chariots threw themselves at their far more heavily armored foes and by sheer weight of numbers disrupted their opponent's attacks.

In the end these were the final results:

1st Place	Hittites	Mark
2nd Place	Normans	Gary
3rd Place	Saracens	Steve
4th Place	Indians	Matt

The Master of Mayhem went to Mark as well since his Hittites scored an unbelievable amount of casualties on their opponents.

All in all, another good tournament. We were able to enjoy breakfast, get set up, and conduct three games each in



about six hours, which is pretty good. We're already looking forward to next year where hopefully we will see two new armies take the field.

Blue Moon 15mm ACW Review

No doubt the arrival of the new Blue Moon 15mm ACW and Napoleonic lines are a welcome addition to gamers everywhere. As with most 15mm gamers who play these periods, I was curious and ordered some packs.

First, by this time Blue Moon has released not only a variety of infantry packs, but cavalry and artillery as well. This will certainly not end up as an "unfinished range"! The infantry come in packs of 30 for around \$15, which means with the OG Army deal then they are

only \$9 per pack, which is pretty hard to beat. The specialty packs contain ten figures and the artillery packs have six guns. Again, it's difficult to argue about the price as it is a good deal.

After opening the packages you can see that they are clean, crisp castings with hardly any flash at all. The second thing you notice is that they are larger than the Old Glory 15mm ACW figs and most other figs, being around 17-18mm. One member of our group calls them "Heroic 15mm"!

Product Review

However, they do paint up quickly and look good on the tabletop. The officers are well done and the artillery pieces look great. You can buy several bags of these, then mix and match from the various packs to give each unit a degree of originality.

The only complaint is that they do need to be in units by themselves. If you place some stands next to Essex, OG, or Peter Pig, they are definitely taller. Overall they are great value for the money.



When I chose to re-do the Sudan in 15mm after selling off all of my old Ral Partha 25mm armies I wanted to do it in a “cast of thousands” type of game. To that end I chose to use Battles For Empire as my preferred set of rules as it was similar to Fire & Fury for movement, plus it would allow for some big battles. I already played TSATF with the Northwest Frontier in 25mm, so something different was definitely needed.

The basing was fairly standard, with four bases representing either a company of Anglo-Egyptian forces or a clan for the Mahdists, so roughly 100-120 men per unit. However, the basing for 15mm meant that you would probably only get 12 figs per unit, hardly what I wanted for that mass battle effect.

In the end I settled on using the 25mm basing for two figs, but replacing them with 15mm figs. True, no one else in the country would be able to match my forces or help me out as they would be using different basing, but I figured this was my one “signature” project, so I wanted to go all out. However, this would mean 24 infantry figs per unit, which is no small task when you’re aiming for 20-30 units a side for starters!

At first, I somehow reasoned that sixteen figs per cavalry unit would look just about right, it would save time on painting, and it would save on figure costs.

After playing a few games, however, it wasn't the look I was after, so if the infantry were going to be 24 figs per unit, well then the cavalry would be the same!

Naturally, this would mean rebasing and ordering more figs, plus the additional painting. The first thing was the bases for the larger cavalry units. For this you need basswood (balsa will crack with 6-8 cavalry figs on each base), so the bases were cut out, painted figs were cut off the old bases, re-glued to the new bases, then additional figs had to be painted.

To make up some interesting units, some of the Mahdist stands would have more than six mounted figs or they would have rocks, small hills, etc., to give the impression that the bases were full. This is where the painter and modeler can have some fun, by designing interesting bases that break up the “sameness” that we often see on the tabletop.

As you can see by the pictures, the 24 fig mounted units look good and frightening if you’re infantry! The one thing it does add to the games, however, is the problem of deployment room as they do take up much more space!



Memoirs of a Miniature & Board Wargamer Pt. 18

Projects That I've Always Wanted To Do

As long as there have been miniatures gamers there has been a disease of wanting to do too many projects! Each gaming magazine issue that you read, every time you see a news story on TMP, watch a historical film, see a boardgame on a subject you like, etc., just adds fuel to the fire. Since I've been in the hobby for a long, long time, I've had my share of ideas for projects and I've actually started a few of them which I chronicled in the last installment. This time, however, I'll chronicle the ones that never got started...

Since I'm a big Colonial gamer I've always been fascinated by The Boxer Rebellion. There was a great article in a very early issue of Miniature Wargames on the Siege at Peking for a demo game, plus every time 55 Days at Peking is shown, it makes me take all of my info and plans out again. Despite the huge interest for this, a large number of figs that are available, etc., I have never started this project. I think

there are two good reasons for this. First, the war itself was pretty short and the major actions were few and far between. There's something about playing a period where there weren't many major battles. Second, most of the terrain will need to be scratchbuilt because even after thirty years of thinking about it there's little terrain out there for sale.

Another period that I would love to do would be what if the Spanish had actually landed in England with the Armada? There was a great article in Practical Wargamer a long time ago with orders of

battle that almost made me order a ton of Foundry figs. The period is exciting, you could create a lot of scenarios or campaigns, and it should be a lot of fun. I think I've held off on this as I

would be painting alone, even though I'm sure I could find gamers to play. This hasn't stopped me before, but for some reason I can't quite pull the trigger on this one.

Ever since I first saw an ad in The Courier for Ral Partha's Polish Winged Hussars, I've wanted a Polish Renaissance army. There's something about those cavalry units that can sap a wargamer's will until they make a purchase of large units of them! However, I've been able to fend off the temptations somehow for 35+ years. I have two Renaissance armies in 15mm and could easily add a third. The problem is that I would then have to add a fourth as the other two are Western European and wouldn't look right. Sounds like too much painting and I'm already behind by a dozen projects.

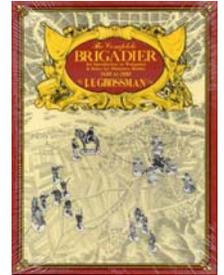
In the WW2 period I will admit to almost being sucked into the early Eastern Front a number of times. Scenarios of panzer divisions running into KV-1 units, dashing to seize bridges, the early Russian counterattacks, and just the sheer amount of scenarios that could be done have almost pushed me over the edge several times. Not only that, I'm now a big fan of GMT's East Front series which focuses on the initial German invasion, so I've been reading a lot about this period. Still, for some reason I just can't sit down and place that first order. I think it's because I already have sizeable forces for the late Eastern and Western fronts that need to be expanded as well. It is tempting, but I would need to expand my terrain to the Russian steppes and that could take some time as well as resources.

Then, every time I watch Fort Apache or any western movie with the U.S. cavalry, I pull out my copy of Pony Wars, or B Troop Ain't Comin' Back. This system just looks like a lot of fun and I think that everyone would have a great time with it. There's masses of

Indians, cavalry, artillery, wagons, homesteaders, cowboys, and a bunch of personalities. However, then I look at the forces needed and while it's not impossible, it is daunting. You need over 600 mounted Indians, terrain, cards, and a ton of other miniatures. Definitely a long term project and it sounds exciting, but I just can't see myself ordering and painting over a thousand miniatures for it.

If you have problems deciding about what projects to do, stay away from the second booklet in the Complete Brigadier set of rules! That little book lists all of the wars from around 1700 up to 1900 and there are hundreds! I remember reading a play test of these rules in an old issue of The Courier where they used some Iranian/Persian forces against some Afghan troops, which was a great read. The system is designed for small forces and it would be great to create some of these colorful armies for the tabletop. Then, however, reality sets in. What figs do you use? Where do you get the uniform info? Is there that much interest in the group? The answers aren't great for all three questions, so while I would like to explore more in this area, it just never happens.

At one time or another, all gamers look to expand out their horizons. I've known some gamers who can't finish even a single project as they are always looking for the next big thing and are continuously buying miniatures for it. As I've gotten older I've noticed that I'm starting to take a long term view to many of the projects that I am doing or I would like to do. I've decided that some things will never ever happen, so maybe it's best that I start finishing or expanding existing collections. Now this is hard to do in what many are calling the Golden Age of the hobby! Pretty much anything is available in any scale that you want, plus ordering online makes it pretty easy. However, at some point all of have to realize that we can't play everything that we would like to!



Blast From The Past Pt. 17: The Old Days Aren't Always Better

When I started wargaming in the mid-70's there were board games from primarily SPI, Avalon Hill, and GDW along with a miniatures gaming hobby that was really just getting started. Opponents were few and far between, so many of us spent a lot of time playing board games solitaire, so that sometimes explains the fondness for them that so many grognards feel.

Recently, whether it's the bad economy that is forcing many gamers to sell their possessions or just a wave of nostalgia, I've received some pretty good deals on a lot of older games that I used to own. In the mid-80's I went through a phase where I decided that miniatures gaming was the thing for me and I got rid of about 50% of my board games, which is a decision that I still regret to this day!

However, there is a reason why some of these games are not held in high esteem anymore and it's simply that time has passed them by. Whether it's the dated graphics, long set up, systems that don't work well, etc., there are a number of reasons why gamers aren't exactly flocking back to these games and why they can still be found for a good price. Anyway, I thought I would go over a few of them that I recently returned to and explain why the good old days aren't always that good...

The first is Narvik by GDW. I had fond memories of this game in my youth and I remember it as being a "gateway" game into the Europa series that was often talked about in hushed tones and reverence with many gamers. In the 70's Europa was kind of the Holy Grail of gaming and Narvik was about the only game anyone could afford! I opened up my copy (after not having seen one for 25+ years) and yes, there were the three tone maps, equally bland counters, the old style GDW rules and more. I set everything up and played the first turn which is pretty exciting with the airborne assault, naval landing, etc., then the game bogged down into playing out the string until the Germans win. Most of the counters aren't even used as there for the mat-



ing up with the other Europa games!

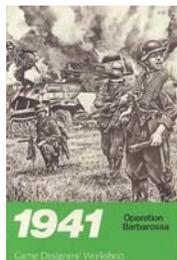
The next one would be Stellar Conquest by Avalon Hill. This was a popular space empire building/conquest game that was originally put out by Metagaming. I can remember long, all day long games of this "back in the day" and it wasn't until I opened it up again that I realized why it took so long to play the game. The explanation is that you have to keep track of all of the economic data, shipbuilding, exploration, etc. Yes, an accounting degree would be useful here. So, what's the main problem with the game? Well, GMT's Space Empires 4X does everything this game does in less than half the time and with much better components!



Next up is Avalon Hill's Luftwaffe which was produced in massive numbers when it came out. I can recall spending many a snowy afternoon playing long campaigns of this game and having a very good time with it. I recently got a copy back and tried playing a game or two. It's not bad, but there are definitely some realism and time scale issues which makes this a good game for those getting into the hobby. Beyond that, however, there's not much there that would make me play the entire campaign again.



Then we come to what used to be one of my favorite GDW games, 1941. This was one of a series of what were called "120" games as they all had the same amount of pieces and we're supposed to be able to be finished in two hours.



GDW also produced 1940 and 1942 in this series. The game covers the first six months of Operation Barbarossa and it was an alternative to playing a full game of Avalon Hill's The Russian Campaign.

For years I played this

game about once a month and had some fun with it, then I lent it to a friend never to see it returned. When I recently won a copy on Ebay I immediately opened it up and played a game. My impressions were less than overwhelming and certainly not as fun as I remembered it being! I think I've become spoiled by playing games like Defiant Russia, War Without Mercy, and Proud Monster that have beautiful components, better research, and very good game play.

The final game was a game that I never owned until now, but has received good praise over the years and that is Avalon Hill's Panzerkrieg. This was originally put out by OSG, then later by a firm called Cosi. The first thing that you notice is that the hexes are TINY! It's so bad that moving stacks of counters in this game is almost impossible. Also, the rules have a large number of errata problems, the set up lines are in a weird yellow color that is hard to see on the board, you can't tell which counters are the Hungarians, Italians, and Romanians, plus there are a lot of unresolved questions about the rules. It's a shame, too, as some of the scenarios are quite fascinating, but playing the game is a challenge. It would be nice if a re-worked version of this would come out again some day in the same way that Successors, Proud Monster, etc., have been remade.



Overall, there is still some good game play with some of these titles, but with more and more newer, far more interesting games coming out, I'm not sure if I'll have the time to get back to these in the immediate future. It's a shame as many of these games were the building blocks of the hobby as we know it today and they gave me some great memories through the years. I usually go on and on about the old days, but this is one time where they weren't always better and games today treat the subject matter with improved components, streamlined rules, online support, and more. Still, there is a place in my heart for these old games and from time to time I will still play them.

Migcap Mission Over North Vietnam

Several of us love to play air combat games, whether it's Phantoms with miniatures, Wings of War, or board games. We recently needed a quick game to be set up that would take only a few hours and Phantoms is a great game for that, especially if you only had three people attending the gaming session!



1/300th A-7s and A-4s from Scotia that formed the egressing strike package. There are a number of weapons parts from various other models that have been used to make the bomb racks and the Shrike on the rear A-4.

For those of you new to this magazine or unaware of the rules we use, they are available for free at this web site in a variety of formats, including a deluxe version with the Phantoms rules, Intrud-



There are a wide variety of 1/300th F-4s with the GHQ models being the best of the lot, with the CinC ones close behind. However, they are true models and are definitely not meant to be handled numerous times during a game as they can be quite fragile. The Scotia F-4s, while not as detailed as the others mentioned above, paint up well and look great. These are painted to represent the Sundowners squadron.

ers ground attack rules, several supplements, plus all of the data cards. The rules are quite simple and after a few turns you get the general hang of things. They are based off of the Avalon Hill board game Mustangs and feature maneuver counters that are placed in front of each aircraft. Depending upon the aircraft's speed, it takes a number of impulses (10 per turn) to reach the marker, then the aircraft executes the maneuver.

The system is quick, simple to grasp, and very entertaining as we use hidden maneuver markers to make everyone guess what their opponent are trying to do. The missile combat adds a bit more complexity, but the rules are great for group play and we've had up to seven players and 14 aircraft at once with no problems.

For this scenario we had a strike package of two A-4s along with two A-7s which have completed their bomb run and are returning back to their carrier. For simplicity's sake they would move at speed 4 each turn on a straight path unless attacked, then their maneuvers would be randomly determined. They were escorted by two F-4Bs (flown by Gary) which were flying Migcap in the area, armed with four AIM-9 Sidewinders and four AIM-7 Sparrows each. They were allowed to start anywhere on the board and they chose to be heading towards the strike package for the opposite direction.

The North Vietnamese Air Force consisted of two Mig-19s (flown by Mark) and two Mig-17s (flown by yours truly). The Migs have impressive cannon firepower, but the Mig-17s would probably only get one pass as their slow speed would be offset by the tremendous power of the F-4s. The Migs started on opposite sides of the board.

The battle began with the F-4s locking up the Mig-19s as they headed for the strike package. They became target (cont. on p.17)

Phantoms Replay



Mig-17s catch the F-4s closing in on the Mig-19s and do get at least one cannon attack that fails. Definitely a moral victory! These are F-4Bs from the early part of the Vietnam air war and thus they have only missiles for armament, which meant they could do little against the Migs in close proximity.



The F-4s try to head off the incoming Mig-19s from trying to close on the egressing strike package. By this time there were already two Mig-19s in flames and falling to the ground. The Mig-17s below are from Scotia and are painted in an unusual tan-gray with green splotches. Mig-17s featured a wide variety of camo schemes during the early part of the Vietnam air war.



Migcap Mission Over North Vietnam (cont.)

Phantoms Replay



(cont. from p.16) fixated, however, and the Mig-17s cut across their path and one got a cannon shot at an F-4. I immediately declared a moral victory and started figuring out how to get back into the game as the F-4s quickly left the Mig-17s behind.

The first AIM-7 fell off the rail and into the ground, but the second flew true and the first Mig-19 was blown apart. The second Mig-19 quickly followed the

first one into the ground, so a second pair of Mig-19s arrived on the scene. The aircraft merged just behind the strike package with one of the Mig-19s getting off a cannon shot at the F-4s, who did some nifty maneuvering to get into firing positions. Another Mig-19 fell to a snap shot with a Sparrow and finally, a Mig-17 was shot down when it didn't see the approaching missile and flew straight into it! Final score was USN-4 and the NVAF -0, so not a good day for the Communist

forces and a great night by Gary!

It was a fun and fast game that saw both Mark and I have atrocious die rolls for our cannon shots and defense rolls against the missile attacks. No Sidewinders were fired (rare in our games), but the Sparrows had a great night. The F-4s launched seven overall, with two falling into the ground on launch, but the remaining five all hit. Definitely a good night for the F-4s!



In the upper left image the strike package hurries across the board back to the carrier. In the upper right the F-4s move in against the Mig-19s, but since they have no cannon they need to either get behind the Migs for a Sidewinder shot or extend the range to get a radar lock for a Sparrow attack.

In the image to the left a fresh pair of Mig-19s arrives to pursue the fleeing strike package. The yellow ball marks the position of the sun on the board. This does affect sighting attempts and the lock on for early heatseekers, which were notorious for tracking the sun! The Mig-19s are the older Enola/Ros Heroics models which have not aged well. However, when I purchased them several years ago they were the only models available in this scale!

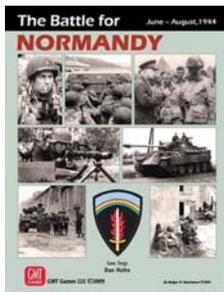
The Battle For Normandy by GMT

Game Review

Yes, I have a thing for monster games. It must have been those all night slug-a-thons of GDW's Third World War series, Playing Highway to the Reich, drooling over the ads in the old S&Ts for games like Atlantic Wall, or just that games with multiple maps and thousands of counters sounds like fun. I own several games about D-Day and the invasion, but nothing in the realm of what could be described as a monster game. I finally got a good deal on GMT's The Battle for Normandy and ordered it in.

First of all, the box is big and it is packed with a ton of stuff. You get five 22 x 34 maps, around 2500 (yes, 2500!) counters, a stack of charts and reference cards, plus the rules and a scenario book. The maps are very well done and you can clearly see all of the points of interest, the bocage areas, all of the side roads, towns, and more. The counters are well done as well, with the entry dates on the counters and they are color coded for division purposes which greatly aids in the set up. The five maps together is an awe inspiring sight, so the components get a high grade.

The rule book isn't the best one I've ever seen, but far from the worst. There is a lot to go over and it does a pretty good job. The basics of the game such as movement and combat are pretty easy to



understand, so most gamers will grasp those systems easily. However, being an operational game where most units are battalions, you have to expect some detail and it is there in a number of areas. For starters, there is an extensive supply system that needs to be read through twice, plus the artillery support rules need to be tried a few times so everyone understands what can support which battle. Add onto that an extensive air game, naval units, coastal artillery, engineering units, etc., and you have a pretty detailed simulation of the Normandy invasion.

The only thing about the rules or the game for that matter that I had problems with was the sections that cover the invasion itself. In fact, this is almost a game within a game and needs to be gone over a few times before you try it. Units are broken down into companies and then stacked in a series of hexes leading to the invasion beaches. No big deal, but this is the only time it's used in the game! Then, once they are ashore you put them back into their battalion sized units where possible. The invasion turn also uses a modified sequence of play and a twist to the standard combat system. Again, this is the only time it's used, so you feel as if you're forced to learn a second game just to get the Allied forces ashore. Also, there are no alternative landing sites, so players have that choice taken out of their hands. The system works, but while playing it I thought it probably could have been done a different way.

Once the Allies are on land, the game turns into a standard hex and counter type wargame which works well. Turns go by pretty fast, even with the vast numbers of units that begin showing up. The duels between the naval units and coastal artillery is one of the more interesting aspects of the game, plus the

players do get to choose how the remaining units will land, which can be crucial in the first few days. As with the real thing, weather plays a HUGE role in the game. A few turns of bad weather in the first week and it could be time to restart the game! The weather not only dictates air support, but naval support, glider reinforcements for the airborne troops, and how many units can be landed.

The scenario book covers the American landings, the campaign to take Cherbourg, the Cobra offensive, and the entire campaign. There was also an additional



scenario posted that covers the British landings and the first few days of the attack. The smaller scenarios are ideal to learn the system and this game is definitely designed for group play. There is an upcoming supplement that will expand the playable area with additional maps and counters for those who thought it wasn't big enough already!

Is this the ultimate Normandy game? The only other competitors are AH's The Longest Day and SPI's Atlantic Wall that will be reprinted soon and both of those were pretty involved affairs that bordered on being unplayable at times. Overall, this game is not only big and beautiful, but it is highly playable and if you get a chance to play it, you should take the offer.



Editorial: Rules Fatigue?

You can consider this an end to a “trilogy” of editorials regarding rules. In the first two parts over the last few years I’ve gone over the large number of rules that have been coming out and their effect on the hobby. I’ve also gone over how many gamers don’t even play the rules properly, either by misinterpreting things or not spending the time to properly set up the game. In this editorial, I’m going to go over a new phenomenon that I call “Rules Fatigue”.

Rules Fatigue is relatively new, although the plague has been slowly spreading for almost a decade. As with most plagues and viruses, they are usually unwittingly helped along by their victims, as is this one. Gamers by nature want to try new periods, start painting new scales of miniatures, buy new terrain, etc., and contribute greatly to this new plague. “Back in the day”, this wasn’t too much of a problem. Most of us played WW2, some Napoleonic, Ancients, etc., but we primarily used one set of rules, picked out a scale of miniatures, and got to gaming. Sure, new miniatures and terrain kept coming along, but they were just added to the same systems and life went merrily on its way. Everyone owned the rules (that didn’t always mean that they read them, however!), knew how to play, and things looked good.

With the hobby currently in its Golden Age, however, new rules sets are coming out faster and faster. Yes, I’ve gone over this in the past about what to choose, why they keep coming out, how can you possibly choose a set, etc., and many of you are probably mumbling that I need to move on.

But wait. What is this really doing to the hobby? Is it making it better? I necessarily don’t think so. I was in a local gaming store (we are blessed with a really, really good one in our area) playing a WMA game and in between turns I was looking at the book shelves. There was shelf after shelf of every kind of rule book imaginable. Flames of War, FOG, Warhammer, Republic to Empire, and on and on. Not just the rules, but the supplements as well. I pulled a few out and asked if anyone knew anybody who played some of them. The answers rang-

es from they weren’t sure to maybe one or two guys. You don’t need to be a statistic major to do the math on this. Basically, there’s a few gamers in each state playing some of these sets of rules. That’s not many. Now multiply that by how many different rules sets there are and now you have thousands of gamers playing one period with 50+ sets of rules! No wonder no one can agree on anything!

This same night I heard someone say that they weren’t interested in trying a new set of rules that someone was quite pleased with as they didn’t want to get involved in anything else beyond the two dozen things they were already playing! Not only that, but gamers are playing so many rules that they can’t remember the rules to the game they’re currently playing!

This has happened several times in our own group over the last year. Granted, we play about twenty periods, and some of our members play games in the club and at the local store, so that makes it hard already. I can’t even count the various times that we’ll be searching for a rule that we’re sure is in the book somewhere or add modifiers to a die roll that don’t exist on a chart that we’re using. In one recent AOR game where we hadn’t played in awhile, it took us several turns to get back into it. There were even a few of us saying afterwards that we needed to go back and read the rules again to make sure that we were playing properly.

Is it old age? Many of us are in our forties and fifties, so it could be. Is it disinterest? Probably not as we made the effort to set the game up, paint the figs, etc. Is it just that we’re tired of learning so many new rules that we can’t remember the old ones? Yes, now we’re on to something here. I recently read on some blogs where two different clubs shut down starting a new period because no one could agree on which rules to use! There are so many and they’re so shiny that they must be good, so everyone buys them. Some gamers try them, some give it up, some move on to something else they like, but a few stick with it. All of sudden you have eight people in your club who want to use eight different sets of rules to play Napoleonic! Then, if you can get half of them to agree and

actually play a game, it takes much longer to play as only person really knows the rules while the others confuse things by trying to use rules they’ve learned from other games!

I think this is where Rules Fatigue sets in. In the blogs I mentioned earlier they just gave up trying to even start a new period. A few guys tried to get me interested in a new set of rules and true, the rules looked interesting, but I determined that no, I couldn’t start on those. I’m already having problems trying to keep the rules for 15 different games we play straight now! I’ve watched others at the store pick up rules and ask fellow gamers if there’s any interest and most shake their head no.

A long time ago I could take a set of rules to my club, show them off, we would talk about it, and by the end of the night we were generating orders for figures. The conversation would continue the next day at the local store, then during phone calls or lunch during the week. Other gamers would order in the rules and the period would take off. This is how we got such large collections for several periods. No more. If I brought in a new set of rules today a few would look at them and probably say that they were happy with other sets, no thanks, they don’t like the scale, there aren’t enough pretty pictures, etc. Basically, everyone is tired and burned out on seeing new rules.

So, what does this have to bode for the hobby? Hard to say at this point. Look at the last batch of Ancient Rules that came out over the spring/summer with Hail Caesar, Clash of Empires, WAB2, etc. After the initial flurry of activity when they first came out you don’t see too many threads about them now and if you see one, there’s not a lot of answers or comments. After all, it’s hard having a conversation about how to use Romans in Hail Caesar if the only people seeing the thread when it’s posted play Clash of Empires or WAB2.

Is there a cure for Rules Fatigue? Where is this going? I’m not sure on both, but the next few years in the hobby could be very interesting in how new rules gain traction.

Desert Encounter

We had not used our Egyptian and Assyrian armies for Warmaster Ancients in quite some time. They were the first armies we played the game with and as everyone continued to build new forces we just naturally turned to using those over the last few years. I also think that since we do a lot of 3-6 player games with WMA we usually go for armies around 2,000 points. Since we only have about 1500 points of the Biblical forces we tend to choose what we think are the bigger armies so that everyone gets to play with plenty of units. The thing that we forget, however, is that most of the units in the Biblical era of the WMA lists are very cheap, so 1500 points can buy a lot of stuff!

The Egyptians went with an infantry heavy force, mixing archers, regular infantry, marines, and some Sherden into several good sized brigades. There were four units of light chariots mixed in as well along with several commanders. The Egyptian plan was to offset the Assyrian armor and staying power by simply swamping them in numbers!

The Assyrians were led by two units of heavy chariots and two units of cavalry. There were a few brigades of armored infantry along with a few archer units. While both sides deployed some skirmishers, the main battle was going to come down to the infantry and who had more staying power.

The Egyptian plan was to simply skirmish on the flanks until the chariots

could see some openings and start picking off isolated Assyrian units by using their superior mobility. In the center the Egyptian archers would keep the enemy occupied and the infantry brigades would use their superior numbers to overwhelm any threat.

For the Assyrians it was also a simple strategy. Close into melee wherever possible and use their armor saves to wade through the mass of unarmored Egyptian infantry. The heavy chariots could blast holes in the enemy battle line which would open the way for the armored infantry to follow up and finish off the Egyptians. With both sides deployed the battle got underway.

The Egyptians did pretty well on their first several command attempts and moved out quickly. The chariots on the left flank pulled off several consecutive orders and were halfway across the battlefield on the first turn! The Assyrians, however, had command problems from the beginning. Their forces moved up in an irregular fashion, creating traffic jams for the heavy chariots and allowing the Egyptians to get their deployment set in the middle of the board. The only area

WMA Battle Report



that the Egyptians had problems was on the right flank, but even then they were able to form a solid battle line of infantry and archers with chariots in support.

The first Egyptian attacks went in against the Assyrian cavalry guarding the flank. After several charges, skirmish fire, etc., the Assyrian cavalry were spent and infantry units had to be pulled out of the main line to shore up the Assyrian right. The Egyptians continued to attack, charging the chariots into the Assyrian archers and infantry, trying to cause as many casualties as possible in order to force a withdrawal. The Assyrians counterattacked in several areas, causing severe casualties to the Egyptian chariots and units on that flank. After a few turns the action died out as both sides were in





no shape to continue the fight. The action now turned to the center and the opposite flank where the battle would be decided.

The Egyptian chariots and Philistines on the Egyptian right now got into action with a series of charges and counter-charges. Both sides gave little ground and in the end it turned out to be a replay of the Egyptian left, with units on both sides shattered and action grinding to a halt as neither side had the strength to continue the melees.

In the center the Assyrian heavy chariots finally came into action, obliterating the first few Egyptian units that they came upon. The Egyptian center buckled, then surged forward, continually

attacking the heavy chariots and eventually destroyed one unit of them. The Assyrians continued to apply pressure and then the Egyptian command rolls started to fail. There were several chances for the Egyptians to use fresh troops to stem the tide, but they could not get them to the front lines.

The Egyptians continued to focus on the flanks where they had some success, but most of the units were down a stand and continued offensive operations looked doubtful. That left the center and clearly the Assyrians were pounding away at the Egyptian infantry. Another surge late in the game put the Egyptians near the breaking point. The Egyptians counterattacked again, but came up short.

The Assyrians launched one more coordinated attack in the center and that was the one that decided the game. The Egyptians had committed all of their reserves and when the heavy chariots broke through, several already damaged units got caught in the slaughter, which pushed the Egyptians over their break point and they were forced to withdraw.

Another closely fought WMA game as they almost always come down to the final turn or two. I think we've played WMA about fifty times and I've only seen a few blowouts. The Biblical era armies are pretty well balanced as the Assyrians have fewer units, but their armor and striking power more than makes up for any shortcomings in numbers.



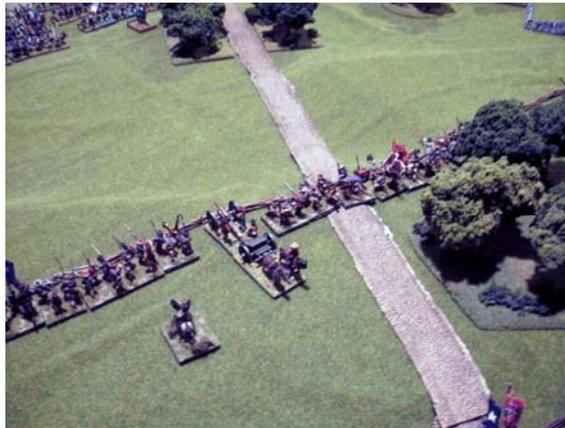
Union Frontal Assault

Fire & Fury Battle Report

I'm sure that I've mentioned this before, but we do all of our American Civil War gaming using the Fire & Fury rules. Although most of us grew up with the various incarnations of Johnny Reb and still think it's a great system, our current gaming situation dictates that we need something that will give us a good, fun game in around four hours and we can't leave it up. Fire & Fury meets that need and since the same system (or base system) is used for two other sets of rules we like, Age of Eagles and Battles For Empire, it makes remembering things a bit easier!

As per our usual pattern, we needed a last minute game and because of limited playing area for this night along with a smaller number of gamers, we went with Fire & Fury ACW. Problems arose when we remembered that one of the guys who couldn't make it had most of the CSA forces! I had been increasing my forces steadily over the last few months with the new Blue Moon figs, but this would severely limit the scenario. So, after analyzing what we had this is what we ended up with.

The scenario would be a Union attack during the 1864-5 period. The Confederate forces are well positioned on a hill blocking a major road with several units behind breastworks. The Confederate forces were allowed to deploy anywhere up to half the board and in any formation, with six infantry brigades, two artillery batteries, and two brigades of cavalry. They decided to have three brigades in line behind the breastworks on the hill,



then have two brigades in column as reserves. The sixth infantry brigade was deployed in a double line to guard the left flank of the CSA force. There were only two artillery batteries and they were positioned on the hill to cover the expected approach of the Union attack. Finally, the cavalry brigades were posted to protect the CSA right.

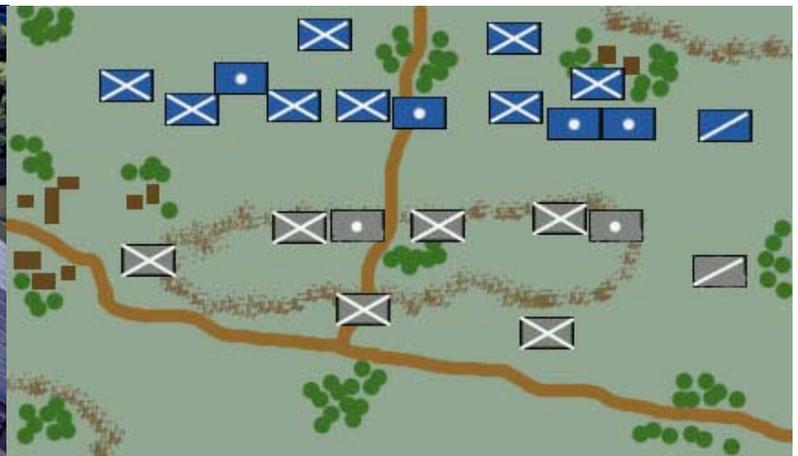
The Union forces consisted of eight infantry brigades, two cavalry brigades, and four artillery batteries. The Union side posted the cavalry brigades on the left flank, then spread the artillery along the front to provide support for the infantry assault on the hill. The eight infantry brigades would advance along a wide front, but because of the terrain restrictions there would need to be a frontal assault on the hill at some point. With only limited room on

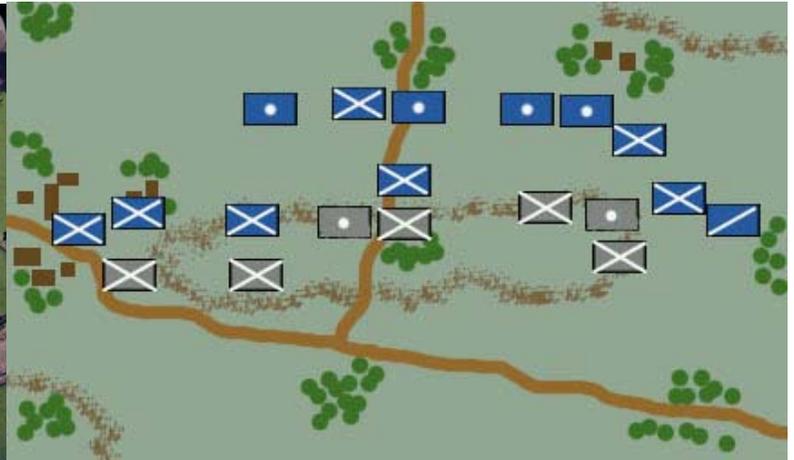
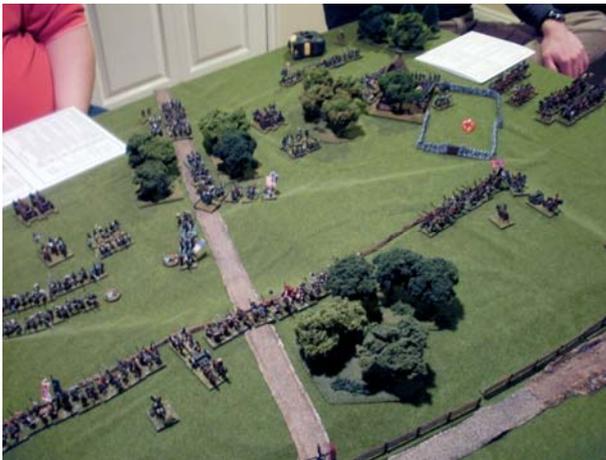
the flanks due to table size, only one or two brigades could probably attack a flank. The Union plan was to overwhelm the defenders at least at one point of the defenses, then pour in any reserves to ensure the victory.

The game started out with the CSA cavalry charging the Union cavalry and winning the first clash while the Union infantry came on board and started to deploy. The CSA artillery scored some success at the approaching columns, forcing them to quickly go into line. The Union cavalry counterattacked and forced the CSA cavalry back. Another salvo from the artillery sent one Union brigade reeling back from the front while the others surged forward.



The next action put the CSA in an awkward position when one Union brigade braved the fire from the hill and charged home, forcing the CSA brigade on that flank back. The attack momentarily tore a hole in the (cont. on p. 23)





(cont. from p.22) defenses. The CSA brigade that withdrew rallied, then went back into the fight. After a brief firefight they charged home and drove the Union brigade down the hill and crashed into another Union brigade moving up, shattering it as well.

Meanwhile, on the other flank the Union cavalry had prevailed in a series of charges and countercharges. The remaining CSA cavalry fell back out of the combat area or simply dispersed. This now meant that the entire right flank was wide open. One of the two CSA reserve bri-

gades now moved up and positioned itself to cover the flank. The Union artillery, however, by this time had inflicted serious damage to the CSA brigades still on the hill, putting the entire Confederate force in a precarious position.

Back to the center where a second charge by the Union against a weakened CSA center caught the brigade holding the line in the act of pulling back and the final reserve brigade moving up to fill the hole. The brigade held for awhile, but then a second charge knocked it back.

On the CSA left, things were not

looking good as well. One infantry brigade had been involved in a firefight with a Union brigade for several turns, but neither side had done much damage to the other. However, a second Union brigade was moving through the town and would soon outflank the position, which forced the CSA brigade to reposition itself.

At this time things were not looking good at all for the Confederate forces. The cavalry had fled, two infantry brigades were chewed up and not combat effective, plus all the reserves had been used up. Forces were shuffled around, but the line was thinning and due to break at any moment.

That moment occurred when the Union artillery, which was having a great day, caused more damage to the CSA infantry on the hill. One brigade fell back, opening a hole where the Union infantry began to move into. One more turn and the Confederate side decided to call it quits and withdraw, leaving the field to the triumphant Union forces.

A pretty fun and fast (around three hours) game that was closer than it appeared. The Union suffered some serious losses, especially from the infantry trying to frontal assault the hill. The hero of the day was the Union artillery, which killed off at least ten stands of CSA infantry in just a few turns, softening up the defenses. We're looking into trying a F&F campaign at some point and it does show that these rules have aged well as we still regularly play them.





WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meets every other Friday night in the SLC, Utah area. We play a wide variety of games in 1/300th, 10mm, 15mm, and 25mm, including Age of Reason, Age of Discovery, Age of Eagles, Fire & Fury, General de Brigade, Warmaster Ancients, TSATF, Phantoms, Mustangs, BKC2, and more...

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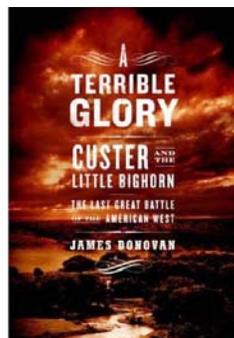
One of the things that has been really annoying of late is the practice of launching a “review” thread on various gaming forums, then posting a “first impressions” of the game or rules. Just so everyone understands, a review of a board wargame or set of rules means that you ACTUALLY PLAYED THE GAME! I’m not interested in an initial impressions approach or how someone thinks the game will play. I can go to several web sites and usually see the components for myself. What I want to know is how long does the game take, are the rules simple/complex in execution, are there new game systems in the rules, or how did everyone react to trying the new game? Instead, we get someone describing how they think the game will play, what they think may be the optimal number of figs, how they think the combat system will work out, etc. How about actually PLAYING THE GAME! I do a ton of reviews for this magazine and although it’s tough to play every single scenario for some of them (i.e., Combat Commander, Fighting Formations, etc.), at least I’ve set up a few games, read through the rules, and at least played them a few times so that I can get a good impression of the rules. Have we sunk to the point where our expectations are so low that we accept these kinds of things? Are there so many rules out there now that gamers feel that if they don’t get a fan boy movement started early that support for the rules will collapse or that they will be forgotten? My advice is to take the necessary time to learn the game, set up a scenario, then play it through. You’ll be doing a better service to other gamers by giving them a more in depth opinion.

A Terrible Glory: Custer and the Little Bighorn Book Review

There have been many books, both pro and con, about the disaster that General Custer faced at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. In a new book, author James Donovan not only chronicles the battle itself, but he also goes into a history of the wars on the Plains and the aftermath of the famous battle.

The book begins with a look at the various Indian tribes, the treaties, political intrigue, and the great expansion to the West as the author sets up the situation. The various players in the disaster, from Grant to Sherman, Custer, Reno, Terry, and a cast of hundreds, are vividly depicted. The goals, ambitions, and failings of the various participants are described in a judicious matter, letting the reader decide for themselves the various motivations for the military expedition.

Another great thing about this book



is that it takes some time to describe some of the previous actions on the Plains, the state of the army, and how the scouts worked with the U.S. Cavalry. There is great detail given about the nature of Indian fighting, previous expeditions, and more, setting the stage for one of the great military disasters of all time.

When the battle finally comes, it is described in a blow by blow account. From the first attack to being overwhelmed by sheer numbers, every aspect of the battle is told from the point of view of those who survived. The maps help to track the various stages of the fight and the increasing confusion that seemed to engulf Custer and his officers that day. You can sense the complete breakdown of the chain of command, the orders that were sent out, but either never arrived or weren’t acted upon, and several interesting “last stand” actions.

The author, however, does not stop with the battle, but then delves into the fascinating aftermath. The retreat from the area of operations, how the news arrived throughout the country, and what happened to some of the survivors, both Cavalry and Indians. The book describes the various articles, condemnations, and finger pointing that engulfed the entire U.S. Army and the Grant administration. From there you had books, a court of inquiry, and many more accusations and defense of the many participants. Finally, there is a section that describes the follow up operations that saw the end of the wars on the Plains and the great Indian nations.

Overall, it was a very good book on a highly overlooked topic. I found it interesting in that I had just read a book about the final week of the Civil War and many of the officers in that book were also present in this one. After a decade it was fascinating to see how things had changed and it all conspired for an epic disaster that is described perfectly here.