

WFHGS

Warning Order

ISSUE #55

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WMA

RE-VISITING DBA

BKC IV BATTLES

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Warning Order

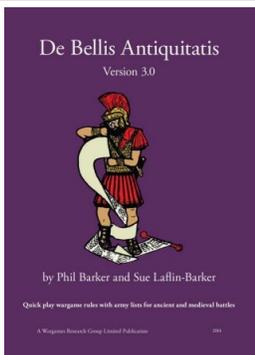
W F H G S

Re-visiting DBA

I remember back in the day when DBA came out. Although my gaming group and I did not play a lot of ancients, we did follow many of the articles on the period in *The Courier and Miniature Wargames*, among others. No one really knew what to make of it, and reading the rules was an exercise in frustration. However, the rules survived the initial skepticism and are still played by thousands of gamers today.

Despite the overly English prose and sentences structured to defeat rules lawyers, the core concepts are quite simple. Field an army of twelve “elements”, which includes a general, from the various army lists. Go through a fairly elaborate set up phase, then fight the battle. First person who loses four elements also loses the battle. From set up to end of game is probably 45 minutes to an hour, making it perfect for tournaments, club nights, an introduction to gaming, etc.

After the rules had been out for a year or so, the miniature companies got into the act. All of a sudden there were ads for DBA boxed armies, op-



tions for the armies, terrain, and more. Not surprisingly, more and more people began to play the rules. A lot of this had to do with the time period that the rules

came out in. If they had come out in today’s hobby environment I doubt they would be played by more than a hundred gamers across the globe.

Instead, they came out at the right time, which was 1990-91. By this time ancients gamers were looking for something new. WRG 6th and for all intensive purposes, 7th, had run their course. Tired of arguments about how many factors per figure in certain combat situations applied to differ-

ent frontages and so on had worn down ancients gamers. There were no good alternatives with *Shock of Impact*, *Newbury Fast Play*, *Ancient Empires*, and so forth, so gamers were looking for something new.

That’s not to say everyone loved DBA. Many would continue to play WRG 7th, some clung on to WRG 6th, others moved to DBM and finally when *Warhammer Ancients* came out many found a home there. However, DBA did take hold in the hobby and there were a lot of players, with many still hanging in there with the rules today. DBA has continued to evolve over the last 30 years and finally saw its 3rd edition recently published.

With all of that being said, its now time for a short review and how our group got into it. (cont, p3)



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Special points of interest:

- *Fire & Fury ACW, WMA, AOE, and two BKC IV battle reports.*
- *Two new Engagements scenarios.*
- *Reviews of two new SCS games: Iron Curtain and Rostov '41.*
- *How the BKC IV winter on the Eastern Front came to fruition.*

If you're a regular reader of this magazine then you know that we really like Blitzkrieg Commander and have been using the 4th edition for some time now. While many in the group have other sets of WW2 rules this is the one set where everyone knows how to play, there's no 15-30 minutes of instruction needed, is fun to play, and you can complete a good sized game with multiple players in 3-4 hours. We had not used the U.S. forces in quite some time, so the scenario was set up for a U.S.-German confrontation somewhere in France in the fall of 1944.

I had been perusing some old issues of Wargamer's Digest, remembering that they had a series of scenarios called Battle Stations. While they were designed for their "Series 78" rules (a little similar to the first version of Command Decision in terms of units) they usually translate well towards BKC IV. The big issue with the scenarios is that they really never took quality, training, or defensive positions into consideration so it wasn't uncommon to see as many PZIVHs defending a board as there were attacking Shermans!

With a scenario picked out I showed up at game night thinking this was going to be easy. Nope. I forgot that our U.S. forces didn't have any painted M-10s yet. On top of that, reading through the "special rules" it looked like the U.S. had way, way, way, too much artillery.



Things would need to be changed. We gave the U.S. side more armor, cut back some of the off table assets, and beefed up the German defenses just a bit. Here was the order of battle for both sides:

Germans

- PZ V company (3 + command)
- PZIVH company (3 + command)
- Stug IIIH company (3 + command)
- Panzergranadier battalion (-)

- Infantry (6)
- HMG (1)
- Mortars (1)
- 75mm AT gun (1)
- Sdkfz 251/1 (9)
- (1) battery of 105mm in direct support w/FAO

U.S.

Remnant

- Sherman 75mm (3)
- M-8 (2)

Armor battalion

- Sherman 75mm (9)
- Sherman 76mm (3)

- M-5 Stuarts (3)

Mech Infantry Battalion

- Infantry (9)
- Trucks (9)
- 57mm AT battery + trucks (3)
- Shermans 105mm (3)
- (1) battery 105mm in direct support and (1) battery of 155mm with (10) scheduled missions and (1) FAO.
- (2) P-47 flight

The scenario was pretty simple, namely part of another U.S. regiment had run into heavy fire from a village and was pinned down (the Remnant command). CCA from another American armored division in the area was tasked with breaking through the defenses, then probing towards the end of the board and exiting as many units as possible. Balancing out BKC IV scenarios is always a problem and here it was no different. The U.S. side looked like it had more than enough to do the job, but could they?

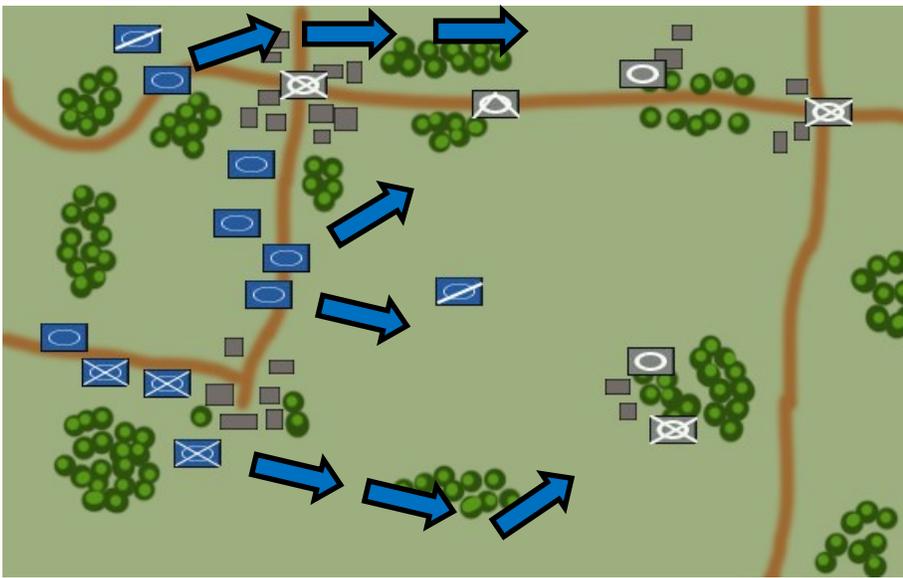
The Germans set their defenses first and we were going to allow full hidden movement to see how that worked. The Germans didn't have a lot of units and there wasn't a lot of non-obvious places to hide, so we figured it wouldn't take too much overhead. After a brief discussion the Germans had their positions marked, we went over the unit stats, objectives, etc., and we were ready to begin.



The U.S. left flank ran into the panzergranadier company defending the village, causing the armor to deploy so they could start shelling the enemy positions. Not wanting to get too close as the U.S. players weren't sure what they were up against, so they sat outside the village and kept up a steady fire. Even with us using the optional rules where all units keep their hits from turn to turn (we REALLY like this rule and use it all the time now), it was going to take some time to clear the village.

On the other side the U.S. mech infantry battalion approached the other village slowly. They ended up dismounting and moving up to the edge of it, only to find the village unoccupied! (cont. on p5)





(cont. from p4) Surely there was some clever German strategy going on here that the U.S. players were unaware of. The infantry secured the village and looked around for their next objective.

in the end two M-5s were on fire and all three German Stugs were knocked out. The Germans were on the verge of panic while the U.S. side was elated. However, this was the calm before the storm.

Things really got going when the M-5 company broke out into the open to draw fire from the hidden Germans and succeeded! The Stug company on the German right flank opened fire and rolled horrible, scoring 3 hits out of 15 dice and the M-5s saved one of those hits! Now the fight was on. The Shermans broke off from shelling the village, leaving the Remnant command to deal with that, and piled into the center to fire at the Stugs. The tank duel went on for three turns, but

Flush with victory and probably without thinking things out clearly, the U.S. armor decided to force the issue and since they were already in the open, press their luck and forge ahead. Unfortunately for them, this is just what the German players were waiting for. The Panther company, with two Panthers in the tree lining the road and one Panther guarding the flank, opened fire to devastating effect. This set off a multi-turn engagement which saw an airstrike, artillery, tank (cont. on p6)



Four more images showing the unfolding action. The Panthers were in an almost perfect position, protecting the center as well as the German right flank. Their powerful gun coupled with their save/hits enabled them to stay in the battle for quite a few turns, which was the deciding factor.



(cont. from p5) duels, and more. When the dust cleared. The two Panthers along the road were knocked out while at least 6 Shermans and the last M-5 were on fire as well.

The remaining Shermans in the middle decided it was time to move around to their right and take their chances in getting past the German defenses. Unfortunately for them, that's where the PZIVH company was waiting, which opened a deadly fire upon the Shermans. The U.S. mech infantry, who had a number of bad command rolls all game, finally started to move towards the farm area where the PZIVHs were hiding out. They unlimbered the 57mm AT guns and a firefight ensued.

On the U.S. left a company of Shermans backed by a Sherman 76mm by-

passed the village and moved to engage the Panthers, knocking out the one guarding that flank. All of a sudden, the path to the road exit was open and victory, despite the huge amount of casualties, might be at hand for the U.S. side! However, the panzergrenadiers in the village, sick of being shelled on two sides for most of the game, counterattacked! They knocked out one Sherman and damaged two more.

By this point 75% of the Shermans were on fire. The Germans still had a company or two in reserve, and the U.S. force had reached their break point. The U.S. side was forced to withdraw and the game ended in a German victory.

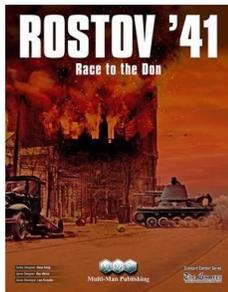
Using hidden placement, the Germans were able to execute a perfect L shaped ambush, despite losing all the Stugs

quickly. The German players were patient, even when at least one of them wanted to counterattack immediately! This led to the U.S. forces getting way too far out ahead of themselves and subject to fire from two directions in the open.

In retrospect, the U.S. side had a few handicaps with the terrain, German hidden start, and no tank destroyers, so if you or your group is planning to replay this scenario, you may want to reevaluate the starting forces. Still, everyone had a lot of fun and the scenario was pretty challenging for both sides. A few die rolls here or there could have been the difference. We really do like the optional rule for keeping hits through the game and we certainly need to use the break point rules more often. Next time it's back to the Eastern Front!



I may have mentioned this before, but I've had a love-hate relationship with the SCS (Standard Combat Series) of games for quite some time. Originally produced by The Gamers, the line was taken over and expanded by MMP (Multi-Man Publishing). There are just over 20 games in the series and at least to me they are hit and miss. Yom Kippur and Heights of Courage, while not the most historical games, are fun to play. Mighty Endeavor is a great D-Day type game and Stalingrad Pocket II is a fun mini-monster, but others, namely Panzer Battles, Guadalajara, and some others just aren't that great.



games. Finally, there is the series rules and a set of exclusive rules which contains the setup info for the scenarios.

Again, the components are about what you would expect for a SCS game. I was a bit disappointed that there weren't any control markers included as well as a victory point track, which easily could have been added and would have helped out tremendously. While I keep going back to the fact that this is bare bones type of game, there could be improvements with little effort.

For those unfamiliar with SCS games, they are a throw back to the old Avalon Hill-SPI days. Locking ZOCs, simple supply line rules, odds based combat tables, etc. You can read through the series rules in 15 minutes and then the special rules in the booklet for that particular game in another 5. What usually slows you down with SCS games is the set up, but here the Germans set up pretty fast while the Russians do not. There's nothing here really complex and what you are left with is a simple, straightforward East Front wargame.

As with most SCS games, the components are just the bare necessities to get the game going. The map, done in a style traced back to The Gamers days, is functional, but it won't win any awards. Why this style continues to persist is anyone's guess, other than maybe all of the other games are like this so it needs to stay the same. In my opinion, however, there needs to be a serious undertaking to bringing the maps in this series up to today's standards.

The counters are again the standard SCS format, but at least the German units are color coded to ease set up. The Russian counters have no color coding or turn numbers for reinforcements, so if you go with the historical set up it's going to take longer than it probably should. There are also almost as many markers as there are combat units! My guess is that the counter sheet had to be filled with something as there aren't as many combat units here as there are in most SCS

The sequence of play is pretty easy to figure out, which is usually move, barrage, exploitation move. The Germans do get one additional barrage phase, but other than that the turns are going to go by pretty fast, especially with as few units are on the board the first few turns. The one thing that is unusual is that at the start of the turn each side rolls a die and the high die gets to go first that turn. It also determines how many air units the winning side gets that turn, which can be used to barrage enemy hexes. Definitely random and although it adds an element of uncertainty, it can create some wild swings of fortune in the game.

The game covers the German drive on Rostov towards the end of 1941. The Germans start with some powerful mechanized formations while the Russians are scattered. However, that combat

power is fleeting as when the mud and freezes start the mech units slow down and are at only half their printed strength. These means that on clear turns the Germans must go all out, which a lot of gamers aren't used to doing. As more and more Russian units arrive the German task definitely gets harder, especially since the victory point hexes are spread all over the map!

The one "gamey" element is the barrage system. Each artillery unit chooses a target and rolls 1D6. If the number is lower than it's barrage number (same for airstrikes) then that unit or units in the target hex have a DG marker placed on them (half strength, no ZOC, etc.). If it's 2 less than the barrage number then a unit loses one step. The issue is that most Russian units are only one step and you can't lose the last step to a barrage result while most German units are two steps

and so they lose a step when this happens! Weird. Also, Russian infantry units have a 50/50 chance of returning when they are eliminated.

So, in the end what you have is a freewheeling, wild, swirling

battle with a lot of randomness in terms of who goes first, how many airstrikes they get, weather, barrages, and eliminated units that may or may not return. Some gamers are going to like this and some aren't. There are several smaller scenarios of only a few turns each and the full campaign, which is 14 turns. The game plays pretty fast, despite the randomness of some of the game systems. Also, taking Rostov is tough and will require some luck, unlike during the actual campaign.

This is a hard game to rate. Simple, plays fast, and I had literally no questions about the rules or game play. There are multiple paths to victory and all kinds of strategies that can be tried out. The randomness of certain parts of the game, coupled with the usual SCS combat results table, can create some weird situations. For the money it's probably a game that should get a few plays. With just a bit more effort it could have been an instant classic.



Engagements 37: Reinforcing A Position

Situation: Blue has surrounded a heavily fortified position held by Red. Blue does not have the strength to take the position, so is attempting to surround it and cut off all supplies, which would force a surrender. For the time being, Red is attempting to infiltrate units and supplies into the surrounded position so that it can hold on until Red starts a relief operation in a few weeks.

Period: Designed primarily for the Modern/WW2 era, but could work with other periods with some adjustments.

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

Terrain Notes: The river is fairly deep and can only be crossed at the bridges, which Red still controls. The river can also be crossed in an engineering operation as described below. The hills are gently sloped and the wooded areas should be treated as light woods for this scenario.

Scale: Can be used with any rules and any scale.

Red Forces: Red's forces consist of the units that enter the South edge of the board on Turn 1.

Enter Turn 1:

3 units of armor

3 units of mech infantry

6 units of infantry

1 recon unit

1 unit of AT guns/ATGMs

10 supply trucks

1 battery of heavy artillery (off board)

Set Up: Red's starting forces can be deployed in any formation and enter at the two Red arrows on the lower part of the map. Red can also construct a pontoon bridge anywhere along the river that can cross two units per turn. Red can deploy forces ready to cross the pontoon bridge on turn 1.

Red Orders: Cross the river and try to get as many units and trucks to exit the roads at A and B. Use forces to block or delay Blue from shifting forces to your main line of advance.

Blue Forces: Blue is spread thin trying to cut off all access points to Red's fortified position, which is just off board at A

and B. In this sector Blue has the following forces:

2 units of armor

2 units of mech infantry

4 units of infantry

1 unit of AT guns/ATGMs

1 unit of medium mortars

1 battery of medium artillery (off board)

Blue Orders: Block any attempt by Red to move units and supplies across the river and then to exits A and B. Use your mobile units to intercept Red's main line of advance.

Set Up: Blue must set up all of their units north of the blue line on the map. There are special rules for the infantry which are below.

Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules: Blue's four units of infantry are in static positions and cannot move during the game. These positions can be classed as improved positions (foxholes, pits for mortars, etc.) in the rules that you are using. Once placed, these four units may not move.

Victory Conditions: At the end of the 12 turns Red is awarded a number of points for units and trucks that exit the board at A and B as follows:

Armor units-2 points each

All other units-1 point each

Trucks-3 points each

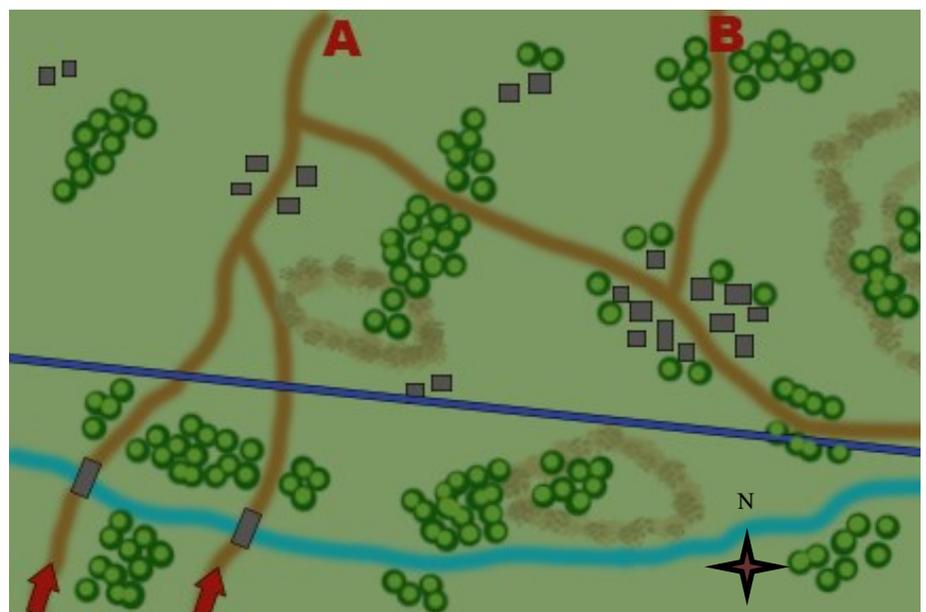
For a unit to qualify for the points award, it must be at least 50% or greater of its original strength. Two of the same unit can combine their strengths to qualify for points.

Roll 2D20. This is the number of days until Red launches their relief operation. If Red has scored more points than the number of days, Red wins. If not, then Blue wins.

Ex., Red is able to get one armor unit, one mech unit, three infantry, and five supply trucks off the board by the end of the game, giving Red 21 points. Blue rolls 2D20, rolling a 13 and a 10. Red will launch their relief operation in 23 days, but since Red only scored 21 points they lose.

Variants: The first option would be to increase the size of the board and double the forces involved, which would make for a pretty good sized group game. You could also experiment with the composition of the forces and the length of the game, depending upon how far units move in your rules. Air units and air defenses could also easily be added.

You can also experiment with the points awarded system to reflect emphasis on what would be more important to Red. Maybe the position is overstocked with supplies, but needs more infantry to hold the lines, or they are desperately short of artillery shells.



Engagements 38: Dominating Position

Situation: Red has surprised Blue and has captured an important bridge over a major river. The bridge was wired for demolition, but was only damaged when Blue attempted to destroy it. Red has moved some units across the bridge and has a foothold on the other side, with more units coming into support. However, Blue has a commanding position on a hilltop which allows good fields of fire against any unit trying to maneuver in the area. Red needs to attack and take this position so that follow on forces can move across the bridge to continue the offensive in this sector.

Period: Designed primarily for the Modern/WW2 era, but could work with any Horse & Musket era as well.

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

Terrain Notes: The river can only be crossed at the bridge and wherever Red lays down their pontoon bridge. The woods are considered light, but offer concealment and defensive benefits. The town at B is in ruins due to prolonged combat and bombardment, so the rules should reflect movement penalties and cover. The village at C overlooks the entire board and should be considered a heavily fortified position.

Scale: Can be used with any rules and any scale.

Red Forces: Red's forces consist of the units that enter the South edge of the board on Turn 1.

At Start in B on N side of the River:

2 units of infantry
1 AT/ATGM unit

Enter Turn 1 on South Edge:

8 units of infantry
3 units of armor
1 engineer unit w/1 pontoon bridge
1 unit with medium mortars
2 batteries of medium artillery (off board)

Set Up: Part of Red's forces begin on the north side of the river in the ruins of B. The remaining forces will enter anywhere along the south edge of the board on Turn 1.

Red Orders: Drive out any Blue forces still in B, then prepare to advance to at-

tack Blue's position at C. Place your pontoon bridge to allow more forces to cross each turn to aid with the attack.

Blue Forces: Blue has been caught off guard by Red's sudden seizure of the bridge. Until more forces can be brought up for a counterattack, Red must be prevented from expanding their bridgehead. Key to this is the position at C. As long as that is under Blue's control forces crossing the river will take losses from Blue's units in that position.

At C:

2 infantry units
1 MG unit
1 Heavy AT/ATGM unit
1 unit of medium mortars
1 battery of heavy artillery (off board)

At B:

2 units of infantry

Mobile Reserve:

2 units of infantry
1 unit of armor

Blue Orders: Hold onto the positions at B for as long as possible. Use the mobile reserve to react to any other crossing along the river or if Red breaks out of the bridgehead. Defend C with the units that start there as well as any defenders who can fall back to that location.

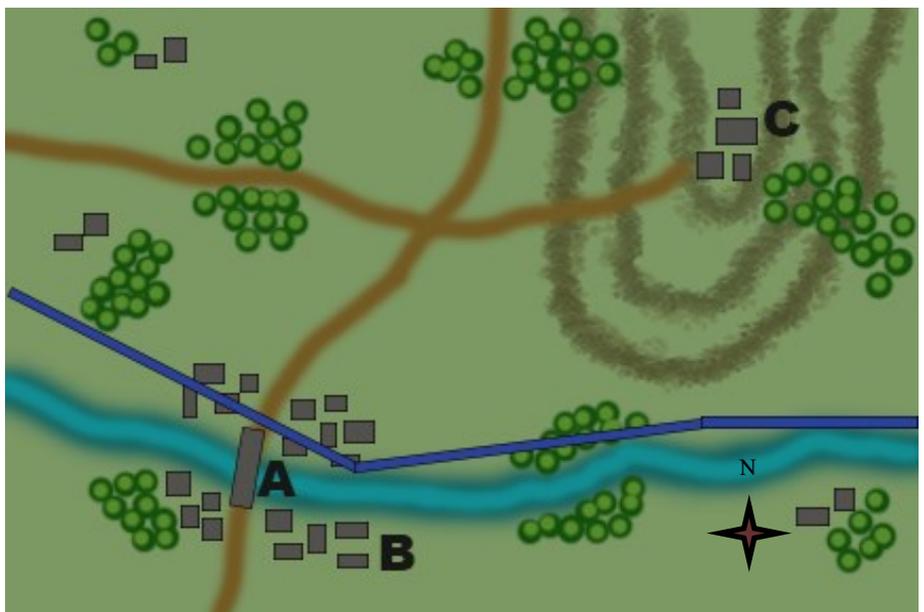
Set Up: Blue's units at B are set up in the ruins at least 4-6 inches from any of Red's starting units that have crossed the river. The Mobile Reserve units can be set up anywhere north of the blue line on the map. Units at C must be set up within 12 inches of the village.

Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules: Blue's units at C can be in improved positions at the start of the game. Only one Red unit can cross the bridge at A per turn (stresses the importance of getting the pontoon bridge emplaced). Additional units can attempt to cross the bridge each turn, but on a D6 roll of a 6 the bridge collapses. Each additional unit adds +2, so the first unit of each turn can cross without rolling, a second unit would need a 6 to destroy the bridge and a third unit would need a 4, 5, or 6 and so on.

Victory Conditions: Red needs to occupy C by the end of the scenario to win the game. Anything else is a Blue victory.

Variants: Extend the scenario length and add forces to both sides for a longer, more involved battle. Red could also be allowed airstrikes to soften up Blue's position at C for the main attack. Both sides could get additional artillery assets, with perhaps a roll for availability to simulate corps level artillery. Blue could be allowed to add several minefields to channel Red's attack. Red could also start with the pontoon bridge in place.



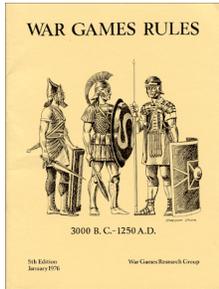
Memoirs of a Miniatures and Board Wargamer Pt. 42

The WRG Years

Any history of miniatures wargaming will no doubt have an entire chapter about WRG, or Wargames Research Group. In the 70s and 80s, WRG was for all intensive purposes the de facto rules for whatever period you and your gaming group were playing. That's not saying that everyone liked them, or they were the preferred rules, but they were readily available and you could find opponents almost anywhere. Most wargaming magazines had ads for their rules, there were numerous articles on choosing the right army list, and plenty of discussion on them in the letters sections.

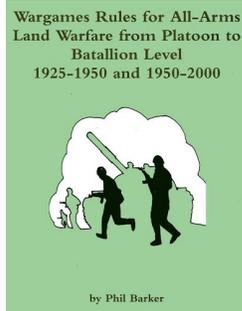
My first experience with WRG rules was when I got into the hobby back in 1976. There were several players who had ancient armies and I sat in on many of the games. This was the era of arguing about how many factors were in contact, how would Greek units of the period do certain things, the points in the army lists, and so on. The average game was an 8 hour affair, with half of the time spent arguing over the rules! Not only were the rules dense, but they were widely subject to local interpretation. Couple that with all of the *Armies & Enemies* books, articles in *The Courier*, etc., and you had a cottage industry centered around arguing over WRG Ancients rules.

From there I was able to play several games of micro-armor using WRG's WW2 rules, which were a bit more enjoyable than the Ancients rules. From my first battle in 1976 to probably the mid 80s, these rules fell in and out of favor. The games were acceptable, weren't too hard, and enjoyable, but there was always the feeling that there was something missing. Then we would move on to *Tractics*, *Tank Charts*, etc., followed by everyone going back to the WRG rules! Again, they were the de facto set of rules for the period and you could always go back to them. However, it seemed as if you couldn't stay with them for very long as you just new there was something better out there and you just had to find it.



The first set of WRG rules that I ever owned was the 1925-1950 platoon set, which was designed for skirmish games. Although I had *Angriff* (my first set of miniatures rules!) I had been looking for something better and had blundered into these in a local hobby shop. These rules were much, much simpler than the other rules that WRG had and for a few years they provided some fun Saturday games at the local store. Again, however, one began to tire of the system and looked to move on to another set of rules for the period.

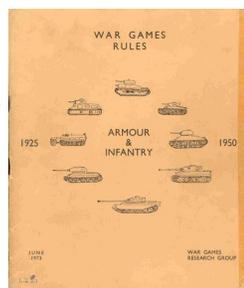
A similar thing happened with the WRG 1950-85 rules, which we used on and off again for modern micro-armor. For about five years modern battles raged on our tabletops as the hordes of Soviet armor along with their Warsaw Pact allies fought outmanned NATO forces. The WRG rules were the first set of rules that we used for the period, but then again, we started looking for something else. After playing *Tacforce*, *Combat Commander*, and *Challenger*, we came back to the WRG rules yet again. After running two campaigns we started playing *Challenger* again and finally settled on that set of rules for the period. The WRG rules, however, remained on standby just in case we wanted to return to them.



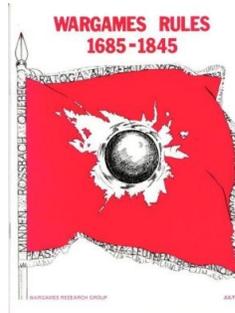
The one set of rules that continually perplexed us were the 1685-1845 rules. The 1685 start allowed for the inclusion of the Seven Years War, but the 1845 cut off meant that it ended right before the Mexican-American War and the American Civil War, so it was a weird choice by the authors. Like most WRG rules, there was a clock like sequence of play, lots of tables, and plenty of rules sections that were subject to interpretation. I had purchased them to use with my 15mm Mexican-American armies, but the first few tries with them were like watching paint dry. There was

little period flavor and you were basically going through the motions. When we later got into the Seven Years War these rules weren't even considered.

At this time it needs to be pointed

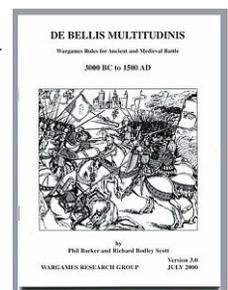


out that WRG's focus with the army lists, lawyer legalese, etc., was so that they could be used in competitions. WRG was the rules of choice for ancients competitions, which of course is almost a hobby unto itself. Many, many articles have been written about the role of competitions in the wargaming hobby, but WRG almost by itself was the perpetuating force behind it for many years. For a long time there really weren't too many championships that used rules other than those by WRG.



Somewhere around the start of the 90s, when DBM and DBA started to emerge, many gamers, including most of my group, moved on. It was a mass exodus as new companies emerged with new gaming systems. *Warhammer 40K*, *Johnny Reb*, *Command Decision*, *Age of Reason*, and many others started to demonstrate that you didn't need rule-books with all text. Gaming could be fun, faster playing, more period specific, and you didn't need to be able to recite the frontage and depth in paces of a Seleucid pike phalanx. While DBM and DBA are certainly still played today, the other rules now only exist on the shelves of gamers who played them in a bygone era.

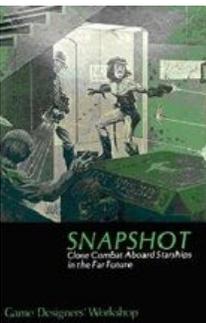
Love them or hate them, WRG was a massive influence on the hobby. They achieved, either accidentally or perhaps on purpose, the goal of getting gamers to use their rules as a rock solid base. Many stuck with them for close to two decades and when other new sets of rules failed, the WRG ones were there waiting for you to return. In today's hobby where there are hundreds and hundreds of rules for every period under the sun, it's hard to imagine a time when there were three or four sets of rules that truly dominated the hobby. Although WRG always gave me a lot of fatigue, anger, and happiness, their contribution to the hobby is not forgotten.



Blast From The Past Pt. 41: Traveller Books and Games

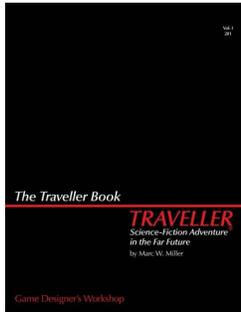
One of the more perplexing enigmas of the gaming world was the RPG system known as Traveller. While D&D was fairly well known by the end of the 70s and throughout the early 80s, there wasn't much around for science fiction roleplaying. There were some miniatures, a few board games, but the genre was terribly underrepresented in comparison to its fantasy brethren.

That did change when GDW came out with Traveller. Very similar to the D&D boxed set, Traveller had its own little books that covered creating characters, designing ships, worlds, and more. It was a system for geeks and nerds, so naturally we all piled in! As with most things GDW, it was process and system driven, so even creating characters was a lengthy process. With no adventures at that point or pre-made anything, the game master really needed to put in some time. Those that bought the system soon were up to their eyeballs in paper, designing ships, planets, NPCs, and more. These things took time and followed guidelines laid down in the books, so one was constantly checking and re-checking to see if things came out right.



could be used and more. The system was still a lot of work, but at least GDW was adding on stuff as quickly as they could. While lagging behind D&D, the system did appeal to a wide range of gamers and developed a cult following.

At this time GDW started to add on to the Traveller "world" of products by introducing additional material in the form of games, especially board games, which is what they specialized in. One of the first was Snapshot, which was part of the Series 120 line. This series were board games with small maps, 120 counters,



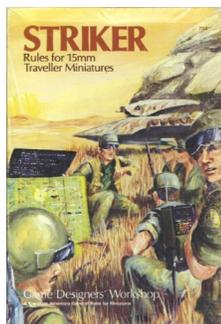
and were quick playing. Snapshot took the combat system for Traveller and applied it to boarding actions. The map had three ships printed on it for a variety of scenarios and the booklet itself provided a wealth of information for Traveller gamers. Later on GDW released Mayday, which was small starship combat.

Further down the road GDW released Azhanti High Lightning, which was a boxed set of ship plans that could be used with Snapshot or as a centerpiece for a Traveller adventure. The box literally had stacks of maps for a large number of decks along with a booklet detailing the entire ship. Whatever you will say about Traveller, you can't complain about the products that GDW put out for it.



One of the more ambitious projects was the boxed set for Striker. This was the ground combat companion for Traveller, allowing gamers to fight out campaigns alongside their Traveller adventures, create mercenary units, or just setting up characters with a military background. The booklets were extremely well done, the system was clever, and there was enough material to keep one occupied for quite some time. Martian Metals even started coming out with miniatures for it.

Striker never really failed, but it wasn't really played that much either. As with most Traveller products it was detailed, well done, and should have been a huge hit. What happened? For one thing, there simply weren't enough miniatures in any scale for anyone to get excited over. The second thing was that it took a LONG time to set up units, vehicles, characters, etc., to get a game going. On top of that the combat system introduced command and control, technology levels, and was far more detailed than most games were used to.



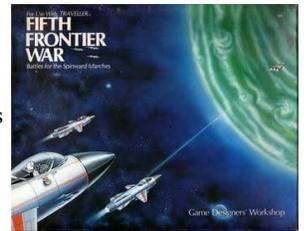
If all of this wasn't enough, the material kept on coming. One of the more interesting board games was called Fifth Frontier War, which was an operational level campaign fought in the Traveller

universe. Big, detailed, and not for the faint of heart, this game took a lot of work. Invasion Earth was another game set in the Traveller world and is still one of the few wargames that dealt with a planetary invasion.

My gaming group tried Traveller a few times, but it never really took hold. Some of the game masters spent months creating worlds and adventures, but nothing really stuck to the point where we carried our characters through an entire campaign. I myself ran a two night adventure which was well received, but then everyone moved on to other things.

I could not believe how long it took to set up a campaign environment. Unlike D&D where you draw up some old fortress floor plan, populate it with some monsters, then let everyone wander on through, here you had to create the worlds, the ships, the NPCs, and so on with a bewildering array of tables and charts.

Of course Traveller would go on for quite some time, with several facelifts along the way and is still available. It's still rated as one of the greatest role playing games of all time and had outstanding reviews in various hobby magazines back in the day. It could just have been where I lived or the gamers in my group, but it never really seemed that popular to me. Sure, there were some gamers we knew who had spent years creating binders and binders of ships and worlds, but they were the exception and not the rule.



When I look back now, Traveller was an interesting part of my hobby life. I bought the boxed set, several of the extra booklets, had most of the board games, and even some of the Judges Guild stuff, but I never really devoted myself to the game. To this day I still have Snapshot and Mayday, plus I love playing Imperium at least once a year, but Traveller was something that seemed to flame out a bit too quickly.

Two SCS game reviews in the same issue! This is another in MMP's Standard Combat Series (SCS) of games that harken back to an older era in the hobby. If you read the review for Rostov '41 earlier in this issue then you know that you get a series rules booklet, then an exclusive rules booklet in each game. The theory is that once you know the series rules you can play any of the games pretty easily, which is not always the case. This time the SCS system takes on WW3, which is certainly fertile ground for wargamers.



NATO invasion of the Warsaw Pact countries. The Tension, Air superiority, and Turn tracks are all printed on the map as well, saving playing area instead of more cards. Overall, the components are pretty good and there's little to complain about, although this game cries out for set up cards.



Inside the box you get a 22 x 34 map, several counter sheets, two player aid cards, two air system cards, series rules, exclusive rules, and two D6s. The thing that immediately caught my eye is that the series rules book was huge, certainly larger than any SCS game I've played. The map is done in The Gamers style (90s era graphics) and the terrain will be familiar to anyone who has played a SCS game before. The counter sheets have a ton of units, which as you sort them you find out that they cover five different time periods.

Here was the first problem for me and is not uncommon in most SCS games; sorting the counters and the set up. The 1945 and 1962 counters have stripes or borders on them, so they were easy to separate and kudos for doing that. The other three eras, however, all use units that could be in one or more eras, making sorting almost impossible. This also adds time to the set up in that you need to pick the right unit with the right combat strength for that era.

The map covers Central Europe from Denmark down to the very northern areas of Italy and Yugoslavia. There is a lot of East Germany and Czechoslovakia on the map as several of the scenarios depict a

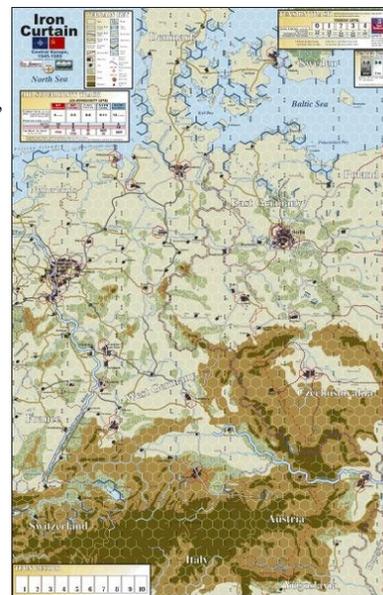
There are five different scenarios in the game; 1945 (Operation Unthinkable), 1962 (Cuban Missile Crisis), 1975, 1983, and 1989. Each game has separate set up instructions in terms of where units start, numbers of chemical and nuclear weapons markers, starting air units, and assets (special forces, marines, etc.) along with specific reinforcement pages.

One of the more innovative parts of the game is the Tension Track and the "run up" turns to war. Each turn both sides get to attempt to move stacks of units towards the border and on a roll of 1 that ends the turn. When both sides are finished there is a roll on the Tension Track where it might move 0, 1, or 2 spaces. Once it gets to 5 the war begins and you transition to the full sequence of play for each turn. Definitely a unique idea and it creates some interesting decisions.

Movement and combat is pretty standard SCS fare for the 1945 game, but the later games use an unusual combat system where you determine the odds, then if there is a terrain shift, then you roll a series of D6s. One for each attacking stack, one for each defending unit, then a final D6 for how far the defenders retreat. So, if the odds are something like 2:1 the attackers roll a D6 and if they roll a 1 or 2 they lose a step, if a 5 or 6 for the defenders is rolled, they lose a step, then another D6 to see how far they retreat. It creates

each turn, then there is a die roll to see which side gets air superiority for that turn. This influences (with modifiers) the rolls on the potential loss chart, which must be done for all units that were put in the boxes. If you roll below the loss number then you roll a D6 for each unit that failed with a 1 or 2 destroying the unit, a 3 is a number of turns of delay before it comes back, and 4-6 is that it can be used again next turn. Any strike aircraft that survive that roll can attack ground units by rolling a D6 and comparing it to the terrain value, which can result in a miss or a step loss. If a strike unit inflicts a loss it can keep attacking adjacent units until it misses! A weird and highly unpredictable system.

For the Warsaw Pact to win any of the scenarios, they



must get a series of things that cause a NATO roll for collapse. Seizing the Ruhr cities, getting three units across the Rhine, seizing Denmark, etc., are all causes for the roll. If NATO is attacking it's simply seizing certain locations. I found it strange that the defending side has no need to save forces for a counterattack. Basically, you just create defense rings around the objectives and hunker down. In fact, for the Warsaw Pact anything south of Munich is a waster of time.

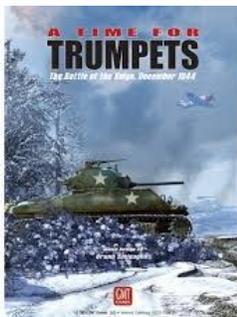
While there are some good things here, especially in terms of components, scenarios, and replay value, there is enough strangeness that not every gamer is going to like this. The combat system, air campaign, and victory objectives leaves one with a feeling that the system is playing you and not the other way around. With a bit more effort this could have been a classic.

a highly randomized series of combats across the board that keeps you guessing as to what is going to happen. I've not encountered this type of combat system before and even after two game I don't know what to make of it.

The air system is also good and bad. Each side puts up a number of air superiority and strike units

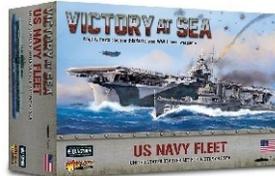


Back in the late 80s RPG games were at a point where they had run their course. From meek beginnings back in the mid 70s where there was the D&D boxed set and a few other obscure systems, the genre had exploded into a fully fledged industry. RPG systems such as Harn, Gamma World, James Bond, Top Secret, Runequest, and many, many more filled the shelves of games stores everywhere. Trying to find a gaming group who played the system you did was getting to be a challenge and there was so much product coming out that keeping it all straight was impossible. RPGs continued on for some time, but as a shadow of their former selves until their rebirth just a few years ago.



So, why is GMT putting out a five map, 2400 counter monster with A Time For Trumpets and then recently I saw that Revolution Games is putting out their own Bulge game! Why? What can they possibly cover that the other 50+ games already published didn't? Also, if you have a stack of Bulge games, why would you buy these? I read some comments from gamers who say that they haven't played their last few Bulge games (which are still sitting on a shelf-some in shrink wrap), but they're "looking forward" to getting these new ones. What? Why?

The same can be said for covering the Normandy battles in miniature wargaming. Since as long as I can remember, there have been 6mm, 15mm, and 25/28mm miniatures for Normandy since the dawn of the hobby. Thousands of articles, scenarios, rules, and so forth have flooded the hobby since I got started back in 1976. You would think gamers would be sick of Normandy. Yet when a new set of miniatures rules arrive, a new boxed set of figures, or just a new line of figures appears, where do they start? Why, Normandy of course! Why not Spanish Civil War, invasion of Norway, a fictional Sea Lion campaign, or just anything as long as it isn't Normandy yet again!



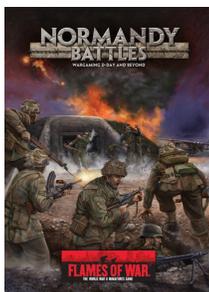
ghan War, Matabele Uprising, or a Great Lakes naval boxed set. Start off with the popular periods, then if things are good, move on to other lesser known periods. Makes perfect sense, until you realize that many of these new lines of figures never get past that initial offering! It's so crowded at the start that they can't get any traction.

Likewise, if you put out a set of rules for the 19th century Opium Wars and figures for it, the chance of your company surviving past the initial offering is slim as there aren't that many gamers who are interested in that. Appealing to established gamers really carries little weight with miniatures companies (at least most of the big ones) anyway as they are really looking to hook new gamers and brainwash them into only buying their products. Board wargames are a bit different as you need to keep your clientele interested so they purchase more games, no matter what the subject. Even that, however, has limits.

So what you have left is this vicious self perpetuating cycle where a new company comes out, offers rules and figs in an established period, and maybe, just maybe survives. If not, another comes along to take its place and we repeat the process. Board game companies offer up yet another Bulge game and enough gamers order it to make a small profit, which can hopefully be invested into something like Twilight Struggle which is highly successful. But how many times can you refight The Battle of the Bulge, Gettysburg, or Stalingrad before it gets tiring? The map image below is from a new Compass game on another topic drowning in games, the invasion of Russia in WW2. What could possibly be in this game that you haven't already seen. Does Finland invade Turkey? Does Japan send troops to fight at Stalingrad? Do the Russians get lend lease aircraft carriers? I think I'm at a point now where I have little interest in some of these new games coming out.

One of the things we would ask ourselves when shopping at local gaming stores and seeing yet another RPG book on the shelves was, "Do we really need another _____ (fill in the blank) system?" Now some 30 years later the same questions are being asked on many hobby forums, blogs, and web sites about new board games, miniatures rules, figures, and more. As discussed before, it is the golden age for the hobby. Pretty much anything you want in whatever scale and complexity level is available at your fingertips. If we need all of it, however, is the question.

Let's take for example, the gaming love for The Battle of the Bulge. Never mind that the Germans had little chance of pulling it off or that those units could have been better used on the Eastern Front, this is a subject that gamers have loved ever since the first Avalon Hill game appeared on the subject close to 60 years ago. Since then, the stack of Bulge games is huge and there's something for everyone in terms of price, scale, complexity, playing time, and so on. Ardennes '44, Iron Tide, Bulge '81, Wacht Am Rhein, Enemy Action: Ardennes, and about 50+ more are all out there.



Now you have Warlord Games promoting their new Victory at Sea boxed sets, rules, accessories, and more. There's been WW2 naval miniatures in every scale imaginable since the wargaming hobby started as well as rules. However, you now have to use their rules and their ships, which are in a completely different scale than anything else that has come before. Why? They don't want you buying anything else other than their products. Yes, I get it and I have no idea how the rules play or how good the miniatures are, but did we really need yet another WW2 naval system?

Now I clearly get what's going on here and most of the philosophy behind it. If you're a new company launching a figure line, the best place to start is Waterloo, Normandy, 100 Years War, Crusades, etc., and not the 3rd Af-



The hobby isn't going under any time soon and it's not an immediate crisis. However, what happens when no one wants the 300th game on the Bulge? That will be an interesting day.

Age of Eagles: Battle of Vimeiro

Battle Report

For one reason or the other, we have not played Age of Eagles in quite some time. Considering the fact that we were one of the playtest groups and have huge forces it, this is certainly out of the ordinary! We figured it was time to revisit one of our favorite set of rules and that it would be best to start out with something small. Small Napoleonic battles usually means visiting the Peninsula campaigns, so one of our members had the scenario set up for Vimeiro, so we went with that.

On the surface, it looked like a good choice. The board was about 4 x 4, there were only a few brigades per side, and with four players available this night it looked to be the ideal choice. The one thing we had not considered, however, was trying to simulate the Spanish terrain! Yes, this is always an issue and we definitely need to take some steps to remedy this in the future.

For one, the rivers we brought to the game were much too wide to simulate what is a narrow canal that can be crossed without too much problem, but it needed to be represented on the tabletop. We used some lichen to mark the boundary on the game map. Then we didn't bring enough lichen to show the large areas of scrub brush on the map, which while not that big of a game influence, it would break up all of the green on the board! The ridges worked out OK, but we need something in the future to more readily

see the boundaries. Finally, we added a few trees here and there to match the paintings of the battle and area during that time period, but they had no effect on the actual game itself.

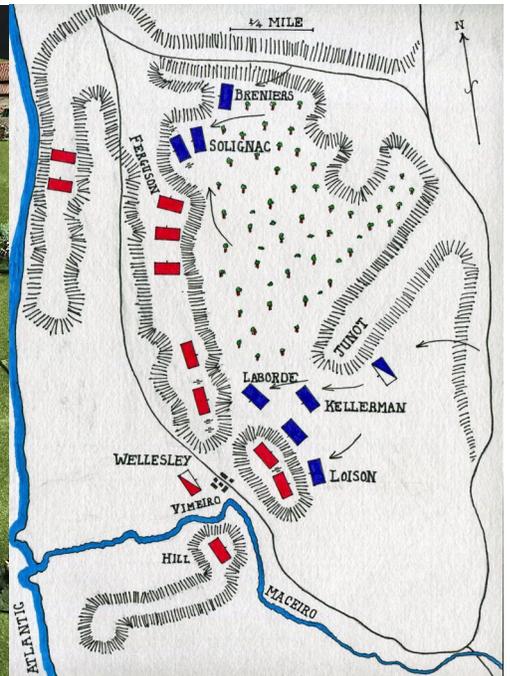
The British army, under Wellington, was split into two divisions. The first would cover the main approaches and had a small cavalry force attached to it. The idea would be to soften up the French attack and fall back to the ridgelines if possible. The second division had two medium sized brigades with two smaller brigades attached. Both divisions had limited artillery, so they were initially placed to cover the approach routes. The main thing and this is hard to quantify, is that this was an earlier British army, so there was no SK (skirmish) firing range, which would be a huge disadvantage in a stand up firefight. While the British firepower was far better than the French, it was limited to a 2 inch range. The French of this period could fire out to 4 inches with their SK ability.

The British were in good defensive positions and the French were ready for attack. While the overall numbers were similar, the French had several advantages. As mentioned above, their firing range was superior, they had some



good sized brigades, and finally, they could choose where to attack. On top of that, their leading division was within attack range of the British right from the start! The French plan was to attack the one British division already on the ridges, then sweep across the board to meet the other French division that would engage and pin the second British division. A good plan that almost worked!

The French immediately attacked the British left flank and the huge brigades swung into view, then moved up to engage. The first attack was thrown back and the second French brigade moved in for support. The British cavalry charged them, hitting the brigade in flank and driving it back for a turn or (cont. on p15)





(cont. from p14) two. The French reorganized, brought up some artillery, and tried again only to be thrown back a second time. One of the smaller British brigades moved off the ridge and poured fire into the disorganized French.

The one common denominator here was that the French commander on this side rolled a series of 1s and 2s at the worst possible time, even when in one combat he was +7 and only succeeded by winning 8-7 on die rolls! What everyone thought would be a quick victory then a desperate fight for the ridges turned into a British moment of glory by not budging an inch!

On the other flank the French had command issues and it took them quite some time to move up. When they finally got going they rolled forward with a huge attack that achieved some initial

success. They also started to engage the British brigades outside of their skirmish range, which posed a huge problem for the British. Stay and get slowly whittled down, fall back to the ridges, or counter-attack?

The British decided to counterattack on their right. The British brigades engaged the French in a wild series of melees, finally driving them back. On the British left the ridge defensive line was still holding, despite some casualties and some very close melees. The British were now in pretty good shape across the board while the French were definitely not strong enough to force the ridges. At this point the game was called as a British victory.

For a “smaller” AOE scenario this was pretty good and perfect for four players. Including the set up time we played 9

turns in around four hours, which is pretty good. Usually the larger AOE scenarios can take an 8 hour day or multiple gaming nights, so this was a good alternative. We’re going to look into some more Peninsula battles, which of course will mean that at some point someone will need to paint up some Spanish!

The French had their chances, but especially on the British left the French die rolls were horrendous and those dice should be burned! The British did just enough to hang on and it was a very fun scenario that we will need to try again at some point. The one thing we need to do better is probably work on our Spanish terrain if we’re going to do more battles from this period. Canals, ditches, better elevation boundaries, etc., are things we need to focus on. This battle did remind us how good AOE is for this period.



I'm not sure when it hit me, but during the Covid-19 shutdown while I was working from home, a thought entered my mind. Out of all the periods that we play, the armies that we have, all the terrain that our group has, etc., why have we never played a winter battle? Now that's a good question! The answer is usually that it takes a lot of effort to paint the forces (particularly the bases) for winter battles. The terrain is a challenge all by itself and choosing the right period in terms of what would be interesting to the gaming group was another consideration. Usually this is about as far as the thinking progresses and then it's back to another East Front battle in the spring of 1944 or 1945.

Not this time. I had been reading several books about East Front battles that were set in 1944 and 1945, but we already had forces for that era. So, in an effort to kill two birds with one stone, I would embark on a project to not only do East Front battles in a winter setting, they would focus on the 1941-1943 period! Outside of a few skirmishes, we rarely game anything in the 1939-1942 timeframe, so this would be something new for everyone. Of course, there were going to be some challenges here.

The first one is that I had absolutely zero forces for this period and the second challenge would be to paint them all for the winter. Also, I had no terrain, so it was time to take stock of what I would need. The aim was to start fairly small with enough forces and terrain for a 3-4 player game then expand from that point



on. Here is the initial list of what I thought I would need:

- A snow or winter mat (6 x 4)
- Several farms and a village
- Enough trees to give the battle a winter feel and take up some space to compensate for the smaller starting forces.
- A German force with several companies (a command stand and 3-4 vehicles) of Tiger 1s., Pz III H/Js, PZ IVF1s, Stug IIIs, mech infantry, and standard infantry. An 88mm AT gun and some 50mm AT guns would help as well.
- A Russian force with 9 -10 T-34s, 5 or so KV-1s, 5 -10 T-60s, and some infantry with mortars.
- Some entrenched positions.

This would be enough to provide a variety of scenarios, then we could expand the forces and terrain later. The idea is that it usually takes at least two games to usually get gamers interested in a period enough so that they decide to help out in some way.

The game mat was probably the easiest part. There are a wide variety of mats, but I decided to go with the Cigar Box 15mm winter mat with roads for a few reasons. First, I like their products and second, I received a \$25 Ebay coupon for being with them for 25 years! This made the mat pretty affordable and while I'm not entirely sold on having the roads permanently on the mat, this will work at least in the short term.

Then it was on to beginning work on the terrain. My first thought was to do a farm and a church I had to test how things would look, then move on to do a few other terrain pieces. The trees would probably be last, especially since many of the tree packs were coming from China, so with the Covid-19 shipping delays in full force, those would be saved for the end of the terrain making. There are several companies who make

Russian or Eastern European buildings, so I started to look around for some options, including some 3D files (I have access to several 3D printers).

I bought a file off of Wargames Vault for a Russian village and printed it for 6mm scale. The instructions for the scaling were a bit off, resulting in smaller than usual buildings, but once on a base with some trees and snow they looked OK. I did find some GHQ buildings off of Ebay and another seller who had some resin cast farmhouses, so I was able to cobble together several bases for a game. I do have plans for an entire Russian town or factory complex at some time, but to just try things out this would probably do for now.

On to the trees. For those of you who don't know, you can get a wide variety of Z scale and small trees from multiple Chinese companies on Ebay. They are usually sold in packs of 30-50 (although some are in packs of 100), cost less than \$10, and usually have free shipping! Yes, they will take a month or two to get to you, but if you're patient there are



some good deals to be had. The main issue is that they're not snow covered, the trunks can be black plastic, and there's going to be some work involved. But you can't beat the price!

For the batches I received I first used an X-acto knife and cut the trunks down just a bit. Then I mixed a grayish-brown trunk color and drybrushed all of the tree trunks. Following that, I grabbed a wide brush, dipped it into white paint and brushed down the entire tree to make it look snow covered. This may sound like a lot of work, but it goes pretty fast. However, I recommend that you do the trees in batches of 40-50 at a time so that you don't get bored! (cont. on p 17)

(cont. from p 16) I did try just dry brushing down the tree, but in the end, it didn't look right, so I dry brushed pretty much all of the tree branches on top and their undersides. The reason? Our miniature games and reality often don't coincide with each other and the trees didn't look right. By more or less "over doing" it on the trees it gave them the look I was searching for.

I use thick plastic for the tree and village bases (available in large sheets). I first prime the base black, cover it with glue and sand, wash brownish-red ink over it, then dry brush with a beige and dark brown. I then drill the holes for the tree trunks and superglue them into the plastic base. Mixing white glue and white paint, I cover the base (leaving patches of earth here and there) and then dunk it into the snow flock. If you want a true winter scene you don't need to use sand, drybrushing, etc., just paint everything white! I then glued some winter grass and some various gray-brown colored tufts around the base. Finally, I paint the border of the base a light-medium gray. The reason? The light gray against the snow mat will help delineate where the forest begins and ends without the need for arguments over LOS.

Now on to the really challenging part, which is painting the vehicles. First off, you could write a book about winter camouflage in WW2! The amount of different patterns, how it was applied, unit markings, etc., is simply astounding. Not to mention that as the war progressed both sides continued to change how their camouflage was applied. By studying a lot of actual pictures and 1/35th scale models (armor modelers are a great resource for projects like this!) you can get a pretty good sense for the types of winter camouflage that were used.



For the Germans I primed all of the vehicles black, then dry brushed a panzer gray over them. Now here is where it is really up to each individual gamer to determine how they are going to proceed. For many of the vehicles I dry brushed them white, sometimes heavy and sometime light, which gave the haphazard appearance I was looking for. Going over many period photographs each unit did things differently. Those who had kept their spraying supplies and had access to paint had well covered vehicles. Others mixes paint and gas, then used a broom to apply the camouflage!

To show where the paint had rubbed off, changed color because of the engine heat, and to just give the vehicles a bit of color, I mixed a very thin panzer gray wash and applied it to some of the seams and edges, which achieved the desired effect. I also added some of the Games Workshop brown ink to sections of the vehicles as well to make them look worn and dirty. Finally, I dry brushed an earth color over the tracks and skirts to simulate mud.

Vehicle and unit markings in 1/285th scale have always been challenging. I was able to use some of the GHQ decals for the halftracks and Tigers, but others that I tried on some of the other German models utterly failed. Painting numbers in that scales is almost impossible, but fortunately, most of the German vehicles did not use markings in the winter, so things worked out well!

The Russian vehicles are even more challenging than the Germans as at times it looked as if camouflage was completely optional! I primed the vehicles black, dry brushed with a Vallejo Russian armor green, mixed a bit of white into it, then drybrushed them

again. This gave the lighter olive shade I was looking for. I then dry brushed white over the vehicle itself, sometime light and at other times heavy. Again, the idea is to make all of the vehicles have no real discernable pattern, which although strange to say, is precisely how they looked in real life.

I then mixed my Russian armor green white mix again, but this time added a few drops of water to thin it out. I then painted some of this was across engine decks, turret hatches, edges of the vehicle, and so on, which ended up looking pretty good. The one thing I had noticed in many images was that the Russian white camouflage seemed to wear off pretty fast and unevenly.

The vehicle bases take some time, but aren't too hard. I prime them black, then after they've dried, cover them with white glue and dip them in sand. Once dried, I paint them with red-brown ink (the Games Workshop stuff works best) and the colors dry unevenly, which works good. I then drybrush with various earth



shades and although I will be using snow ground cover, some of the earth will show through here and there. As I was going for an early winter, late spring effect, I used a heavier brown for the dry brushing. I then mixed glue and white paint, painted the base and dipped it into the snow powder. After gluing the vehicle to the base I painted tread tracks behind the vehicle and added some winter grass.

After working on the this project I came to the conclusion that creating armies for spring and summer is much, much easier! Trying to get the camouflage right, basing with the snow powder, working on the trees, etc., all to get the right effect was much harder than I thought it would be. This is probably why you don't seem too many winter gaming tabletops!



After working on this project for nearly six months it was time to start using the miniatures and terrain! Outside of a few one offs here and there, we've not done a lot of winter battles before, so this would be an interesting experience. Also, most of our WW2 battles over the last 20+ years, whether skirmish or operational level, are usually 1944-45, so again, this would be an interesting change of pace.

The scenario takes place in December of 1942, where a Russian counter-offensive has ripped open the German lines and they are pouring through into the rear areas. The Germans are moving whatever formations they can to plug the holes, but they will be arriving piecemeal. There is a village that the Germans are holding and a crossroads further up the table that the Russians needed to secure for victory. The Germans have some Marders and PZ IVF2s that have the 75mm, but most everything else is still using a variation of the 50mm weapons that were prevalent at that time.

The Germans started the game with an infantry battalion strung out in fortifications across the board. There was a special rule that said while the HQ was stationary, all units counted as being within 20cm for command purposes (simulates a command post with telephone lines). There was a company of three Marders assigned as a reserve. Not a strong position, but it should hold out long enough for the Germans to have a chance to counterattack and reinforce it.

Off board, the Germans had several units waiting to come on. Each unit would roll 1D6, needing a 6 on Turn 1 to arrive, a 5 or 6 on Turn 2, and so on.



Once they were going to arrive, a second D6 was rolled to see which road they would appear at. There was a panzergrenadier battalion, a company of PZ IIIJs, a company of Stug IIIDs, a company of PZ III Hs, and one company of PZ IVF2s. There was also a FAO with access to three batteries of 105mm.

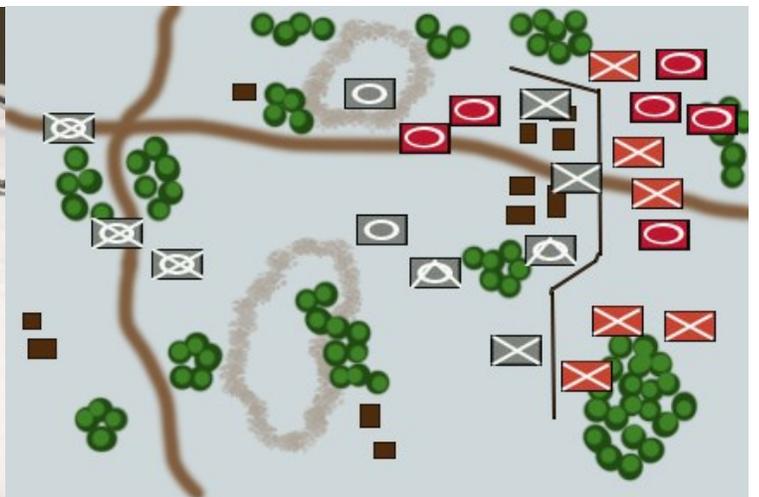
The Russians would use the mobile and flank deployment rules for their initial turn as they entered the board. The Russians had two infantry battalions and two mixed tank brigades. My readings of this period and from looking over different OBs, the tank brigades were a result of taking whatever was available and rushing it forward into battle. To that effect, the first tank brigade consisted of five KV-1Cs and four T-60s. The second tank brigade had 9 T-34/76s and three T-26s. The Russian side also had three batteries of 122mm that needed to be scheduled before the game began.

The Russians moved onto the board, but their second batch of command rolls didn't work out so well, so the offensive got a bit of a slow start! The Germans were able to get two formations to come

on board Turn 1, so they raced up the road towards the developing crisis. On Turn 2 the Russian artillery started to pummel the German held village while the T-34s started to shell the fortified German positions. The Russian infantry was moving up, but a bit slowly. Meanwhile, the first tank brigade with the KV-1Cs moved behind the village in an attempt to draw off the German reinforcements.

Whether by design or by accident, this became the focal point of the battle! None of us really knew that the KV-1s would turn out to be the monsters that they were, but they stood alone in this clearing for well over half the game, fighting off PZ IIIs, PZ IVs, and Stugs, giving as good as they got. Their armor, the Tough special rule, and their high hit points made them into the WW2 version of dragons, shrugging off large numbers of attacks while destroying their enemies. The critical thing and really no one realized it, but the Germans got distracted by the KV-1s and not much help reached the village!

Speaking of the village and its defenders, the Germans were hanging on, inflicting hits here and there on the attacking Russian infantry. The fortifications were working pretty good as despite the continued shelling by the T-34s and artillery, the infantry platoons were only losing a few hits here and there. By turn 5 the Germans were in a pretty good position. Most of the reinforcements were on the board, the Russian armored attacks had been halted, and the village was still held. This might turn out to be an easy German victory after all! Then things went bad for the Germans. (cont. on p19)





(cont. from p18) The KV-1s and their accompanying T-60s were now being swamped by German armor and several were on fire. However, the PZ IIIH company was wrecked and a few of the PZIIIJs along with a Stug were on fire as well. The panzergrenadiers were moving up and got hit by a series of well placed Russian artillery barrages which knocked out some of the transports and inflicted casualties on the grenadiers.

Around the village, the Russians decided enough was enough. Two of the German platoons were finally destroyed, opening a gap in the defenses. The T-34s moved into this gap, pouring fire into the remaining defenders. The Marder IIIs counterattacked, hoping to take out the T-26s and slow down the T-34s, but several series of bad die rolls and great saving throws by the Russians ended with the Marders being set ablaze.

The German defenders in and around the village counterattacked the T-34s, but were defeated in close assault. The handwriting was on the wall for the village, so the Germans tried to reshape the defenses. The Germans at the far end of the line actually withstood several Russian assaults, but the north end had collapsed and Russians were pouring through. At this point things did not look good and the Germans conceded the game.

The KV-1s were the real heroes of this day. By merely moving in behind the village and waiting developments they caused the Germans to refocus their reinforcements in an effort to take care of them. This was harder than it appeared! They fought on for a long time, dishing out punishment and delaying the Germans in reinforcing the village. Also, the Russian artillery, which had to be scheduled at the start of the game was usually

on target and contributed greatly towards the German defeat.

This was a good change of pace for us in that we had not used any of the early war stuff in our BKC games. It took awhile for the German players to realize that the Stugs weren't the 1944-45 variety who could reach out and inflict casualties on any Russian armor. The AT guns, tank weapons, etc., just could not cope with the heavier Russian armor. The Germans, with their better command ratings, needed to use that advantage, but got bogged down in a series of firefights.

A good start for our winter battles and now it's time to add some more forces. I'm already working on a Russian SMG battalion, engineers, and a motorcycle (recon) battalion for next time. We also need to add some more German armor to the mix as well.



Fire & Fury: Battle of Big Black River Bridge

Battle Report

Every now and then in the hobby there are those game nights where seemingly nothing goes right and this was one of them! In the end, everything worked out well and everyone had a good time, but getting there was a chore. We had decided to do a Fire & Fury ACW battle as it had been quite some time since the last one. Gary chose the battle, which was from the Vicksburg campaign where the Union forces attempted to break through Confederate entrenched positions.

Right from the start there were issues. First, everyone usually brings one or two green mats, but we had seen some the last time we played so everyone thought we would be fine. Nope. Someone took the mats home and no one brought theirs! Luckily, we found a neoprene mat for WW1 battles that didn't look too bad. Second, we forgot that the table was around 4' x 8' and we needed something bigger, so we had to cut down the battle area. Finally, we had brought



trenchments. It took a while for the Union brigades to get organized and move into position for their attack, so the Confederate artillery was able to get off a few salvos which did negligible damage and the first attacks were ready to go in.

The Confederates started off pretty good, defeating the first coordinated assaults with their firepower and in a few cases, melee. The Union was losing a few stands here and there with the Confederates relatively untouched. The big issue was that there were more Union troops on the field at this point than Confederates and at some point they would break the line. The Confederate and Union brigades continued their firefights up and down the line, with each side getting a bit weaker as the turns went by.

Finally, around Turn 5 on the Confederate left, things began to change. A few good rolls during the Union shooting phase, some bad rolls by the Confederates, etc., and the end of the line started to give way. After another turn it pretty much collapsed, with the two brigades there falling back to save what little they could. In the middle things started to go the same way, with a loss of stands, forced back from the entrenchments, and the lone battery there silenced and forced to move back. One of the Confederate brigades on the right, however, made a heroic last stand that held up the Union advance or things may have been catastrophic by Turn 6! (cont. on p21)

Bowen's 3rd Division had five brigades in total, with two of the brigades being split into two units along with two artillery batteries. The largest units, which were the 3rd and 4th brigades, were still coming down the road towards the battle and would not arrive for a few turns. This meant the other three brigades composed of 4-6 stands each (fairly small), would need to defend the entire board.

McClermand's XIII Corps was composed of four divisions and a total of 9 brigades (including one of cavalry) along with 3 artillery batteries. They would be entering the board at several locations, trying to punch a hole in the light fortifications the Confederate brigades had thrown up to delay them. In terms of overall numbers it was pretty close, with around 64 bases and 3 guns for the Union as compared to 52 bases and 2 guns for the Confederates. The main issue was that the Confederates had to defend a wide area while the Union could afford to pick and choose where to attack.

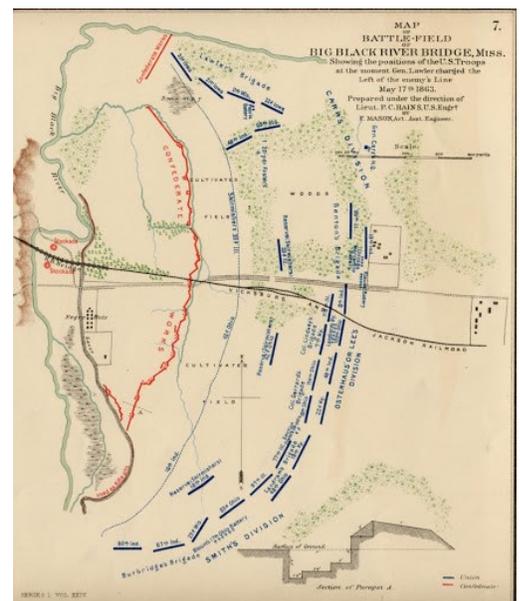
The battle began with the Union forces trying to force the line of en-



big river sections, but nothing small enough for the little stream sections, so that's why we had to use blue felt. Despite all of these issues we were able to fashion together that would at least give a good representation of the battle.

Big Black River Bridge takes place right after Champions Hill during the Vicksburg campaign. Grant's forces had followed up their victory by pursuing the defeated Confederate forces. Bowen's 3rd Division of the Army of Vicksburg, stops and makes a stand at a place called Big Black River Bridge, where they are attacked by the 13th Army Corps under McClermand.

This is a smaller Fire & Fury battle,





(cont. from p20) The Union was trying to reorganize itself from the various attacks and sudden success. Units were scattered all over the board and the results were a mixed bag. On the Union right they took their time, moved up slowly, and continued to put pressure on the retreating Confederate forces. On the Union left, however, those brigades just went off on their own individual pursuits. This kept up the pressure on the Confederate forces that were trying to throw up a last line of defense, but just when a final hammer blow was needed the units were too spread out.

For about two turns the Confederates were staring disaster in the face. The Union side played about as good as we've ever seen and was in a position to wipe out the remaining Confederate forces. In fact, those of us on the Confeder-

ate side commented that it might be an early night as things did not look good! We figured a few more die rolls and that was going to be the end, even when the two large reinforcement brigades arrived and took up position.

Forming a giant V, the reinforcing brigades awaited the final charge. The Union brigades, which by now most had a few stands missing, charged right in, setting off a series of firefights and melees that were to go on for several turns. The remainder of the Confederates were fighting desperate actions on the sides of the V, losing stands each turn and finally a few collapsed and routed away.

For just a moment, the Union could see the end of the game in reach as they neared the exit road. One final push should do it and the game would end as a

Union victory. But the final push never materialized. The two fresh Confederate brigades poured a deadly fire into the advancing Union troops, many of which were not rated as Fresh any more due to the loss of stands, and they started to falter. By turn 10 both sides were exhausted, having lost close to 25% of their initial forces. The Union was unable to advance any further and the Confederates didn't have the strength to retake the fortifications, so the game ended in a draw.

Even with all of our set up issues, the game worked out pretty well! We are still getting used to the new rules and a couple of questions came up that we need to research. However, the general view is that the 2nd edition of Fire & Fury is pretty good. We're already looking for another scenario to play before the end of the year if possible.



WMA: Indians Have a Great Night

Battle Report

Everyone wanted to do a huge War-master Ancients game, so the two biggest armies we have at this time are the Indians and the Seleucids. Although we can get up to 2500 points for the Imperial Romans and Seleucids by themselves, the Indians at 2000 points gives one a massive force, especially all of the infantry and archer units.

The Indian force has also been one of those armies where everyone makes jokes about its performance in past games. True, they haven't done great and usually they can hang on for a while, then things utterly collapse and they lose again. In the WMA annual tournaments we hold, for example, the Indians come out on the losing end, no matter who the opponent is!

For this battle, there would be a horde of Indian units as you can see from the force list.

- (12) infantry units
- (8) units of archers
- (4) units of skirmishers
- (1) unit of heavy chariots
- (2) Elephant units
- (4) units of medium cavalry

The 20 infantry and archer units would form most of the brigades and with a break point of 14, the Indians had plenty of troops to throw at the Seleucids. The elephants and chariots would provide some mobile striking power, but the big problem is that most of the army in unarmored, so there are no saves, which can be a problem when going up against armored opponents.



The Seleucids, as usual, were a polyglot of forces based upon their phalanxes and heavy cavalry.

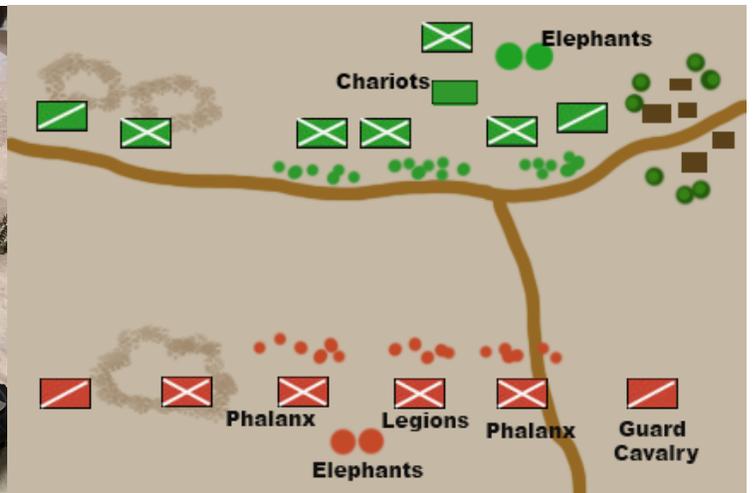
- (6) units of phalanx
- (2) units of imitation Legions
- (4) units of archers
- (2) units of light infantry
- (2) units of Thorakites
- (2) units of Guard/heavy cavalry
- (1) unit of heavy cavalry
- (1) unit of cataphracts
- (1) unit of skirmish cavalry
- (1) unit of elephants
- (2) units of skirmishers

With a break point of 11, the army was a bit more fragile than the Indians, but had some really good units, plus most of the force was armored, so it was definitely a "quality vs. quantity" type battle.

The Seleucids did pretty well at the start, but the Indians, particularly on their right flank, were able to get a large number of units set up and into a defensive position. The first Seleucid skirmish cavalry unit that got near them was met by a hail of arrows! It quickly dawned on the Seleucid commanders that the Seleucid left was in serious trouble and the game was just beginning!

Sure enough, the Indians pressed their advantage on that flank, launching charge after charge in a war of attrition that was succeeding beautifully. The one Seleucid heavy cavalry unit on that flank was crushed for little in return and several skirmisher units on both sides were destroyed, which was of little consequence to the Indians at this stage. Their tactic of using archer units to cover the front of their advance, move in large numbers of infantry, then simply swamp any Seleucid unit that strayed too far out was working.

Unfortunately for the Seleucids, several units got caught out in the open due to failed command rolls, which created an uneven advance right when the time was to stick together in some sort of formation. Several Seleucid units did go forward in a fairly successful charge, but then they were quickly surrounded and wiped out. By turn 4 it was apparent that the Seleucid pikes and elephants needed to get into the main battle where their fighting power could be decisive and change the situation around. This was a problem all game long, with the Seleucid center really not wanting to move. By turn 6 things had not really improved and the Seleucid left was gone. (cont. on p23)





(cont. from p22) The Seleucid right had the army's best cavalry units and they moved up, then charged into a horde of Indian infantry. Usually, the heavy cavalry crushes the first line, seriously damages the second line, then retires themselves as they are more than likely down to one stand, having caused huge casualties to the enemy. Not this time. The Seleucid heavy cavalry was fighting for its life from the first round on. Not only that, the Indians counterattacked with their heavy chariots and in less than three turns the Seleucid heavy cavalry had ceased to exist. The Seleucid commanders looked about, wondering what else could go wrong this night!

The Indians now advanced across the board, picking out isolated Seleucid units here and there, firing archers into them, then hitting them with fresh infantry

units. While the Seleucids fought back and in some instances counterattacked, their numbers were getting cut down with each passing turn. By the start of turn 7 things were looking grim. It was time to get the center moving and try to salvage this battle before a complete collapse. The Seleucid center finally got moving, but in bits and pieces.

The Indians continued to attack where possible, killing off units here and there. The Seleucids by now had no reserves, while about 30% of the Indian army still had not seen combat! Things were definitely not looking good for the Seleucids and both sides were gearing up for a final showdown in the center...which never materialized.

The Seleucids went in with a few units, but failed several crucial command

rolls and the major counteroffensive got off to a so-so start. The Indians pushed forward fresh units that simply overran the unsupported Seleucids, which combined with large amounts of archery fire doomed the Seleucids. The Seleucids hit their break point number while the Indians weren't even halfway to theirs and the game was called as an Indian victory.

A rare Indian victory! The Indians usually need a lot of things to go right for them and tonight they did. The Seleucids just could never get things rolling and the Indians, despite their low command ratings, kept getting successive command rolls at an amazing pace. I think it's time to rethink the Seleucid army list for the future. Maybe add some Galatians, more skirmish cavalry, some scythed chariots, and see if a change of pace can produce a few more victories.





Several more images showing the titanic battle between the Seleucids and Indians. Despite the qualitative advantages of the phalanxes and the heavy cavalry, the Seleucids could not overcome the numbers that the Indians threw at them. There were several huge combats across the table where the Seleucids simply could not cut through enough of the Indian formations to make a difference.

The Next War series from GMT Games continues to be one of its more popular offerings. Whenever a game or supplement gets put up on the P500 pre-order system it usually hits the goal pretty quickly. With a legion of dedicated followers, this series has become the de facto leader in modern combat wargaming. This fifth entry takes the series to Vietnam, where just over 40 years later it covers a hypothetical repeat of the Chinese invasion of 1979.



You certainly get your money's worth in components in a very well produced package. There is a standard sized map covering the northern border with China (the scene for any land invasion), a strategic display that covers the Indian Ocean all the way to Japan, several counter

Next War games come in two flavors; the first is the standard game, which is more of a classic hex and counter affair. The movement, combat, and air support is fairly easy to do, although even this version seems to be suffering from a bit of complexity creep. The second version is the advanced game, which is for those who do not mind complexity and want to experience the full range of modern combat. Standard scenarios play fairly quickly, but the advanced game, with its two-sided sequence of play, is going to take some time.

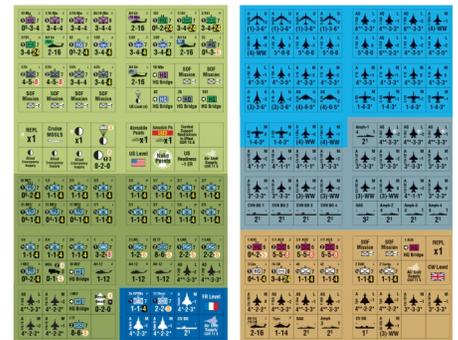
There are several standard scenarios that cover the various invasion routes that the Chinese forces would take and a large standard scenario that covers the entire campaign. In the standard games the U.S., British, and French can intervene, although the Chinese are awarded various amounts of victory points. In the advanced games there are a variety of countries that can intervene at different levels, plus you roll for the forces of Thailand, the Philippines, and others to see if they get involved or not. For those who like monster games, you can put the Next War Vietnam, Taiwan, and Korea games all together!

Units are rated for combat strength, defense, and movement, plus their quality. This easily lets you see at a glance the better forces, how they will move, etc. Each counter is a miniature work of art that shows a wide variety of information. While it appears daunting at first, you quickly realize that you will not need even half of the counters for the standard scenarios.

The standard games are a good place to start and have the least amount of complexity, although that seems to be changing. Units move and attack, with airpower being used in the form of shifts. Naval control over areas is dependent upon die rolls and this is the part of the game where even in standard mode it starts to make the turns longer. The Chinese need to fight their way through the Vietnamese jungle, which is not going to be easy. Also, where to land airborne troops and marines is also a big part of the puzzle, as is where any foreign intervention forces will show up. The standard game is great for learning the basics, then applying the advanced game rules on top of it.

When you get to the advanced game, things change greatly. Movement and

combat are similar to the standard game, but now there is a host of other things that can affect this. HQs can add fire-power, there are cruise missile strikes, special forces raids, and much, much more. There is a complete air system, with counters for each type of squadron, air combat, escort, and defense suppression get added to the mix. On top of all that there is an abstracted naval system where CVBGs, SAGs, and Amphib groups battle it out on the high seas.



This is where the game begins to move towards a lifestyle choice! The advanced game is definitely where its at to learn about the complexities of modern combat, but it will take time to get through even one turn. There is so much going on, from raiding SAM levels on the air defense tracks, missile strikes on HQs, air squadrons fighting it out in the skies, to clearing a sea lane to land reinforcements, that at times it feels overwhelming. You can even add nuclear weapons if you think there's not enough going on already!

This is a very good entry to the series and presents interesting challenges to both sides. The components, especially the player's reference cards and maps, are well done, with a rules package that leaves you with very few questions. The advanced game, however, will take some dedication and the standard game is a bit more involved than you would think.



sheets, rules, a scenario book/specific game rules, and all kinds of reference cards and tables. By now the system has been pretty well defined, so you know what most of the components will be in each game, but that still doesn't prevent one from being surprised at how good the overall presentation is.

The counter sheets mainly cover the Chinese and Vietnamese forces, but there are also U.S., British, French, and many other combatants in the area who are represented. This is for the various scenarios and campaigns where there can be different levels of intervention by outside powers. Everything has been well thought out, from the positioning of tracks on the strategic display to the layout of the various combat tables. While this series of games is a bit more expensive than the average GMT game, you definitely get more than what you paid for.

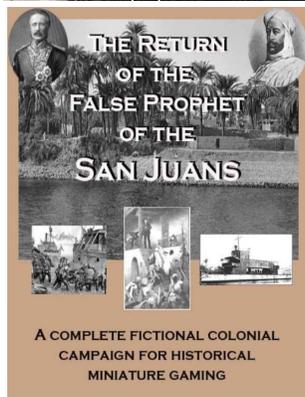
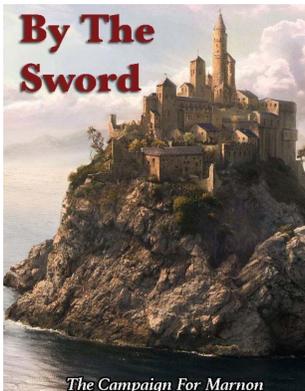
WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

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/Medieval, TSATF, Phantoms, Mustangs, Saga, Battlegroup Panzergrenadier, Saga, Ronin, BKC4, board wargames, and more...

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Scale creep. Two of the most horrifying words that could ever be spoken to any miniatures gamer. Many may remember back when WW2 wargaming was done with 1/76th scale models and Airfix HO figures, most ACW battles were 20mm, fantasy was 25mm, and 15mm was used for Napoleonic. Then slowly the 15s became 18s, 20mm slowly passed out of sight, 25mm became 28mm (heroic 25mm!), and then there was the rise of 6mm followed by the in between scale of 10mm. Gamers tremble when a new scale comes out as new gamers will get into it, then you have the decision of getting into as well or continue to use your now "outdated" miniatures. Just when the dust had settled after about 20 years of chaos, the subject of scale creep is back.



First off, 32mm is now the new "heroic 28mm"! Many of the latest Kickstarters are featuring miniatures that are at least 32mm and many are closer to 36mm. Not to mention that some games have complete sets of miniatures at closer to 40mm or just a horde



of various scales. Naturally, this makes a gamer have to purchase a certain company's figures to make sure they're all the same scale. Do you really need a new scale? Not only is this scale creep, but proprietary creep as well, ensuring that other companies won't crowd in on your chosen scale. Even Victrix, who has large ranges in 28mm has now come out with an interesting range of WW2 figures and vehicles in 12mm!

Why? 15mm too crowded? Why would gamers with large collections of 15mm or 6mm jump to this scale?

On top of that you have the Pico 3mm armor scale, new 40mm skirmish figures from some companies, and a bewildering assortment of new 15mm figs, many of which are not 15mm! While the choices are mesmerizing, there is a small problem emerging. You will either need to convince someone else to come along when you try one of these new scales or you will be needing to provide all of the figures for a game! Not a big problem if you're doing a fantasy skirmish game in



36mm where there's less than 20 figs involved, but if you're moving to 12mm WW2 for your big Market Garden campaign, that would be a serious project. I think what we're seeing is that the 6mm, 15mm, and 28mm markets are well established and getting a new range of figures to be noticed is going to be tough, therefore the answer is launch a new scale! It is going to be interesting to see if the new scales take hold or not in the hobby.