

Operations

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Table of Contents

Game Support

[Lonely Games](#)

Solitaire Play by Dave Demko.

[Chrome a la Mode](#)

Civil War Brigade Series by Gerry Palmer.

[Sand, Surf, and Survival](#)

Or, How to Plan Your Next Beach Party by Dave Demko.

[The Birth of Guderian's Blitzkrieg](#)

Game Production by Owen Fuller.

[A Couple More for the OCS](#)

Optional Rules by Dean N. Essig.

[Comments on Stalingrad Pocket Combat Results Table](#)

Standard Combat Series by John B. Gilmer, Jr.

[Messing Up with the Big Boys](#)

Revised Stalingrad Pocket Victory Conditions by Dean N. Essig.

[Afrika](#)

A Status Report on SCS #2 by Dean N. Essig.

Other

[Maneuver Warfare and The Wargamer](#)

Part 4: Bulldozerkrieg. By Dean N. Essig.

[The "Game Company" Game](#)

Part One by Dave Powell.

[Saving Origins from the Infidels](#)

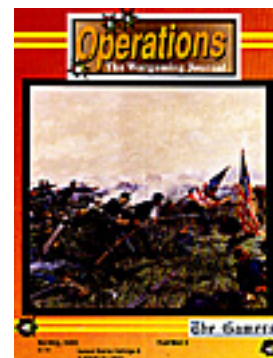
And Other Thoughts... by Dean N. Essig.

[External Business Report](#)

A Look at 1992 by Dean N. Essig.

[Internal Business Report](#)

The Gamers, Inc. 1993s. by Dean N. Essig.



Departments

[In Brief](#) Editorial: Design Front

[Out Brief](#) Commentary: The Great Game Glut of '92.

[Game Rating Chart](#) All Companies' Products 1993.

Game Errata and Q&A

[Errata and Q&A: Civil War Brigade Series](#)

[Errata and Q&A: Tactical Combat Series](#)

[Errata and Q&A: Operational Combat Series](#)

[Errata and Q&A: Standard Combat Series](#)

[Large version of cover \(slow: 108K\)](#)

[Back to the list of Operations Issues](#)

[Back to the MagWeb Master Magazine List](#)

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Lonely Games

Solitaire Play

by Dave Demko

*"I'm afraid that sometimes
You'll play lonely games, too.
Games you can't win,
'Cause you'll play against you."
--Dr. Seuss*

Last year I came across a review of *Barren Victory* which said that the game's command rules make solitaire play "impossible." But I had already enjoyed many hours of solo play, blissfully ignorant that I was attempting - and accomplishing - the impossible. (Serves me right for not keeping up with the experts in the hobby press.)

Yes, the CWB command system shines in games against a live opponent, when two different brains' plans, refracted through the Order Acceptance Table, collide. Solitaire play cannot reproduce the guesswork and gambling, the jubilation and frustration that characterizes a live playing of *Barren Victory*. But for that matter, solitaire play always lacks the competitive tension of two minds trying to outmaneuver each other. In this regard CWB games are no different from Blue and Gray folios.

My experience suggests that two sorts of problems are specific to solitaire play: workload and total player control. Far from making solo play impossible, the CWB and TCS command rules help me overcome these two problems.

For this article I kept notes on solitaire playings of *Force Eagle's War* and *The Sands of War*. The scenarios were similar: a modern US force attacking a Soviet (or Soviet-equipped) enemy in a positional defense. In effect, I set up a laboratory to test my ideas about solitaire.

As far as the workload goes, there's no escaping the job of moving all the units and rolling all the dice. In fact, the TCS artillery system calls for a fairly large amount of work each turn. Some might say that the process of drawing op sheets and calculating their implementation rolls adds more work, but I disagree. Putting together a decent op sheet certainly takes time, but time spent in preparing initial op sheets leads to smoother, quicker play once I start moving counters. With a script to follow, I spend

less time at the table rethinking and second guessing both sides' moves. As a result, the game turns click right along and I don't get worn out even though I'm doing all the work.

Pounding Sand

For the "Deliberate Attack" solitaire scenario in *FEW*, I drew up two different Soviet op sheets. Another day I sat down and drew up the US attack plan. When I found some time to play, I was able to set up quickly and start blasting away. With *The Sands of War*, I did much less pre-planning. I played the "Makfar al Busayyah" scenario (the US versus the Iraqis) two times. The first game I dove right into by looking at the victory conditions, setting up the Iraqi defense, and prying it open with the US mech-heavy battalion task force. By turn 3, I had found a victory condition loophole that would let the Iraqis play for a tie, but I resisted the temptation and played on to a US victory. For the second game I eliminated the big error from my original Iraqi set-up.

Though not required to draw op sheets for the GDW game, I did record the hexes where I wanted Iraqi entrenchments, etc., and I wrote these notes: "Iraq-set up infantry screen in wadi to allow for close assault tactics. US-plot GS [general support fire from MLRS] onto 7th Army HQ [a big victory point target] for turn 2; spend first turn setting up smoke screen." I suppose I've become used to the advantages of getting my ducks in a row on paper before the shooting starts. Doing pre-game preparation certainly led to more enjoyable play. The second play-through was a much closer and more interesting game.

The Random Element

I mentioned above the problem of time spent "rethinking and second guessing both sides' moves," and this point leads me to the second, and much more important, problem with solitaire play: the gamer's total control. I mean control, not knowledge. A solitaire player is always, inescapably, going to be omniscient about each side's plans and intentions (unless he plays with no plans, improvising all the way through). But when a fair-minded player can continuously adapt those plans to the current situation on the map, the result is typically deadlock. It is for me often enough. Though I can always surprise myself and have a dramatic moment when I suddenly notice a previously overlooked possibility (like a way to get a flank shot in a CWB game), there are no big surprises, the kind that take several game turns to develop. If a player figures out a good strategy for one side, how does he decide when, or if, to let the other side make appropriate preparations against the threat? Maybe when the disposition of the forces makes the plan obvious to anybody looking at the map? But how does the player, who already knows the plan, decide when it would be obvious to-or, harder still, suspected by-someone else looking at the map? The random element in Dean's command rules eliminates this problem.

Often I will "play fair" in a solitaire game and so end up with a pyrrhic victory. What fun. But the Command Prep table takes away some control and with it my ability to fine tune the battle to a bloody stalemate. This consideration is especially important in *FEW*, where the weapons are like silver bullets and even the tanks are like so many werewolves.

"Wait," you say. "Me solitaire scenarios in *FEW* are too short for implementing mid-game op sheets, even if the special rules didn't specifically prohibit doing so." True. And therefore I had to invent a way to produce the same good effects that the command rules automatically give in a longer game. My solution was drawing a pair of Soviet op sheets. The Red Army gets a motor rifle company, three Hinds, and some support troops. In one plan I tried a compact deployment, a thick defense in front to the Americans' first objective, with helicopters assigned to counterattack around the Soviet left flank (the potential weak spot). On the other sheet I spread out for better artillery observation and interlocking fire from the ATGMs. Both plans featured infantry dismounted and dug-in in the improved position hexes on and around the American objectives. I figured that trying to maneuver on foot or in BMPs was even more suicidal than hunkering down and getting pounded with artillery. I let these plans sit a few days so I could forget where I had laid the minefields and then drew the US op sheet. Finally I rolled a die to see which Soviet sheet I would use.

I used another randomizing house rule for air point usage, a system in the *FEW* game rules that, for my money, is harder to play solitaire than the command system. Each hour I rolled both sides' air points, chose the number I wanted the US to assign for air superiority, and then made a die roll for Soviet air superiority: on a 1-4 the Ruskies spent everything to contest the airspace, while on a 5-6 they spent their points half and half on air superiority and attack missions. I gave the maximum air effort better chances on the theory that the Soviet knows that US ground attack aircraft are more capable than his own and will therefore be motivated to negate that advantage when possible. As it turned out, the Americans rolled low air points each hour, and the random Soviet effort kept the A-10s and F-16s from entering the battle area.

All I had to do was add a few die rolls (one for the op sheets and two for the hourly air point allocations) to keep the US side (the "active player" so to speak) from anticipating the Soviet strategy in detail.

GDW's First Battle series allows the defender to use dummy counters set up under firing position markers [which indicate units currently eligible to use reaction, i.e. opportunity, fire]. To use these dummies in solitaire play, I would build stacks of defending units, mixing in the dummies any old way. Then I would put a firing position marker on top of each stack and shift the stacks around on the table in front of me like a shell game. Then I'd set up the stacks in defensive positions on the map, to discover where the real units were only when the attackers spotted them. This solution was rather unsatisfying because it tended to impose artificial stupidity instead of artificial intelligence on the defender. By randomizing the defense on the op sheet level rather than unit by unit, I could at least be sure I was playing against a coherent

defense in *FEW*. The "Makfar al Busayyah" scenario does not give the Iraqis any dummies, and I didn't miss them at all. Playing *The Sands of War* I also went up against coherent defenses (one of which showed some weak thinking, but thinking none the less). But in this case I could not build in any uncertainty about what the attacker was going up against.

Would You Care to Order Now?

The Sands of War uses a command system similar to that in Frank Chadwick's earlier *Assault* (my modern tactical game of choice for several years). Units must be in command control to advance toward spotted enemy units or enter firing position. The player commands his units by keeping them near, or at least in the line of sight, of commander units. A commander can issue one order per turn, either a LEAD command that gives it a two-hex command radius from its own hex or a TRANSMIT command that gives a one-hex radius around a subordinate unit. In addition, battalion staff units can act as commanders or save their orders from turn to turn. A player can therefore choose to save up command points and spend them all at once for a big push. As the *Sands* rules put it, "This represents operational planning by the staff unit."

What this rule really simulates is not so much planning per se as the staff's ability to make an accurate and timely analysis of the battle, leading to the flexibility to take appropriate action as the situation changes. The fundamental difference between *Sands* and the TCS is that the *Sands* rule does not require the player to do any actual planning. The player can accumulate orders with his staff units without having to commit ahead of time to how he will use those orders. In effect, the player is under less and less pressure to plan ahead as the game goes on. During the first few turns, before the staff has built up a number of orders, leader placement is critical. Should the player keep whole battalions together and use LEAD commands, or should he get smaller battle groups moving with TRANSMIT commands? To handle these questions well, the player needs a coherent plan in mind, if not on paper. But later in the game, saved orders enable a shift to more turn-by-turn improvisation.

Cry Havoc

My first playing of the Busayyah scenario brought this point home. My mistake had been to let the T-55 battalion defend the rough ground on the Iraqi left. Though they took out an M1A1 platoon in the initial firefight these tankers folded quickly (I was using the cohesion rules, and the T-55s' morale crumbled). The Americans were behind the Iraqi main line of resistance on Game-Turn 3 (out of 8 for the scenario). The victory conditions call for the Americans to wipe out an Iraqi army HQ and occupy several objectives. Victory points add up each turn the Americans occupy their objectives, so the motive to take these with simultaneous or rapidly sequenced assaults is strong.

Upon breakthrough I used one of my two leaders to run in some tanks and Bradleys

toward the HQ, which soon died under a hail of MLRS fire. Then I spread out against the dispersed Iraqi objectives, using interior lines to keep the numerically superior enemy from concentrating against me. I had originally spread out the Iraqi logistics sites (victory point objectives) on the theory that the Americans would have to take more time and cross more killing zones to get at all the objectives. But with two commanders and one staff unit with one saved command, I had four orders to use the next turn to send my battle groups off to their individual objectives. Once they were in contact and the firefight began, I needed fewer orders per turn (to get my guys into firing position). From then on it was a matter of pounding the Iraqis with firepower and capturing the objectives with easy same-hex attacks.

For another play-through, I planned to get some use out of the Iraqi infantry. A wadi cuts diagonally across two thirds of the map between the US entry edge and their objectives (an airfield, two towns, and logistics site counters the Iraqi can place pretty much at will). Wadis in *Sands* work like gullies in *PanzerBiltz*: they run through hexes instead of along hexsides, and units in those hexes can stay out of LOS of non-adjacent enemy units. By putting a thick infantry wall in the wadi, I could force the US units to come up close where they'd be vulnerable to in-hex counterattacks. Even feeble infantry can do well against armor with such attacks because they can fire at the vehicles' flank armor. The US response was to creep a commander on foot into some scrub where it could remain concealed while calling artillery and to dismount some infantry and work up along another wadi to meet the Iraqis on more advantageous terms. The tactics worked, but they consumed valuable time. Unfortunately, I ignored my informal written orders, ran a couple M3 platoons up too close before I had set up a smoke screen, and got these troops blown away. These losses would affect the later course of the fight.

The good guys did break through, but they still had to dig out defenders on the objectives and reduce all Iraqi commands to their morale break point. The US earns victory points for objectives only once he captures them all. The Iraqi earns points for killing Americans. My dilemma was between pushing hard at the risk of game losing US casualties and preserving my forces and hoping not to run out of time. I chose the second course and ended up playing to a tie.

Gunfight at the Palestine Corral

In my *FEW* game, I discovered that my op sheets ended up putting the whole American company up against about two thirds of the Soviet force. The scenario calls for the US to take both Al Hamidiya and Al Murassas. On my randomly-selected op sheet, I had set up my Soviet motor rifle company with one platoon in each of the prepared position areas on these two hills, with the MG units and their BMPs in prepared positions just west of Olive Grove Farm #1. The Hinds started near Olive Grove Farm #2 the AA teams were up front, on Al Hamidiya, and I had mines in front of Al Hamidiya and Hill 226. filling the gaps between the wadis (which are impassable to vehicles). Failure instructions for the two forward platoons were to fall back and defend Al Murassas. The defense is fairly obvious, but I had to prepare for a

fire fight more than for some fancy thrust and parry work. I used a Prepared Defense, with all the infantry squads dug in.

My plan for the US used one main thrust plus support units moving on secondary axes. All forces enter from Area I on the first turn. The M1A1s and the M2s in my tank-heavy team moved up to Hill 210. There the Bradleys, along with ITVs, were assigned to provide overwatch as the tanks carried the assault onto Al Hamidiya from the northeast. The scout platoon move up through the Border Station and used terrain masking to stay out of a firefight. Their mission was to survive long enough to use their minerollers. The mortars set up near Hill 232 and the AH-64s took position behind Hill 225, read to execute pop-ups.

The US plan used three phase lines: 1 east to west just north of Hills 215 and 219, 2 the same line but with a salient taking in Objective Pete (Al Hamidiya), and 3 from Olive Grove Farm #1 (the second position for the attack copters) east to take in Objective Cyndi (Al Murassas).

How did it go? Despite a good pre-planned barrage onto TRPs, there were some holes in the US smoke screen, and I lost an M1A1, an M107, and an ITV-- all to the same BMP -- as I tried to put someone in position to observe artillery. On a mere three overwatch triggers, the Communist crew tolled five consecutive sixes. Nevertheless, the attack unfolded as planned, despite more casualties from Soviet HE and Chem rounds. The Ruskies were shooting persistent agents on and around the US units to create a sort of "chemical FASCAM." In fact, I had to drive some US vehicles in circuitous paths to avoid the contaminated hexes. The Hinds did not come north to threaten the US staging area (the blind zones behind the hills) because of the AA risk and because they were already slugging it out with the Apaches. In fact, I knocked out two of the Hinds with Hellfires and got the other with a Chem strike. Likewise, I lost one AH-64 at NOE to Soviet chemicals.

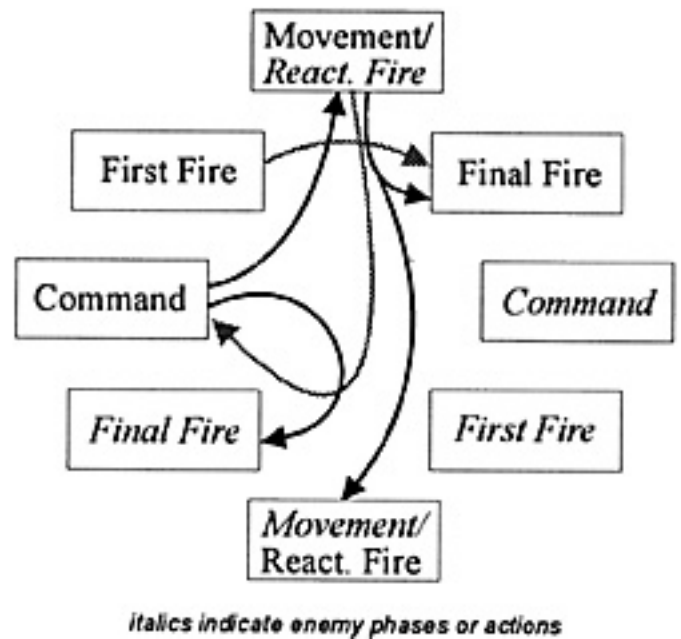
At one point I marched a Stinger team right into a Soviet barrage, where it vanished. Oops, I had forgotten the Soviet artillery plot during a coffee break. This example show how the artillery rules don't necessarily backfire in solitaire. A player who understands the sequence of play and the mode rules often has a good idea of where to aim, so solitaire artillery fire has no unfair accuracy advantage. And it's easier than you might think to forget the details of the fire plan you wrote down the turn before. Furthermore, the op sheet graphic restricts you from dodging around target areas. On the other hand, the Soviets in my game had to cancel two out of three fire missions on both the 0920 and 0940 turns because US units, moving within the freedom allowed by their op sheet, didn't always show up in the target areas.

After getting beaten on by American firepower, the Soviets decided to execute some failure instructions. The infantry remained dug in on Objective Pete, vowing to make the running dogs work for this hill and frankly unwilling to commit suicide by flipping to move mode and leaving their foxholes. The DPICM fire was vicious. The surviving

BMPs, however, fell back to Al Murassas, losing a couple vehicles to overwatch. The M3s rolled some mines, the MIAs rolled onto Objective Pete, and the end game was on.

The effects of suppression and special armor made the Soviets' AT rolls useless, and company morale was in bad shape. So the combination of fire and overruns wiped out the remaining troops on Objective Pete easily. After a shoot out with the last BMPs, the story was the same on Objective Cyndi, and the Americans won, leaving only one Soviet AA unit to escape the map. But US casualties were such that this would have been a costly win in the context of the solitaire campaign. Though the casualties alarmed me, I stuck to my op sheet, kept my faith in the principle of concentration of effort, and finally swept the map.

One point of similarity between my games is that their short durations (8 turns for the *Sands* scenario, 7 for the *FEW*) motivated me to use bolder and bloodier tactics than I'd choose for a longer game. In each game I got a good number of US units chewed up each time in my race against the clock.

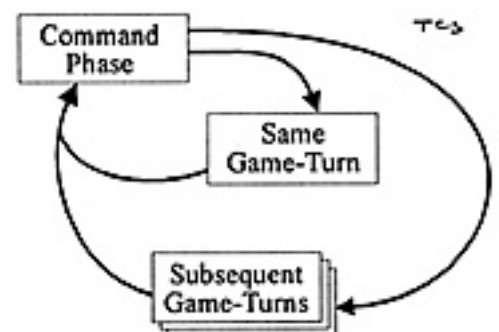


Circles Within Circles

A few pictures help me visualize the similarities and differences between the approaches to both specific command rules and the decision cycle in general in *Sands* and *FEW*.

The following pictures represent the sequences of play in the TCS and *Sands of War*. Each box is a phase of the game turn, and the sequence of play flows clockwise. Arrows start in the phases when the player has to make a decision and point to the phase when that decision has its consequences on the map.

On the turn-to-turn level, both systems are similar. The player makes choices that will affect his units abilities, especially the ability to fire overwatch (or "reaction fire") in the present and immediately following game turn. The solitaire player can pre-visualize a whole game turn,



especially in *Sands*, which uses no die rolls to determine who gets to move or shoot first. But the real difference, not surprisingly, lies in the long-term effects of the op sheet system. Here the decisions are fewer and more macroscopic. And, of course, the player can only guess when they will take effect. The command prep table yields the same uncertainty even when only one person is using it.



Lessons Learned

Since defenders can begin a *Sands* scenario set up in firing position, they can be remote from their leaders and still fight effectively, shooting reaction fire and defending in place. If those defenders have to redeploy, then they'll need some leadership. Similarly, TCS rules allowing implemented initial op sheets, especially Prepared Defenses, provide a strong motive to set up a good defense, one in which it makes sense to sit tight once the shooting starts.

The advantages of the *Sands* command system are that it limits the player's absolute control and, through the use of saved points, allows a player to achieve "surprise" if he happens to come up with a good idea, but only if he had the forethought to save up enough orders to implement it in a big way. The disadvantage is that saved command points can also let the other side work quickly to nullify that surprise. Trying to play fair, the solitaire player may feel a special urge to keep both sides pretty close in the orders-saving race. The rules for GS artillery, leaders, and firing position all require forethought only into the next game turn. As a result, a scenario can devolve into a force-on-force slugfest unless, as in my first game of "Makfar al Busayyah", one side manages to exploit a mobility advantage.

What's missing from *Sands* is any uncertainty about the tactical situation. *Sands* scenarios assign the roles of Attacker and Defender, and the general shape of the battle is largely determined by the victory conditions. In contrast, *Assault* has a move mode/ combat mode rule that lets move-mode units maneuver freely without the turn-by-turn expenditure of command points. The result is an operational dimension. In my solitaire games of *Assault*, I usually ended up with some sort of head-to-head clash, but the exact battlefield and attacker/defender roles were more fluid than in *Sands*.

The advantage of the TCS command system, as I have already hinted, is that it is a ready-made method for limiting player control and injecting uncertainty into the scenario. Its disadvantage is that it makes possible a complete orchestration of the battle beforehand. This disadvantage is acute only in short scenarios, in which planning is effectively restricted to the initial op sheets. In longer games the Command Prep Table (or Acceptance Table in the CWB games) ensures that even the best-laid plans contain some surprises. For the "Deliberate Attack" scenario in *FEWI*

had to inject my own random element to determine which Soviet plan to use; in a longer game the standard command rules would keep me guessing about when a new plan would kick in. In such a game the specific tactical situation is up in the air at first and takes shape over time.

Interestingly, I ended up wanting to use more of the command system in my *FEW* game than the solitaire campaign rules allow. By 0900 (game turn 4 out of 7) I was wishing I had drawn some more alternates for the Soviets. And if I had had time, I might have used a new op sheet to revise the US attack and keep casualties down. Slightly longer scenarios give the solitaire player room to use the full command system. For example, I have played solitaire games of "Second Attack on Kommerscheidt" (16 turns) and "Return to Vossenack" (12 turns) from *Objective Schmidt* with satisfying results. I started with op sheets based on the historical orders but went on to use alternates, reserves, and new op sheets in various mixtures.

If you have a talent for improvisation and enjoy seat-of-your pants, opportunistic play, then the "impossible" task of TCS or CWB solitaire might not be for you. Grab *Stalingrad Pocket* or one of XTR's "panzer-pusher" games and have at it. On the other hand, you might repeat my experiment and discover that the work you put into writing orders and drawing op sheets can lead to some wild and wooly solitaire play.

When I cracked open my first Gamers game, *ITQF*, I (like the *Barren Victory* reviewer) assumed, "Hmm. This command stuff probably won't work solitaire." I went onto learn the game by playing through roll-your-own versions of Hooker's and Burnside's attacks. But I quickly discovered that playing with the command rules made solitaire a lot less cut-and-dried. To see what I mean, check out the "Sander's Field" scenario in *BRS*. The historical orders and the victory conditions make the big decisions for you, leaving you with a limited, albeit fun, tactical exercise.

Consulting the Oracle

OK, if my arguments don't convince you, turn to a genuine wargame expert. In his *Complete Wargames Handbook* (1992 edition), Jim Dunnigan gives some advice for solitaire. He suggests you analyze each side's capabilities and the victory conditions, group the individual units into larger groups, write up orders Or objectives for those groups, and establish criteria for deciding when those instructions are no longer viable. If this approach brings to mind terms like "op sheet," "task organization," and "failure instructions," you must already be familiar with one of the two game systems I know of which, while designed for face-to-face play, already have excellent solitaire mechanisms built in.

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Chrome a la Mode

Civil War Brigade Series

by Gerry Palmer

The Civil War Brigade Series (CWB) has now visited seven different battlefields. The popularity of the series has risen steadily since its inauguration some five years ago. With the possible exception of ASL, no other system that has been around this long still enjoys support by its original design house.

That having been said, the suggestion of optional rules might appear to be a foolhardy exercise in "gilding the lily". The main focus of the rules is to cover the unique command and control aspects of the CWB series. Consequently, Dean has intentionally kept the chrome to a minimum to allow players an opportunity to concentrate on the system presented.

I am going to assume that anyone reading this article might well be a veteran of the system and therefore be interested in layering on some optional rules. Many of us have assimilated the sequence of play through repetition and the fluidity of the game is now second nature. The extra 'work' required by these proposed changes will not detract from the elegance of the system. A system that is fast being considered the premier pre-20th century tactical game system.

It is for those intrepid souls that want to flesh out the CWB that I present the following optional rules.

1. If in the act of entering close combat the unit passes through the ZOC of an enemy unit other than the intended target, the following adjustment applies. If the close combat procedure advances to the Resolutions and Odds Table, roll one die. If the result is even, reduce the attacker's unit strength by one fire level. This adjustment is for this resolution only and reverts to its true level immediately thereafter. We must guard our tactical flanks, now, mustn't we?
2. Limbered artillery and mounted cavalry brigades that are part of a division or corps with no orders or orders having a D1 or D2 status must change formation after one turn of inactivity.

Let's face it. Keeping guns and caissons tied to horse teams and riders getting saddle-

sore for hours to avoid the movement point cost of a formation change is a subtle bending of the tactical intent. Every time I see an opponent do this, and the boys suddenly take off for their destinations once their orders are accepted, in my mind's eye I see the beginning of the LeMans. "Gentlemen, start your engines ... !"

3. When playing either the campaign scenario or the first short scenario chronologically of any of the games, adjust the low ammo rules as follows. During the first two hours, low ammo occurs only on a roll of 12; during the next two hours low ammo only occurs on a roll of 11. Thereafter all normal low ammo rules apply. The rationale for this is that the men were fully equipped and ready for combat at the outset.

4. On a leader wound roll of 11, the side causing the wound secretly rolls one die. Count ahead that many turns. At the beginning of the Movement and Close Combat phase of that turn, he informs his opponent that the wounded commander is now available for duty. Return him to his command in a hex of the owner's choosing given the limit of his command radius. Ignore this rule for leaders that have returned from wounds previously in the game. They've suffered enough and deserve to have the rest of the battle off to convalesce! All orders not yet received are done so with the leader (receiver) rating of the leader present at the time of acceptance.

Why the opponent control? This prevents the army commander from delaying a non-urgent order to avoid dealing with the oft-times inferior replacement leader. If you are aware of your commander's time of return, you will be more likely to wait until he's patched up to issue an order to that corp/division.

I have a friend who says that every Civil War game ever designed has too many leader casualties. The CWB is unfortunately not immune to this phenomenon, in my opinion. The subtle changes in the revised second edition of the rules notwithstanding (picking off leaders alone in a hex with a long range artillery cannonade), I would tend to agree. I'm not much of a one for leading from the trenches, either.

In one *August Fury* campaign game, by mid-afternoon of 29 August, there was a cumulative total of nine leaders carried off the field. Unfortunately for my Union opponent, Franz Sigel was not one of them! These rules are an attempt to dilute this somewhat while making the leader loss rule more dynamic at the same time.

5. AH units must be inactive (only in line/dismounted formation without moving) for six consecutive hours between the last twilight turn and the first dawn turn inclusive. Recovering stragglers is allowed.

If this requirement is not fulfilled, the morale level of all affected units is reduced by one letter for the following day. Designate these units with an appropriate marker. Units thus affected must rest the aforementioned six hours the following night-two consecutive 'all nighters' are not allowed.

The addition of the optional rules for breastworks and hidden movement (as well as the dreaded Hood Addiction Table in *EAW!*) increases the likelihood of activity during the night. Consequently a fatigue rule would be appropriate.

6a. After three turns of orders languishing in delay status (D1 or D2), apply a +1 die roll modifier to all subsequent delay reduction die rolls. Even the most mentally apoplectic leader would get his butt in gear after a time. This rule aids those unlucky players who can never seem to roll a one when they need to--present company included!

6b. After six turns of orders in delay status, assume the order is lost or distorted and consider the command to be in no order status. If the army commander reissues *different* orders (due to arrive later than the 6-turn limit) on or before the sixth turn, still use the acceptance table column shift modifier upon their arrival.

If the six turn period has elapsed, the army commander may issue the same orders in hopes of a better die roll on the acceptance table this time.

7. The Boog-a-loo down Broadway rule or "Excuse me, could you kindly tell me where I might find the General?" Apply the following adjustments to the arrival times of all orders that are either aide-written or aide-oral due to the difficulty of finding the recipient on the field of battle:

7a. If it is a night turn, roll a die. If the result is even, add one turn/hour to the arrival time.

7b. During a night turn, automatically add one turn/hour to the arrival time of the order if the route ventures from a pike, road (primary or secondary), trail, or railroad hex. This is besides the roll mentioned in 7a.

7c. If it is a day turn and the path traced from the army commander traverses a woods hex without the benefit of a pike, road (primary or secondary), trail, or railroad hex, apply 7a.

7d. If the provisions of 7c are present during a night turn, add two turns to the arrival time of the order. Ignore the roll in 7a if these conditions apply.

Go ahead. Hike through 200 yards of dense woods, in the dark, with no Coleman lantern to guide you. See how long it takes you to end up where you want to be. I dare ya. Think this is too harsh? Don't ignore it. Just keep your leaders on the roads and trace the path over them even if it is more circuitous. In other words, keep your leaders where the aides can find them more readily.

I present the following play aid ideas as an addendum to Rod Miller's fine article in

Operations #1. He provided tips to facilitate a reduction in counter handling needed to check unit/supply strengths. These work especially well for players who own several, if not all, of the games in the CWB series. Otherwise, one can easily substitute counters from other games.

Collect all the counters not specific to a particular game into a counter tray or similar plastic compartment organizer for use with all games. This eliminates the possibility of running out of the necessary fire level markers, et al], and creates the following possibilities:

Write specific strengths on the detached artillery markers of from "1" to "3" (the maximum detachable strength). Leave some blank, but a good half dozen of each should do the trick. This eliminates the need for separate strength markers under the detachments.

Several of the older games in the series used white-on black A/B fire level markers. Use these with the new Green A/Yellow B markers, much as Rod has pointed out, for not only artillery and supply levels but for the fire levels as well. With the old and the new markers available, the following strict usage renders the letter on the counter redundant. It is therefore unnecessary to pick up the piece or look it up on the roster in order to know the fire level.

Use the old AA/AB markers to denote all AA levels;
 Use the new AA/AB markers to denote all AB levels;
 Use the old A/B markers to denote all A levels;
 and lastly, use the new A/B markers to denote all B levels.

Consequently, you now have 'edge of the counter codes' if you will, allowing a glance at the edges in all cases to give you the information of the fire level. Using the above, the colors are the strength:

White =AA, Green=AB, Black =A, Yellow =B

Since this method renders reading the letters unimportant, the fire level markers can now serve double duty as artillery or supply wagon strength markers as well. I agree with Rod that a gradual 'paling out' of color to show further reduction is a logical choice. Thus:

Black=4 pts., Green--3 pts., Yellow=2 pts., White=1 pt.

While none of this is obviously earth shattering, it keeps those of us who are 'dexterously challenged' from having to fumble unnecessarily with stacks of counters on the game board. Besides there's only one person I know with worse thumbs than myself...

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Sand, Surf, and Survival

Or, How to Plan Your Next Beach Party

by Dave Demko

The Gamers retreat looked like a good opportunity to get into a full game of *Omaha*. I drew up an American landing plan and German op sheets ahead of time so I'd be ready to play either side. As it turned out, Dave Friedrichs agreed to play the Germans against me. When Sam Simons noticed me rolling the LCT(R) fires, he joined the American war effort and ended up leading our most successful drive off the beach. My purpose here is to explain the rationale behind the plans I made and to point out the lessons I learned putting the American plan into action.

The *Omaha* game rules allow implemented op sheets for the German reinforcements only if the German player draws them up before the game. I gave line-item counter-attack orders to the variable reinforcements for Scenario 1, assigning them to take (or retake) objectives including St. Laurent, Colleville, and the various draws. I reasoned that if I were lucky enough to roll reinforcements, they might be able to get right into some useful action rather than move for two turns and then sit down to prepare op sheets. Of course, I'd have to hope that the orders would be sensible. But considering the victory conditions and the historical imperative they reflect (stop the Americans at the water's edge), towns and single breach areas are sensible objectives.

It's a bit of a chore writing all these orders. Dave Friedrichs ("Fred" in a room with too many Daves) thought so. And here's the first lesson. If you want to accomplish much as either the German or the American, be willing to put in some time on careful preparation. Both players have to cope with strong randomizing influences. The German has all those release, reserve activation, and variable reinforcement rolls, while the American has landing scatter. Facing such limits on control of his units, a player without good plans can start feeling that he has lost control and can do little more than react to the local situations fate deals to him.

Although the full game is too much to take on alone, I have had lots of fun playing the one-map invasion scenarios solitaire. In my experience the random factors make for interesting solo games. Obviously the American's plan is to blast his way off the beach, while the German wants to defend in place and counterattack if possible. So there are no big secrets to pretend you don't know. The landing system deals the American a mostly unforeseeable unit distribution, and the command-phase dice rolls keep the German reaction an unknown until shortly before it happens. As a result, the

solitaire player can concentrate on tactical nuts and bolts. Of course, you need a little detachment to avoid choosing the Americans' modes according to where you know you plotted the German artillery.

Solitaire play did not prepare me, though, for the magnitude of the American's problems in a full-scale assault. Having twice as much beach to attack more than doubles the complexity of your options and your chances to make bad decisions.

Aiming the American Scattergun

Give all your assault units line-item op sheets if you like, but plan from the assumption that you won't execute any of those orders. In loading boats and choosing beaches, the American's goal must be to put good fighting formations on the beach despite the landing scramble. The two principles for achieving this goal are combined arms and redundancy. Combined arms in this context means bringing to bear infantry, point weapons, and mortars for an attack in a particular beach sector. Redundancy means sending enough troops to do the job even after heavy losses.

First, combined arms. Infantry units are essential, since only they can cross the shingle, breach obstacles, and occupy breach security hexes. But considering the time and danger involved in making AT rolls against pillboxes, much of the job of knocking out those German strong points belongs to the tanks and AT guns. (The Navy can blast away at pill boxes in quiet sectors, but pill box hits there do little good except on the landing survival roll table.) Mortars are critical for laying smoke. I should mention at this point that we were playing with a proposed 3rd edition rule that prohibits 60 mm mortars from firing smoke, so every 81mm and four-duce was important. Try to assign units to boats/boat groups and boats to beaches so that you maximize the chances of landing combined arms packages without too much dispersal.

You'll never get such useful packages without "overassigning" resources. Here's where redundancy matters. If you want to get two AT guns up to the shingle and into action, send five or six. You never have enough LCTs for bringing in tanks, so take advantage of those numerous Load Class I, 2-load-point ATs. It's too bad that, as armor-less B-type targets, they die so easily. Pack in those ATs wherever they'll fit, and try to assign more than one to a boat or boat group. On the other hand, you should never have more than one smoke-capable mortar in a boat. Because of their range, you don't need to mass these mortars, and you sure don't want to put all your eggs in one seasick basket. Tanks can move up and down the shingle to where you need them, and mortars can shoot pretty far given the decent visibility off the beach. But because they are such soft targets, AT guns have to right from the shingle near where they land. Fortunately you have lots of them. So send lots. As for infantry, remember that a good portion of them will get suppressed each turn, so you'd better try to send a company to do a platoon's work.

The tactical value of smoke is no secret to TCS veterans, so I'll make only a few remarks about smoke use in the specific situation of *Omaha*. Except for the odd pillbox squad, the German will offer no Area targets to your troops on the beach. That's fine, since you'll want to use mortars to lay smoke. Your artillery has too few tubes and too few smoke rounds to do much, so those flexible, accurate mortars are key. You need to blind the pillboxes and, more importantly, block observation for German artillery and mortar fire.

You'll never be able to smoke the whole beach, so pick the critical area and set up good smoke screens to create blind zones. Critical areas are wherever you're trying to cross the shingle or breach obstacles plus wherever units on the beach must be in move mode. A curtain of smoke between you and the pillboxes helps you move up, but when it's time to close in for those AT rolls, drop smoke directly on the pillbox to earn the "Firer in Smoke" modifier on the Area Fire Table. Remember too that units in a smoke hex cannot observe for indirect fire.

Often your mortars will be able to self-observe their fire, except when the German "hides" a pill box in a draw or smokes in your units with big HE missions. And you have one reason to be glad the landing system scrambled your units: observers for battalion mortars are probably scattered around and have multiple lines of sight. It's true that you can try to form "massed batteries" according to 4.2 to get even more observer flexibility. But mortars trying to move around are going to waste and probably getting wasted, and if they do manage to form a massed battery, the German will blast it.

Landing DD tanks swimming is a good way to throw away your armor. Looking at the large number of US tanks and the short supply of LCTs, I sent one tank company as DDs in each of the first two waves. It was merely an act of impatience. Four of those 32 tanks--about what I could have expected--actually made it into action.

Which infantry units to send in first can be a dilemma. I sent in the 16th RCT for historical flavor and because of those platoons' good morale. Without good morale values, the troops will spend more time suppressed on the sand and less time breaching obstacles and taking out pillboxes. On the other hand, there's something to be said for keeping the good troops alive until the fighting moves into the hedgerows where they'll need good morale and have targets for their superior firepower. In the end I decided that the overdraft reinforcements gave the 16th enough durability to lead the way. I did make sure to assign units from all the US battalions to the assault and first transport waves so I'd have the largest possible leader pool. Once all those outfits got mixed together, keeping track of who was who got complicated. But if you want to keep your troops tidy (all your Dukws in a row), don't play the Americans in *Omaha*.

What beaches should you aim for? In the long run you have to clear the whole beach and open up those shingle breaches. But the best place to start is in the middle (unless the Germans have the same idea, of course). Fox Red 1-4 and all of Fox Green offer

good exits from the beach and four shingle breach sites. In many spots the infantry will be able to test obstacles and breach mines while protected by shingle hexsides. The other beaches present extra problems. Units landing on Dog Red, Easy Green, and Easy Red have to cross lots of wide open space. A long wall of cliffs faces Fox Red, and the incoming tide there can force some serious overcrowding. An end run through Port en Bessin looks tempting, but the German can defend there pretty easily.

The landing plan I used was far from perfect, but it illustrates the ideas I've laid out here. And it contains some very educational mistakes.

Dawn's Early Light: the First Wave

My four LCTs brought in all of a/745 tank. The other boats were 12 LCIs, which I loaded with A-E companies of the 1/1 6th. There were four 2-boat groups and four individual boats. I left out all but one of D company's MG units, since area firepower is useless against pillboxes. On the other hand, I included both mortars and two ATs from H/2/16 and made sure that each of my four 81mm mortars was in a separate boat. In addition to the ATs from the heavy weapons companies, I loaded six of the battalion ATs and four of the "big" 76mm guns from B/635 TD. Finally C/741 tank swam in as DDs. The first wave landed from the Easy Red box, loaded for bear to 01 pillboxes.

There Is a Tide: Wave Two

The LCIs brought in the rest of the 16th RCT's infantry and the 26th RCT. I made sure I had the 81mm mortars well distributed. I included all the weapons-company AT guns in the 26th, some of its regimental ATs, the ATs left over from H/2/16 and 16/1, and the rest of those B/635 guns. I got the I&R platoons of the 16th and 26th on the beach, looking for a chance to be heroes.

One mistake I made here was using a 3-boat LCI group to carry all of E/2/26 plus 5 ATs. This efficient use of load points left me with a huge target stack on the beach. As the units tried to disperse, they got picked off (the ATs) or suppressed (the infantry) in adjacent hexes, leaving a lovely artillery target out there on the sand.

In order to use the Rhinos, I filled the Dukws with the smallest and most expendable loads I could: the infantry of B/635 and all the MGs from the heavy weapons companies. But I still had eight Dukws to fill, so I loaded up two with ATs from 26/1 and six with the guns of Cannon/26. Next time I won't, because five of those six guns never made it to the beach.

The Rhinos did excellent work, though, bringing in 2 infantry companies, the 33rd FA battalion, a flak half-track (which eventually got into action!) and the A/81 mortar company with its trucks. Here is another point on which you may well question my judgment. Why send those powerful mortars merely to blow smoke at pillboxes? Why

not save them for the hedgerow fighting, where they're invaluable? I explained to Sam, "Mortars are mortars, and we need them now." He agreed at the moment, being a careful counter of 81s already. Once the artillery had shot its few rounds of smoke, Sam used lots of mortar smoke to cover his drive inland from Fox Red 3.

But in retrospect, I wish I had held the mortars for the transport landings (I also put C/81 in wave 3). These units are the best, but on the beach they die like the Test. The last, tragicomic straw was Dave Freidrichs' selective targeting of one mortar company's trucks. A quick check in the rules reminded me (oops!) that Tow-Only units without transport do not creep up the beach with the tide. After picking off the trucks, Fred left the four-duces to the inevitable. If You're going to land these units under fire, do so only at high tide.

My other mistake at 0740 was to assign some 9 LCAs to Fox Red. Because of the cliffs, the troops here spend lots of time doing nothing while the ATs traded shots with the pillboxes. At least we were "lucky" with the DDs this time: 3 tanks out of B/741 made it to the sand.

Once More into the Breach

To boost my tank strength I had to wait for wave 3, when the LCIs brought in a dozen tanks from B/745. For this wave I again loaded up the Dukws with MGs, a half-dozen ATs, and the guns from Cannon/1 6. The Dukws with Class I loads all made it, but the Cannon company lost 3 guns. To make matters worse, a Rhino with a third of Cannon/I 8's strength went down as well. I don't think I'll be loading artillery into Dukws again any time soon. If the German wants to knock out my field pieces, I'm not going to help. My 3rd-wave LCIs brought in the same sort of infantry/weapons mixture I've described above. I used four 3-boat groups this time and again had some trouble getting the stacks dispersed under German fire. Moving in stacks is suicide since one overwatch shot pounds everybody. But moving individually is tough too. Some units have to choose between moving on top of suppressed buddies, thus bringing down overwatch, and sitting out in the open come the next Suppressive Fire Phase.

I assigned all of third wave to Fox Green because of the good break-out prospects its terrain offers. I'm glad I made that choice because by that time the push was going well on that beach.

As the Dust Settles

How did the fight go? That's another story. I'll just say that at first we Americans had to battle despair. Sam would say something like, "It's suicide to move up against those pillboxes," and I'd answer, "Well, we're dying right here, so we might as well attack." (OK, that sounds like a limp version of "There are two kinds of people on this beach. . . .") On the other hand, even as he blew away hundreds of steps with his stinking mortars, Dave Freidrichs kept saying, "You guys are doing fine." By the

second wave we seemed to be making progress. By noon (that is, when we ended the game) Sam had pushed inland and gotten into a good firefight near St(-- Honorine, while I had troops coming up the F-1 draw. We had started some hasty defense op sheets, so we were in good shape to consolidate. Sam had even 'captured" a few towns with roving Shermans. But the cost was high; already we had lost enough units to give the Germans a one-level victory shift. The American assault had been effective, but ugly.

So What's Your Point?

Once you hit the beach, there are not many fancy options. You have to get to the sea wall, battle the pillboxes, find or make holes in the obstacles, and push through your infantry assault. The time to show some finesse is in planning those assault waves. Load your boats and assign them to beaches with an eye toward establishing combined-arms teams despite landing scatter. Take plenty of the key weapons if you want to get a useful number into action. Structure your waves so you can concentrate on a few objectives at a time-which objectives will depend on factors you cannot predict. Resist the temptation to throw away good units with questionable landing hardware (DDs and Dukws).

Once you land, some of your units will inevitably sit idle, taking casualties and contributing nothing, because of landing scatter, leader positioning, and the choices the German player makes. With good planning you can maximize the number of useful units. You can even keep your four-duces from getting waterlogged.

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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The Birth of *Guderian's Blitzkrieg*

Game Production

by Owen Fuller

It's done! It's done!! It's really done!!!

Last August, *Guderian's Blitzkrieg* finally cleared its last hurdles and went out the door here at The Gamers. This may not seem like such a big deal to most people, but I spent much of last summer as midwife for the birth of this baby. It was not an easy labor. I learned more about game production than I really wanted to know.

Game Production = Ulcers

In an earlier article, Dean described some of the near-disasters that have occurred during the production of other games, but left *GB* for me. The story begins several years after Dean initially conceived the idea for the OCS, and after completion of the design and playtesting of *GB*. In early June, I went fishing for two weeks to regain my sanity at the end of school. During this time, Dean used most of the memory then available in his Macintosh computer to create the artwork for the two maps. In fact, the forest symbols on Map A are less dense than on Map B because he ran out of memory and had to thin them down. Dean then sent the computer disks to California for conversion into film usable by the printer.

I was in Homer when the map negatives and proofs arrived, along with an unbelievable invoice. This was my first experience with the up-front expenses involved in game production, and it was definitely a shock. The proof maps were absolutely beautiful and almost perfect. There were, however, two noticeable glitches. Along the south edge of Map A, four patches of woods overlay were missing. Fortunately, Dean knows a good stripper at the print shop who fixed three of the four. However, Map B must now overlap Map A. For you dirty minds out there, a stripper is the person who sets up the artwork for the press. In addition, the background color on the two maps was slightly different. Our man at the print shop was again able to solve the problem. During the printing process, tiny dots of yellow, red, blue and black placed next to each other in varying densities make different colors. This requires four negatives, one for each color. The film company had put the yellow and black dots for one map on top of each other instead of next to each other. The film company needed an extra week to re-do those films before the printer could get

started.

In mid-June, I spent two long days next to the computer helping Dean design the counter sheets. The biggest lesson I learned from this experience is that what you see on the computer screen is not what the printed product will look like. When the first set of counter films and proofs returned from California, Dean was so upset with the results that he redid all but one of the counter sheets. Even though the counter films were done and paid for twice, we both feel that there are units that could have looked better. In fact, the Christmas errata counter sheet included the third, and hopefully final, version of the forty-one Russian Armored Brigades and Tank Divisions.

Even though two of us were watching and double checking every counter, I must sadly report that the values on the back of one stupid German motorcycle battalion are wrong. Of course it was a German unit, because Uncle Joe does not tolerate behavior like that in the Red Army. We made and double-checked an inventory sheet of every unit in the game. Then we checked each unit as it we made it. We also triple-checked the new counters using the playtest counters. I remember the day well because playtest counters occasionally flew around the room during this long process. Both of us were getting tired and froggy, so when Dean made some smart comment, I popped him with a recon battalion or tank brigade. Regardless of how or why this error occurred, the correct replacement counter is on the errata counter sheet.

Next, Dean did the final layout of the rules and play aids, and I spent another long day proofreading them. Then we spent more hours designing the examples of play. Finally, everything went to the printer where, except for a minor misunderstanding about deadlines, everything went smoothly.

After picking up several pallets of printed material from the print shop, it was time for the next steps in the process. Dean drove from Champaign to St. Louis, about four hours away from Homer, to deliver the box art to the box maker, and the counter art to the graphic finisher (AKA die-cutter). Three weeks later, we intended to rent a big truck on a Wednesday to pick up the finished boxes and counters. The collating party had to start on Thursday in order to ship the game before Origins. The good news was that the box maker completed his job on schedule. I heard the bad news the Friday before our intended journey. Foaming at the mouth, Dean called me. The graphics finisher had just told Dean that the die cutting machine had broken down. Luckily, they repaired the machine and completed the job, approximately, on time. We did have to wait for four more hours in the loading dock while the counters were flat-cut and boxed. Does anyone know of a reliable graphic finishing company somewhere in the Midwest?

After driving back to Homer, Dean and I unloaded the entire twenty-four foot Ryder truck by hand, in the heat and humidity of an August evening. We then returned the truck, but not until after spending several late hours looking for diesel fuel in Champaign Urbana. We discovered that, even though three Interstate highways

intersect near here, there is not one single truck stop, and apparently only one service station in the entire town that sells diesel fuel.

That night the collating party began, something every gamer should experience. First, some lucky soul carefully checks components for damage and production flaws. Next, we stack all the components in a line on a long table. Then, volunteers go down the line putting the components into the boxes, repeating the process over and over. Filled games get shrink-wrapped, stacked in storage boxes and put into the warehouse. Three or four people can do about 400 games like *GB* a day. By the end of a long, tiring weekend, the game was ready for shipping by Sara Essig and her faithful and reliable crew of one, on time and way over budget.

There is one serious side effect to the collating process. After one has collated several hundred copies of a game, one gets rather sick of it. Some even report seeing games being collated in their dreams, a phenomenon that I am sure would interest Freud. It was several weeks before I could again look at a copy of *GB* without physical discomfort.

There is a moral to this story. Next time you want to bitch about minor imperfections in a game from any company, remember that someone else is already nursing an ulcer over those flaws. I know, because I see the pain in Dean's face when I mention the postproduction glitches that I find. As a wise old man once told me, do not judge another until you have walked a mile in his shoes.

In January, Dean informed me that the supply of unsold *GBs* in the warehouse was essentially gone, with only a few copies remaining. I hope you are enjoying the game as much as I do. Your support has encouraged Dean to continue the OCS series, with a second game due in 1994. In the mean time, I would like to hear from you, especially the Russian players. I know that there are better players out there than me who could contribute some great ideas. Send comments and play hints to Owen Fidler, in care of The Gamers, or to my home address at Box 709, Metamora IL 61548. If there is enough interest, Dean says we may be able to start our own column. Hey Dean, how does "Letters from the Glorious Red Army to STAVKA" grab you? [*Ed. Note: Up yours, Owen.*]

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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A Couple More for the OCS

Optional Rules

by Dean N. Essig

The following are a handful of optional rules (and a play tip or two, I guess) for the OCS and *GB*. With each, I'll introduce it with where it came from and why. These can be used to custom fit the game to a player's particular tastes. Send your suggested optionals to me and I'll get them into future issues and maybe other players will benefit from your insight. See you then!

Minor Cities

The Minor Cities rule addresses those urban areas between the village and major city categories which need some, but not all, of the effects of the latter. The need for this terrain type was discovered in the playtest map creation for *Enemy at the Gates*-some places just weren't big enough to qualify as major cities, but it didn't seem right to degrade them to mere village status.

The following "villages" on the *GB* maps need to be upgraded to Minor Cities Status: Kursk, Vyaz'ma, Roslavl, Yel'nya, Spas-Demansk, Kaluga, Mozhaysk, Serpukhov, and Podolsk.

The effects of a Minor City are as follows:

Special Modifiers: All types x 1, Close Terrain. Movement: All types x1/2.

The effects of this addition will be limited - except at a few key points and time when the location of a minor city aligns terrain and opposing forces to generate a bottleneck.

Recon Retreat Rule

This rule was suggested by Mike Denson in Texas. He was annoyed at the inability of the assorted recon units in the game (motorcycle and armored recon types) to screen and run to withdraw from combat when threatened. This rule can be used to alleviate that problem, if you see it as one.

Allow recon units (motorcycle and armored recon types, not Soviet Cavalry

Divisions) to withdraw one hex before resolving a combat against them when it is announced. Only those units may withdraw (and may do so if stacked with other unit types, although those other units must stay and take their lumps). The recon units may not do this if. A) they must retreat into a hex adjacent to an enemy unit, B) in an overrun situation, C) when the attacker has surprise, or D) if the player decides to tough it out. The recon units may be "attacked" and retreat their one hex only once in a given phase. The retreat rule has no effect on air or artillery attacks.

Retreat into Combat?

Mike Denson also gives us this rule. This one takes on those annoying units which retreat from one combat and then add to the defense of another hex in the same phase.

A unit which retreats as a combat result in a combat in a given phase adds nothing to the defense of units in a hex it ends up stacked with which happen to be attacked later in the same phase. The unit is subject to any adverse combat result (such as a retreat), but adds nothing in terms of combat strength or action rating. Likewise, no combat supply is expended for that unit.

Selective Supply

This is more of a 'how to' note than an optional rule. Players sometimes wonder how they can, say, supply everyone in an area at low supply, yet keep a given Panzer division in full supply for counterattack purposes. With the Germans in *GB*, there are always a few underutilized Corps HQs running about. Team one of them up with another, more active, HQ. The active HQ continues to supply its empire with low supply and to handle throw operations for combat supply for all (since it is probably a long-range panzer-type HQ). The other HQ acts as a draw mechanism for the counterattack full-supply force.

Players can also by-pass the need for another HQ by having the full-supply types draw supply directly-the problem being that they must always hover within five hexes of their supply dumps, which limits their flexibility and makes them all too predictable.

I have heard of players who supply something like every-other unit in their front-line at full supply and the rest at low by using multiple HQs like the above. There is nothing in the game to make this wrong (in real life, the crossing supply nets would drive rear services nuts-the work load almost does it to them normally, in this case ...). Personally, I think such an operation would be too big a pain in the rear to keep track of (on the game map) and I never seem to have enough supply to pull off such a stunt, anyway.

Using those Panzers in DEFENSE

This is another 'how to' section-since the special modifiers are weighted against tanks

in the defense, how does one use a Panzer Division to defend? The proper use of a mobile division in the defense is by judicious use of counterattacks. Once you've got that reserve division in full supply (above), in Reserve Mode, and properly protected, attack in the Reaction Phase wherever the enemy seems to be preparing a blow. I prefer to keep the division together than to making a bunch of smaller attacks. The best things to hit are logistical preparations, followed by artillery emplacements, key enemy stacks, and lastly rail communications. With luck, you will be able to keep him scrambling to keep his offensive force connected and un-DG'd, completely unable to allocate resources to the stopping of your counterattack force, and you'll free yourself from having to sit there an 'take it' when he wants to dish it out. The easiest way to make a Soviet player to break into tears is to vaporize his extensive artillery preparations and sever his rail link to the east. Capturing his dumps would be good, but is a chancy affair and the dump may simply bounce to a better spot for him!

A DG on his best offensive stack will bring on much gnashing of teeth, right Owen?

Until next time!

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Comments on *Stalingrad Pocket* Combat Results Table

Standard Combat Series

by John B. Gilmer, Jr.

Offense vs. Defense

In any game that employs combat resolution for "battles" and battle odds, one can make an interesting observation of the balance between offense and defense. At what "odds" are losses on offense and defense likely to be equal? Presumably, at higher odds the attacker will lose less than the defender, while at lower odds the attacker's losses are higher. (This assumption is not necessarily true, since larger numbers of attackers could simply present more targets without proportionate benefit.) This correlation of loss and attack odds' ratio holds for *Stalingrad Pocket*, but at a much lower ratio than for most games. (For example, in the ancient Avalon Hill universal CRT, the balance point for larger defender losses is between two to one and three to one.) In *Stalingrad Pocket*, at a 1:2 ratio, attacker losses are 1.37 steps per defender step lost-, at 1: 1, they are .78 steps. Thus, in *Stalingrad Pocket* the attacker loses less than the defender, on the average, with attack ratios averaging as low as 1 to 1.5. This suggests that attack is generally 1 1/2 times more effective than defense.

Offensive player initiative further weakens defense. The offensive player can bring to bear most or all of his forces on selected defenders. Because zones of control do not affect combat except by restricting retreats, other defenders contribute nothing to the odds unless directly included in the attack. Mobile forces (armor and cavalry) may attack as many as three times per turn under favorable circumstances. They may make overruns during each movement phase (if not initially in a ZOC) and during the normal combat phase. This gives the offense an additional advantage.

If the defender cannot retreat due to enemy zones of control, the ratio for parity drops to 1:2 (where the attacker loses .97 steps per defender step). Since Zones of control are "soft" and units advancing after combat may ignore them, many (or perhaps most) attacks will fall under this condition.

In the overall play of the game, this low ratio for loss parity means that attacking is a more effective employment of forces. The situation is akin to two proverbial scorpions in a bottle: offensive weapons are so deadly that the landing of an effective offensive

blow is all important. Tactically, one would like to be present in a battle as the attacker or not at all. The overall scenario puts the Soviet player in the role of the attacker. The German player must either avoid the Soviets, denying the opportunity to be attacked, or attack in some sector in sufficiently overwhelming numbers as to minimize the impact of the Soviet attacks. The third option is to hide in or behind terrain that mitigates the offensive advantage, such as behind rivers or in cities.

Armor vs. Infantry

Infantry units typically have a defense value that is about double their attack value. Since they may attack only once per turn, among such units defensive and offensive potential is roughly balanced. For armor, attack values are typically larger than defense values. Such units have more attack potential than defense potential, and attacking is more potent than defense. Therefore, such units are too valuable to expose to attacks by the enemy if another option is available. If one must defend, it makes sense to do so with infantry, or in combined infantry and armor stacks. One could value armor as about three or more times as valuable as infantry per step: greater attack value, plus up to two extra attacks per turn. Thus if infantry can attack armor at odds of 1:4, with the I to 2.36 or 1.89 (surrounded) the expected loss ratio indicated that such an attack is worth making. Of course, better odds are even more favorable. In the reverse situation, armor attacking infantry needs a very high ratio to make the attack worthwhile. Anything less than 4 to 1 gives a loss ratio of less than 1 to 3, which may not be worthwhile against most infantry. (On the other hand, Soviet infantry units, especially Guards, lose much combat power per step, making them more worthwhile to attack.) At 9 to 1, attacker losses are so much less than defender losses that armor attacking infantry makes sense, unless it is a very valuable armor unit or very worthless infantry. Mixing infantry with armor allows the attacker to take the losses in infantry, an option unavailable in overruns or (often) on defense.

Implications of force limits

If the forces of one side or the other are of a limited number of steps, this significantly affects the attacker to defender loss ratio. A single step infantry unit has a 1/6 chance of costing an attacker a unit even at the worst (9 to 1) odds. If the defender is a 0- 1-5 with no attack value anyway, this is not a bad deal if the losses are armor. Defending against overruns from a typical 12-point stack, two 0- 1 -5 (or a fullstrength 1-2-5) stack will raise the cost for the attacker to .34 steps per defender step. However, during regular combat (with infantry absorbing the losses) and 9 to 1 odds, the attacker loses less than 1 step per 10 for the defender. Thus, use single step stacks against overwhelming mixed infantry and armor. Use multiple unit stacks when the attacker does not have the overwhelming superiority for 9-1 attacks or when the threat is dominantly infantry.

If a defending force in a hex has two steps or less, any combat result that causes a retreat will kill at least two steps. Larger stacks of defenders are at significantly

greater risk due to surrounding zones of control. The additional risk is greatest for a large stack at higher odds. However, it is the large stack that is less likely to face the high odds. A six level (maximum) stack consisting of 1-2-5's yields only a 2 to 1 against a 12 point overrun attack. This costs the attacker .56 losses per defender step or .40 if surrounded. If the 1-2-5's are in a stack of four steps, attacker's losses at 3 to 1 are .49 or .33 losses per defender step. This is less expensive to the attacker but would be more advantageous if having more such stacks prevents a surrounded situation. Still, it appears that having the large stacks is preferable, especially for the Romanians early in the game. At this point, the chances are that they will be surrounded anyway. Also, the Soviet armored forces are numerous and in sufficiently good condition to make overruns a big hazard.

It is generally best not to stack a Soviet infantry unit with one step remaining. Because, if the German armor is attacking, the odds will be unlikely to exceed 6 to 1. This gives the infantry unit a .44 chance to cause the attacker a loss. If it is a 1-3-5, such an attack is even less attractive to the Germans. Such depleted units make a good escort (at a hex distant) for army headquarters. A two step defender, typically a 4 or 5 in defense, might yield a 3 to 1 attack, which has a comparable .46 attacker losses per defender. The single step defenders have the advantage of covering more hexes, without much difference in loss rates.

Some Conclusions

1. The Romanian defenders should start out in big 3 unit stacks to minimize overrun impact. Such stacks on roads could delay Soviet HQ advancement a turn or two. Any 1- 1 -5 (flipped 2-2-5) units might as well attack on the first turn, preferably alone against mobile units. The 1-2-5 units are a tougher call. Take any possible attacks on armor. Attacks made on turn I will not be in a supplied status, but even a 1 to 4 is worthwhile. This is especially true if no retreat is available. The 0- 1 -5 units should be left in singles. Each has a 1 in 6 chance of taking a more valuable attacker with it, and stacking would just reduce attacker casualties. Such units interfere more with movement and threaten to cause supply problems when they are spread out.

2. Armor should spend its time attacking in sectors offering a favorable force ratio in which armored stacks can overrun, attack and overrun again. For the Soviets, the Romanians provide the obvious fodder for such tactics. For the Germans, the initially un supplied 24th and 66th armies are vulnerable to such an attack, with the 14th corps and additional mobile units from elsewhere (e.g. 29th Mtrd) providing the punch. The Germans need to maintain a strong armor reserve, and it might as well be beating up on the 24th Army while it waits for an opportune moment to attack in the South. Leaving units idle when they could be attacking is a waste of combat power, given the overwhelming way the game favors the attack.

3. The 51st Corps in Stalingrad should not be left idle. In the first turn or two, it will very likely be able to attack the 66th Army and the northern flank of the 64th without

leaving the restriction area. If you assume this corps will be lost anyway, then it might as well take some Soviets with it, and the earlier the better. The Germans cannot abandon Stalingrad and win, but if there looks like a good prospect of maintaining communications with the city, elements of the 51st Corps will do well to exit the restriction zone to attack if the Soviets are hanging back out of range to keep them idle.

4. Since the victory conditions put such an emphasis on German losses, the Soviets need to attack at every opportunity, even if odds are not particularly good. Single step armored units are worth expending in single attacks against German armor, especially if the latter can be surrounded, at low odds. The Germans will likely run out of armor first.

5. The Soviets have a bit of a dilemma on what to do with the 24th and 66th Armies on the first turn. They can attack (though unsupported) and do as much damage as possible before they die, or hang back and try to survive until the supplies come. In general, the German loss based victory conditions seem to suggest attacking. Also, if there are no Soviet units adjacent to the mobile formations of the 14th Corps, those units will get to overrun, making defense harder. Losing the "C" entry hexes will certainly make life more difficult for the Soviets later in the game, but the two closest to Stalingrad are probably going to be lost anyway if the German preemptively attacks the 24th and 66th Armies.

6. It seems very difficult for the German player to hold losses to the 90 to 110 unit levels if the Soviet player attacks aggressively. On the other hand, it is well within the realm of possibility for the Germans to keep a line of communications to Stalingrad at the expense of losing too many units.

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Messing Up with the Big Boys

Revised Stalingrad Pocket Victory Conditions

by Dean N. Essig

OK, I'm the one who did it. It was me. Put away that noose. Let me explain..

Last issue in my article "Putting on the Hun," in Rule number 7 (about the 90 unit mark), I alluded to what I *thought* to be the system of evaluating German losses in the game. The original conception was that the 90 unit mark was supposed to be for the Massive German Victory level only and that the lesser victory clauses were to contain greater loss numbers. In some sort of computer replicating nightmare, I managed to repeat the condition of 90 units throughout the *SP* victory conditions. The natural reaction of players to my statement that the 90 unit mark did not mean all was indignation and several called. My natural reaction was "huh?" and then terror as I read what was in the rules. The pity of it is I have no one to blame but myself. The playtesters used the correct numbers. The proofreaders didn't know any better. I managed to slip it past all of them.

So, let me rectify the whole thing, as well as add a couple of other conditions which repeated play has brought home (to roost?) at this point.

Here is the background on all but the numbers matter (which besides the above has also been found to be too harsh on the Germans). The Soviet victory shifts are OK for what they are, but it has been found that players can strip that flank of all but a handful of units and still get the award. The original thoughts on those shifts were that the Soviets have created the prerequisites for furthering their gains deep behind the Germans possibly as far as Rostov. The new exiting requirement will make the Soviet player expend more resources to obtain the shifts and conform to the original conception behind the shifts.

The added Soviet Loss Shift is an addition to the original thinking. The reason Soviet losses were ignored at first was that we felt the Soviet Army could sustain *reasonable* losses without affecting their war effort one wit. The problem was that at the high end of Soviet losses which game players could rack up were losses that can only be termed "unreasonable." The shift for Soviet losses addresses this magnitude of butcher's bill.

So without further ado, here are the revised *Stalingrad Pocket* victory conditions:

Massive German victory If the German player has lost fewer than 90 units, and occupies two or more hexes of Stalingrad, he is given the next higher order of the Knight's Cross, promoted to Field Marshal and enjoys the rest of the war. (Probably, you'll get shot later for some other trivial reason, but that is not in the scope of this game.)

Major German Victory If the German player has lost between 90 and 110 units, and occupies two or more hexes of Stalingrad, he is given the next higher order of the Knight's Cross, but is not promoted to Field Marshal. (Same limited life expectancy as in the above Massive conditions.)

Minor German Victory If the German player has lost between 90 and 110 units, but does not occupy at least 2 hexes of Stalingrad, he is summoned to Berlin and retired in disgrace. He lives out the war and writes memoirs blaming Hitler for everything that went wrong in the German war effort.

Minor Soviet Victory If the German player holds two or more hexes of Stalingrad and between 110 and 120 Axis units are lost, congratulations--you have duplicated the historical result! You will be promoted to field marshal in hopes that you will commit suicide. If you do so, you will be made a hero of the Reich. If not, you will be disgraced, spend 10-20 years in a Soviet work camp, and after repatriation, you can *still* write the book mentioned above.

Major Soviet Victory The German player does not hold 2 hexes of Stalingrad and German losses are greater than 110, or German losses are 121 or more (but not both, see below)

Massive Soviet Victory If the German player does not occupy at least 2 Stalingrad hexes and at least 121 German losses, the Fuhrer summons you to Berlin where you will be shot by the Gestapo as a traitor. Your family will get a two and a half year tour of the latest in concentration camp technology.

Victory Shifts Shift one level of victory in the Soviet favor if the Soviet Player occupies all hexes of entry area G and exits 15 units through any G hex.

Shift one additional level of victory in the Soviet favor if the Soviet Player occupies all hexes of entry area F and exits a further 10 units through any F hex, In addition to the conditions of the above shift.

Shift one level of victory in the German favor if Soviet losses (actual dead units, don't count out of supply, fired rocket artillery, or the above exited ones) are 100 to 120.

Shift an additional level of victory in the German favor if Soviet losses (actual dead units, don't count out of supply, fired rocket artillery, or the above exited ones) are 121

or more.

Just think, we spent most of the playtesting time trying to make sure the victory conditions worked well.

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Afrika

A Status Report on SCS #2

by Dean N. Essig

This is an update report on the second Standard Combat Series game, *Afrika*. This game, the follow-up to *Stalingrad Pocket*, covers the campaign in North Africa from September, 1940 (with the Italian invasion) through December, 1942 (when all Axis resistance historically ended on the game map area). It will come with one and a half maps and 280 counters. The retail price will be \$25.

Series Changes

Aside from the excessive (for my tastes, anyway) patches made to the series rules after *SP*'s release, a couple of important changes will be made to them. The rules in this game will be "Standard Combat Series Rules, second edition". This would be as good a time as any to introduce everyone to the revision 'notation' system we have evolved into using. A set of series rules beg is in its 'first edition.' (No kidding, right? Stay with me, I'll get to the point.) Those problems discovered on its release-and there is always something-would be incorporated into what would be termed the 'first edition, revised' or more simply 'the revised edition'. The SCS has just entered that phase. Later, if more serious structural flaws are found or-' as in the case of the first edition CWB-yours truly learns to write in more comprehensible English, the rules are rewritten in a 'second edition'. Repairs to typos in a 2nd edition will give rise to a 'second edition, revised' and so on.

At any rate, the new SCS rules will contain all of the changes brought out heretofore and one major system change-the Supply Phase will be moved to the end of each player's player turn. It was found in *Afrika* that pockets of short duration could be formed very easily. While these occurred in *SP* too, the effect wasn't as pronounced since A) the out of supply effects weren't as catastrophic, and B) there were many more units running about. The change brings on some neat effects. First off, the 'attacking' player cannot run hellbent-for-leather deep into the enemy rear sure in the knowledge that he will be OK in his next Supply Phase, yet the enemy win rapidly be ruined before he has a chance to do anything about it. Once formed in the new system, pockets must be able to withstand at least one turn's full strength attack or they will be of little or no effect.

***Afrika*: The Game**

Afrika has been designed to be a fast running, volatile, active game. There are but a few units on the map at any one time, so each player can rapidly make his move. Special rules and other 'drag' have been kept to a bare minimum. What is left is a straightforward I wargame' of the desert with enough meat to keep the grognard's interest, yet simple enough to be learned and played in short order.

The full scale game begins with the Italian 1940 offensive, runs through all of Rommel's adventures and ends after Montgomery's big counteroffensive at El Alamein. The entire thing is 28 turns long, but the turns fly by much more rapidly than those in *SP* since there are fewer counters to deal with.

Supply

What would be a North Afrika game without so much as a wink at supply? Not much of one. *Afrika* uses a much simplified supply system with roots in the *GB-OCS* style one. Players get supply points every turn (each represents 20,000 tons or so), uses coastal shipping and truck points (trucks are not counters on the map, but are abstract points), and expends them to supply units during the Supply Phase. The calculation of number of supply points required of units is made by totaling the number of units drawing off a dump and dividing by ten. The conduct of the Supply Phase for a player usually takes less than a minute.

Units found to be out of supply suffer all the effects seen in *SP* plus they automatically lose one step to attrition. This gives a bit -of urgency to keeping your units in supply. Also, for the first few turns (in order to reflect the rapid disintegration of the Italian Army in 1940), Italian units found to be out of supply automatically surrender.

At times some, but not all, of the supply points a player might need will be available. The player can then select who is going to go without and who is going to be supplied. In the playtester's parlance, this is called "being sent out to watch the desert..."

Shipping

The Axis player (and to a much lesser extent the Allied player) must use his coastal shipping effectively to survive. Each turn, a player rolls one die for each of his ports. The port value has a marker placed on a short track designating the port's useful capacity for that turn. The Axis player also rolls to mark a track for the total amount of coastal shipping available for the turn. Either the total port capacity or the shipping available will set an upper limit on the number of supply points or units which can be moved by sea in the turn. For the Axis player (all of whose supply points arrive at far away Tripoli (unless Malta is reduced during the game), the proper use of coastal shipping will conserve vital truck points.

Units

The units in the game range from the occasional recon-type battalion through Italian Infantry Divisions. Most are either regiments or brigades. The Rommel counter represents the man, his forward staff, and the Storch. Units can have their step losses repaired by step replacements provided by the player's Variable Reinforcement Table. These steps also represent returning wounded and repaired vehicles. The Allied unit withdrawals are also handled by that table-an Axis player cannot rest assured that the outside world will go according to plan and unit X will disappear on turn 10. Withdrawals might happen at odd times and in different combinations since the table tells the Allied player when and how much to withdraw, but not what units. The choice of units is his. Returns are handled in a similar way. The withdrawn units are dumped into the dead pile and the player's replacement steps must be used to bring them back into the theater.

Scenarios

Aside from the 28 turn campaign game, this game will include a number of short scenarios, the final group of which has yet to be fully determined. Among them will be: The Italian Offensive, Rommel's First Campaign, Operation Crusader, The Battles of Gazala, and El Alamein. At least the last three will be small map area, few turn snacks compared to the main event. The Italian Offensive will be the first seven turns or so covering the September, 1940 invasion through just before arrival of Rommel. It will need both maps.

Conclusion

Afrika is not the definitive game on the North African campaign-it was never meant to be. What it is is a fast, fluid, fun wargame which roughly simulates the historical events in Northern Africa during the early years of World War II. That is what the Standard Combat Series is all about-good old fashioned FUN wargames!

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Maneuver Warfare and The Wargamer

Part 4: Bulldozerkrieg

by Dean N. Essig

[Maneuver: Part 3](#)

[Maneuver: Part 2](#)

[Maneuver: Part 1](#)

Maneuver warfare advocates refer to something loosely as "that other form of warfare." This method of fighting has also been characterized as "slower." What is it and what can be added to a discussion about maneuver warfare by examining it?

I speak here of attritional warfare. The sort of "pound 'em till they quit" sort of thing practiced to a fine art in World War I. It is also one of the least efficient and most costly forms of war. Attritional Warfare (AW) is ingrained into western culture as a "fair fight" and the sort of face to face (no tricks allowed) confrontation seen as the "proper" way to fight. Its actual roots go back as far as the Greek citystates and the Hoplite form of warfare. At that time, the head-on clash between phalanxes was the only approved way to fight--where one literally invited the enemy to the battle. This was, strangely enough, a method of reducing the amount of fighting and as a method of keeping war under control. Since no tricks were allowed and everyone knew the "rules" the battle would be had and one side or the other would win ending the war in an afternoon. That was the idea, anyway. Regardless of its effectiveness, this manner of fighting created the mythos that to take on an enemy in any but the head-on manner was considered degrading and even scandalous.

Further embellishment on this idea of a "fair fight" was added during the middle ages with the advent of chivalry. Anything short of a clean fight head-on was considered "cowardly."

World War I added anew dimension to AW--there was no real alternative. Flanks were nonexistent, you couldn't air land behind the enemy, and the tank was still in its infancy. Logistical preparations required months and these naturally couldn't be hidden from the enemy well. As a result, by the time your offensive was girding itself, the enemy was double his original strength.

In this war were the roots of modern maneuver warfare. The German army, unable or

unwilling, to strive for a technological solution to the trenches (the tank, the British solution), generated a tactical solution-stormtroop tactics. These were based upon small units led by well trained leaders which infiltrated the enemy lines, attacking where possible, and always moving on. The combination of these techniques with armor was the genesis of World War II's Blitzkrieg.

Attritional warfare is a head on, frontal clash, between alert forces which generates a blood bath. The first side to back down from this blood bath (or is "bled white") 'loses'. The other (almost as bloody) 'wins'.

Wargames, unfortunately, tend to portray AW much better than maneuver warfare. ZOCs inhibit fluidity. Even if you could bypass the enemy force, there is usually nothing back there to hit. The game becomes two solid lines of units and ZOCs extending the width of the game board where each side pounds on die other until the net losses determine one side or the other to be the winner. While very good at generating WWI results, I prefer a more free-wheeling style of warfare. When I take my panzers out for a spin, I don't want it to be a quick dash which is only a race against time until the front solidifies again. Whereupon I'm forced to waste time punching another hole so I can have another minute exploitation. I want him reacting to my moves and NOT by pulling back 5 hexes to form another line!

So, if wargames are uniquely able to simulate AW, what is required to do maneuver warfare? High mobility is a must. Units must be able to generate new conditions in a single turn or the enemy will quietly react to something he see's coming. There must be something in the rear of the enemy to hit-so that he cannot afford to let you rove at will back there. Things like logistics systems and rear area services that will cripple his army if destroyed will make him fret over your penetration more than any "victory point city" ever will.

If the ability to drive through his hinterland in a single turn doesn't exist, then it must be compensated by some sort of time delay on his reaction. While he can see what is going on, he won't be able to do anything about it for a while-which should give your side time to take him out.

Naturally, no matter how suited to portraying MW a game is, brutally inefficient play can still create AW. The player who looks at a hole in the enemy front as a means to a "driving thrust" forward of three hexes, while all the time protecting himself from everything, would never be able to make an MW game work. The player must be able to take decent risks and plan ahead to support his drives or he will find himself in a lot trouble.

More Maneuver

[Maneuver: Part 1](#)

[Maneuver: Part 2](#)

[Maneuver: Part 3](#)

[Maneuver: Part 4](#)

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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The "Game Company" Game

Part One

by Dave Powell

In the five years since Dean started The Gamers, Inc. the two of us have had many discussions about keeping a wargame company alive in today's gaming market. In the Spring of 1988--our debut--we entered what people often described as a dying market. All the major publishers seemed to regard board-wargaming as backburner at best, with even Avalon Hill doing little beyond *Squad Leader*. The hobby press greeted new products with lackadaisical enthusiasm.

Now, at the end of 1992, things seem quite different. The hobby has two bi-monthly Mag-with-a-game efforts: *Command* and *S & T. Moves* is back, *F & M* is still around, and most encouragingly, a number of other journals are available. In terms of house organs, *The General* is still here, of course, but we have started our own version. Operations is now in its second year. Also, GMT has brought out *C3I*. GRD has taken *The Europa News* from a newsletter to its new, fullfledged magazine incarnation as *Europa*. On the reviewing front, *Berg's Review of Games* has returned with a vengeance, and *Field of Battle* is an anticipated but now very overdue 64 page magazine out of Virginia. Together, these last two periodicals promise to deliver a much needed independent review perspective for the tide of new games released and anticipated.

A tide of new games? How about a tide of new companies? Just since our own debut, the following new companies have appeared: SDI, GMT, FGA, XTR, Rhino Games, Decision Games, and New England Simulations. Additionally, GRD has expanded to fullfledged *Europa* publication. Clash of Arms has greatly increased their game production efforts, moving from part-time to full time. Personally, I considered 3W doomed after selling off *S & T*, but they have shocked the hobby with a virtual Tsunami of titles. Admittedly, SDI has already departed, and FGA's candle seems to be flickering at best. The bulk of companies is hanging tough, however, and there are indications that more are on the horizon. Several new groups contacted us seeking information about the myriad aspects of game company-ism, most often about graphics and print production. At least two of these contacts represent quite serious attempts at game publishing, and we expect to see their efforts in print in the next couple of years.

In five short years, our size has almost doubled every year. This is hardly the sign of a

dying hobby. While not privy to other publishers' figures, I'd wager they've seen similar encouragement from the gaming public. In retrospect, the perception differences between then and now are shocking in comparison, thanks mostly to this spate of new guys and new games.

Naturally, as each new development in board wargaming emerged, Dean and I indulged in endless speculation about it. What intrigued us most was the particular marketing approach and philosophical bent each new outfit espoused. Admittedly we had no access to inside information; but rumor, gossip, and each new arrival's public facade gave us plenty to ramble on about. Through it all, we noticed several distinct patterns emerging, among both the struggling new companies and our collective market.

Some Background

SPI--If there is a Brass Ring in wargaming, the three letters SPI exemplify it. SPI. Only these three will do; TSR-SPI is not the same, at least in Mr. Average Gamer's mind. The history of those initials has warped most of the revitalization of the past several years.

Since SPI's demise, there has remained a core of gamers out there looking for the next company to come along and fill that void. This is natural, I suppose. The heyday of the 1970s at SPI saw the recruitment of most of today's active gamers, a time of growth for the hobby as a whole. Both Dean and I fall into this category, and we each have dozens of SPI games on our shelves.

However, SPI's day in the sun had its share of mythbuilding as well. SPI was not stabbed in the back, or destroyed by the evil dragon-lords. From my outsider's perspective, it seems to have collapsed of a more mundane reason-poor management. By its own admission, SPI lost money for 7 out of its 10 years in existence. Many SPI games suffered from hasty publication and poor development and playtesting.

Still, the New York crowd managed to produce enough truly great games to create a lasting audience and a glowing image, at least in retrospect. When SPI went under (taken over by, of all organizations, TSR) the hobby self-image stagnated. Not that there wasn't historical gaining activity through the following decade, but some spark was missing. By the late 80's, Yaquinto was gone. West End moved on to where the real money was, and Victory seemed on the verge of collapse. In 1988 and 1989, Dean and I heard repeated rumors that Avalon Hill was going to shut down Victory Games altogether. TSR retained S & T and hundreds of old SPI titles, but demonstrated little interest in putting out wargames after the first couple of years. Not that I blame them. They had long ago discovered where the real money was, and it had little to do with historical battles on cardboard.

What do you do with a Brass Ring but try to grab it? Given the above legacy, more

than one company has strived to inherit the title, usually in a shamelessly transparent manner. Once Keith Poulter had acquired S & T magazine, 3W trumpeted to one and all that they had become the 'SPI of the West'. Two years later he was unloading the same mag like a live grenade, and I suspect that this excessively ambitious effort nearly took 3W out of the game business completely. How about FGA? They were hardly less subtle: once divorced from

Gene Billingsley and GMT, the Fresno Gang embarked on an extravagant series of game title promises that were almost exclusively SPI remakes. They name-dropped furiously, repeating several times that they "were in negotiations with TSR to buy the old SPI game rights." FGA's main attention-grabber was the ploy of redoing old SPI monsters, since these games have a core audience all their own, and cast a spell over most gamers. However, the honeymoon ended quickly for FGA when the games arrived filled with problems. In short, they were mostly unplayable and incomplete. By redeveloping 10 year old SPI games, one would expect that FGA would transform often flawed games into solid efforts. When the remakes were worse than the originals, it was no wonder that disillusionment set in quickly among most of the buying public.

Even companies who do not overtly seek the title will find themselves affected by the 'curse of SPI'. Gamers are quick to draw the comparison. We frequently found ourselves being measured against the SPI yardstick. Simply put, a publisher cannot escape this evaluation, whether or not he supplies the bombast. Not that this is all bad: a publisher who avoids self-aggrandizement and instead lets the public bestow the "new SPI" title upon him has earned a valuable laurel. To date, no clear heir has emerged, but several good companies seem in contention.

Some words about the Market Numbers:

It took us a while to get a handle on just how many wargamers were really out there. Starting small, we built up our customer list the hard way--one at a time. Alternatively, we could have bought an existing mailing list, but the meagerness of our initial budget precluded that option. The bootstrap method has its benefits, however. Now our list has over 2,500 names. Virtually all of them are committed customers who sought us out and own our products. This is an excellent indicator of our growth.

In fact, there are about 500 gamers out there who will buy almost anything. These guys are plugged into all the hobby communications networks, so they will come to you, even with minimal advertising on your part. These people are not gullible saps who also own bridges and Nevada beach fronts. They are collectors, who acquire titles for the sake of completeness. Good games tend to be a bonus to their way of thinking. They are some of the most experienced gamers in the hobby, however, and will end up giving you many impromptu rules writing lessons.

Another 1000 or so are hard-core. They too are 'plugged in', and can be reached by minimal advertising. However, they look for good games rather than collectibles, and have logged an enormous amount of time pushing cardboard. The best thing about this group is their willingness to volunteer time and effort in playtesting, research, and general quality improvement. These people are the unpaid support network of the hobby, and every company uses some of these gaining militia. Especially in playtesting, these guys render stellar service to the hobby as a whole.

For a while, over the winter of 91-92, we seemed to reach a plateau with these 1500 or so gamers. Our games to date involved 'quirky' command rules, and received little notice in the press. We existed almost exclusively by word of mouth. Occasional conversations with other companies indicated that there was larger group out there we had not yet reached, but we hadn't figured out how to crack the code.

Stalingrad Pocket and *Guderian's Blitzkrieg* achieved the needed breakthrough. Both games are selling very well, and have brought in a large response from completely new customers. *Stalingrad Pocket* sold out its initial run in five months, and was quickly reprinted. *Guderian's Blitzkrieg* is within 21 games of going out, too. The customer list zoomed to its current level and continues to grow.

Moving strictly into the realm of rumor, some positive indicators seem to exist. I understand that Avalon Hill has 10,000 subscribers to *The General*, a number that has been purportedly static for over 10 years. Both *Command* and *S & T* sell between 8 and 10 thousand copies per issue, though the bulk of that is through retail stores. By default, the 10,000 figure seems a likely indicator of the number of full-time wargamers, though there is certainly another (hopefully larger) group that is part-time. While these are hardly demographics that make your average sports shoe manufacturer salivate, they form a solid basis for a niche market.

Can a game company survive with 10,000 customers? I don't see why not, given proper management. Except for Avalon Hill and the magazines, most games have print runs between 2500 and 5000 copies. At The Gamers, Inc., we have just increased our runs to 5000 to ensure each title remains in print for a while. If we sell half of each game in its first year of life, we will be solidly successful.

It does seem clear that more people were once involved. In the late 70's, SPI claimed *S & T's* circulation stood at around 30,000 subscribers. So where did they all go? First, I think the hobby was a lot less fragmented then. Many former wargamers have since diverged into areas of greater personal interest that include role-playing, science-fiction and especially computer gaming. Second, after SPI's demise, the hobby professionals and press alike spent much time harping on the malaise of the late 80's. Certainly a large number of people left the hobby then. This pattern was probably mutually reinforcing, and ended with all of those dire predictions of the hobby's eminent demise.

Trends

Numbers aside, the other big debate revolves around what gamers want in their games. Simple, one hour quickies? Topic fads? How about card games? Each time anew game does well, it seems to spawn a promoter claiming that it alone will 'save the hobby'.

The most common movement is that of the 'Intro Game'. Conventional wisdom holds that today's jet-setting, on-the-go gaming guy has no time for the monsters of yore. He demands games that take 5 minutes to learn, one hour to play and a lifetime to master. Hand in hand with that goes the recruiting imperative; produce simple games that will drag in hordes of eager neophytes and swell the market pool into respectable, D & D - like numbers. I recall a point in about the middle of 1990, where it seemed like the only outfit not producing an Intro game was The Gamers, Inc.

How about card games? The success of *Modern Naval Battles* so impressed 3W that they quickly announced the formation of an entire card game division. I have since noticed that most of the titles then proposed never appeared, except for MNB add-ons. Whether this had more to do with later 3W troubles or lack of continued success with the card games, I confess I just do not know.

Historical eras do not get neglected either. Sparked by the release of GMT's *Alexander*, 1991 became the year of the 'Ancients Craze'. Two more boxed games, a module or two, and several magazine games later, the idea seems to have peaked, but who knows what will follow it.

The above three trends have one thing in common, a desire to find the instant formula that translates into a best-selling game. It seems that one good release is enough to spark a whole mini-genre. I think the real lesson here is somewhat simpler. Good, fun games will sell. Gamers want a mix of topics and products, and for each Intro game fanatic there is another gamer out there looking for a *Europa* title or *Guderian's Blitzkrieg*. Variety best serves the hobby as long as, at the outcome, the games are good.

Patterns: Big Splash versus Little Splash

New game company debuts resolve themselves into two types, usually dictated by available startup funds, but also modified by the SPI factor. So far, more companies lean towards the big rather than little splash.

The Big Splash

Simply put, the big splash demands a significant debut; in terms of game releases, advertising support, and future promises. Releasing multiple titles at start certainly attracts attention. GMT burst onto the scene with three games, and definitely got

people talking. Simultaneously, extensive advertising is needed. Full color, full page stuff in as many of the magazines as possible is the theme here. Again, reference GMT: Gene's ads were often on the back of *Command*, *S & T*, *Moves* and *F & M*, sometimes all at once. Inside front covers are also popular among big splashers, and color is imperative. Talking up the future is just as important. Many proposed topics need to be bandied about, to sustain long-term interest. This is not just a matter of laying out one's production schedule for the next six years and then continually talking about the same titles. More important than along-term framework is the excitement that new stuff creates. Periodically dropping in word of new, previously unannounced projects will rekindle little bursts of enthusiasm all over, rather like booster rockets on a launch vehicle. In wargaming, new = good. The really ambitious will also attempt to publish a house organ, usually bimonthly, to support the game line.

There is one more card to play in the Big Splash gambit: the overt SPI parallel. Announcing SPI remakes, etc., will definitely whip up interest. The most successful application of this technique is to start with some of the most popular old SPI games and update them. Many of the monster games, especially, could use extensive development to finish them off. This is not a difficult task since most have had extensive home-brew surgery performed already. Those gamers are out there, eager to volunteer their ideas, expertise, and playtesting services to create truly classic games from such promising material. Ideally, this would also involve buying the SPI rights from TSR to use directly, though TSR appears reluctant to let them go. Still, all of these games could be legitimately redone without plagiarism, since the redevelopment work would radically modify them and there is no copyright on historical events.

There is one obvious downside to the Big Splash: money. Multiple game releases take cash up front to pay for the printing bills, before the cash-flow cycle begins. Bigger games will make more of an initial splash than little ones, but that simply adds to the cash front cost. What's worse, your first games are liable to be your most expensive per item because you have not yet learned all the tricks of the trade. Even more money goes into advertising, and color back covers don't come cheap. I'd guess that GMT spent between 10,000 and 20,000 dollars on ads in its first year based on what we know of the magazine advertising rates.

Beyond the cash, there are other pitfalls. You will not really know how good your games are until put before the public, no matter how much you test them. Failing to deliver promised quality can create a perception problem that can haunt you, no matter how much improvement you might make later. Ambitious production schedules will demand heavy work loads, and falling behind will result in game delivery delays that irritate customers. By choosing the Big Splash, you are deliberately bypassing any initial water-testing period and jumping into full scale production. This means that you need finished designs quickly to follow up initial releases, and an established playtesting network to keep the pipeline working. The Big Splash works on the theory that you have many of the answers already, and can assimilate the rest quickly.

Most dangerous of all is the overt SPI tactic. Besides all the above baggage, now you

must meet the expectations of memories made rosy by ten years of selective recall. SPI has a martyr image in the hobby, and any new-company warts you might display magnify tremendously in comparison.

The Little Splash

I suspect only one thing really influences the decision to adopt the Little Splash instead of the big one: cash. For those ambitious types who do not have the dine To to dive in whole hog, the only recourse is a low profile effort. Its main points are a much less intensive release schedule and a lot less advertising. The very real benefits for the newcomer using this approach appear after the fact rather than before.

Initially, even the Little Splash requires some advertising. We spent about 4,000 dollars in our first 12 months. This is probably the minimum for creating some sort of name recognition. After that, we tapered off and conserved needed dollars. Our sales reached a plateau as well, since we were doing little to recruit new customers. We used this quiet period to improve rules editing and graphics. Advertising has always been a trade off, as we sought to find the right balance between dollars spent and extra sales generated by that expense. Of late, we have returned to a maintenance level of ads, usually one every two months.

Apart from money, there are other real benefits to the small approach. All the drawbacks given above, under the Big Splash heading, are positive points here. Just releasing your first game will give you a crash course in rules writing, a fact of life we discovered immediately. In 1988 and 1989, The Gamers, Inc., put out only three games, covering two series. All the while, we sweated out cash crunches, print production nightmares, and general blue periods. However, by the end of 1992, we have published our 14th game (not counting one reprint), 7 issues of Operations, and entertain solid hopes for the future. What we learned in those first two years was the difference between making good amateur games and solid, professional productions. That initial period was our boot camp.

[The Game Company Part 2](#)

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Saving Origins from the Infidels

And Other Thoughts...

by Dean N. Essig

By now word has traveled far and wide that last year's Origins-Gen Con (they did the other way around, of course, with a certain amount of type size changes, too) was a wash as far as the historical wargamer was concerned. As was brought out at our one seminar (which, I might add, we were lucky to get scheduled at all), there was little of interest for the historical gainer in the way of tournaments, seminars, panel discussions or what have you. In other words, wargaming had moved from ugly step sister of the (gasp) Adventure Game world, to third cousin, twice removed.

I can't do anything about last year's con-it's water under the bridge now. I have been assured by high ranking sources in GAMA that the combo with Gen Con will never happen again. Maybe. Regardless, with my limited position in that organization, I'm hardly able to dictate anything if they decide to go back and see if things got any better ... except to find another con for my company to attend that summer.

What can be done?

Many gamers have now expressed to me their dissatisfaction with Origins these days and expressed their desire to avoid it in the future. Aside from generating a self-fulfilling prophecy, this attitude is the potential choice of many hard-core gamers unless something is done to turn the thing around. There are two things which we are actively doing to try to help (both of which push our limited resources to the limit) and we can only wait to see if some of the other small game companies choose to follow our lead and help too. Avalon Hill has already chosen the "we'll just do our own" step already, which does nothing to help the current Origins, but does give an alternative.

Adding to the Existing Show

For this year's Origins, I've submitted for us to do no fewer than five seminars, two demos, and a tournament. For a show staff of four and having to keep our booth manned, that is pushing about as far as I dare. (More than that and guys like Sticky, Dave, and Owen who get thanks instead of a check are going to start wanting the latter!) I do not yet have the times of days when these will happen. I know when I requested them, but scheduling frequently doesn't end up looking like I wanted.

Hopefully those powers that be won't screw this up by scheduling all of them at once. (Boy, is Owen going to get tired running them all by himself ...)

Lou Zocchi also contacted us to help support his War College and we will be doing so if we can find a positive way to contribute.

Going it Alone

The second thing we are doing is that we are opening up our in-house retreat to the general public as an alternative to Origins for those who want to wait and see before committing their hard - earned money to another trip. Our retreat this year (September 24-27) is the fourth such event. We had so much fun at the first, we tried two last year - and that was a mistake. From now on it will be annual in late September (depending on the U of I football schedule). It is a very informal affair with nothing but gaming & mixing on the agenda. There is no registration fee, but I do request pre-registration only since space is so limited. We are also trying to work out some sort of discount rate at the local Red Roof Inn for convention attendees.

Right now, the only game we are sure to be playing will be *Enemy at the Gates*. Others are sure to be involved as players divide across interest lines (and begin to start to throwing up breast works ... just kidding, too much Bosnia on the news). We have enough room to support numerous games.

The goal of opening our retreat is to give an alternative to Origins and allow it to take root before any sort of collapse of the larger con might occur, if it does. If you are interested in coming in to play (or just to see what Homer is really like), I'll look forward to hearing from you!

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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External Business Report

A Look at 1992

by Dean N. Essig

Like you, I always wonder who has how much of the wargame market anyway? Figures are difficult to obtain and those which do find mention (when stripped of all the hyperbole) are both out of context and seemingly doctored.

In an effort to cut through the gloom of misinformation and lack of information, I asked four of our distributors to give me the raw dollar figures of sales for a number of what I would call "wargame companies". These distributors have no ax to grind and are as interested in seeing how their market apportionment compares to other distributors as we are in just seeing the averages. Their help was both gracious and without any sort of reward, except our thanks.

The chosen distributors range across the size spectrum and are located in different sectors of the country. There is one each from the east coast, midwest, west, and west coast. The limitation of sample size and degree of error in the sample are unknown, but the figures and proportions between these distributors (which was asked to be confidential) was consistent to a great degree from one to another. That examination, while I would not bet my statistical life on it, is probably accurate to a great degree. Use the grain of salt you feel is appropriate. For what it's worth, these four represent about 40% of the initial distribution of one of our games-no small chunk!

In looking at these figures (a simple addition of the four distributors), the following are the only "voodoo" corrections made: 80% of the combined Avalon Hill-Victory Games sales figure was considered to be wargames. 20% was dropped as representative of all the "other" things AH puts out. The Victory figure was not available separately from any of the distributors and I am led to believe AH's internal accounts system brings this about. They are, in effect, one and only one entity.

25% of GDW's sales was counted as wargames. The rest is that you-know-what genre.

The following companies had either incomplete reporting from the contacted distributors, or insufficient dollar value to show up on enough of the distributor lists to make meaningful comparisons: ADG, Canadian WG, and Omega Games. Any other firms missed, undoubtedly fall into the same category.

Company Notes

The XTR figure includes Command and the zip lock games. None of the distributors could break the figures down further or give a rule of thumb as to how much was from the games. I won't hazard a guess.

From a couple of the distributors, I was able to determine that roughly 10% of the DG figure is due to Four Battles of the Ancient World. The remainder is due to the magazines. The DG figure here is the total. Apply the 10% multiplier if you want to separate the mags from the game.

The Clash of Arms number contains an unknown amount of Theatre of the Mind, Combined Books, and Prince August volume. (As well as whatever else Ed has been cooking up!) I have no idea of how much of the figure is actually Clash of Arms wargames.

Total Volume for the Four Distributors and Market Share		
Company	Dollar Volume	% Share
AH-VG	382,807	47.98
DG	78,771	9.87
3W	76,157	9.55
XTR	53,290	6.68
GDW	51,619	6.47
COA	44,546	5.58
GMT	39,527	4.95
The Gamers	35,389	4.44
GRD	23,587	2.96
Rhino	7,336	0.92
NES	4,796	0.60

Rankings

For the following market share rankings, the above modifications are all used plus I'll make two ballpark wild-assed guesses that Clash of Arms's wargames makeup 75% of the COA figure and that 20% of XTR's number is the zip-locks. Feel free to chuck those estimates and use your own. In any case, I have attempted to separate the magazine industry from the boxed game market for this purpose. If you don't like any of my assumptions or restrictions-feel free to make your own list, the raw data is here as are all my assumptions.

1. Avalon Hill-VG 56.87%
2. 3W 11.31%
3. GDW 7.67%
4. GMT 5.87%
5. The Gamers 5.26%
6. Clash of Arms 4.96%
7. GRD 3.50%
8. XTR 1.58%
9. DG 1.17%
10. Rhino 1.09%
11. New England Sims 0.71 %

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[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Internal Business Report

The Gamers, Inc. 1993

by Dean N. Essig

As promised, here are the assorted figures pertaining to the operations of The Gamers, Inc. for the last five operating years. The hard part in assembling this information was in determining what might be of interest to players and what might not. I hope I have decided wisely. If not, feel free to write me about it so I can add the detail when I do next year's report. I do hope to make this a feature of each Spring Issue. In future issues, I won't go back over all past years, but will only cover the year just concluded.

Income and Expenses

An important thing to note about this listing of income, expenses, and profit (loss) is that for the later half of 1990 and first half of 1991, I was under instructions from the government not to draw any salary from the company (after my injuries, I was placed on full-time military pay for about six months which was followed by eight months of administrative screwups the likes of which I wouldn't wish on anyone). The net result was that both year's expense amounts are abnormally low. Since my family likes to cat and have a roof over its head and I don't have any other sort of job, reality dictates a structure more like 1992 in the future, especially as we add on more workers.

The expense column does count the cost of goods sold, but not money soaked up in the form of inventory. For my own internal purposes, I prefer to expense-out' cash spent on inventory as money which is gone. That way I can keep a close eye on whether the inventory is paying for itself or if more and more money is being sunk into it without an equal share coming back out in good time. To my accountant and the government, inventory is money I still have. Maybe, but for my own edification, I prefer to see how the balance is going before I find that there is no cash to be had, as it was all tied up in inventory. I prefer my own records to tell me real things about real money, not to play accountancy games with my head.

Game Unit Sales

This is a complete wrap-up, including those figures presented here earlier. From this you can easily see the degradation of sales over time (especially when a game goes out of print ... just kidding) as well as the increase in expectations over the years. What

was a good first year back in 1990, just doesn't cut it now.

What surprised me about these figures was the difference between *SP* and *GB*. Even deducting the 300-400 copies of *SP* from the second printing counted in that games total, there is still a gulf between the two of some 400 copies to spare. Yet, both games went out of print in roughly the same amount of time and both had 2500 print runs. The variance in final numbers can be explained by the number of *GB* parts which were rejected by inspectors here before making it into a game-thus dropping the number of copies possible to sell from the optimal 2500 to the number of first-rate games we could assemble. A further 90 *GB*s were sold after the beginning of the year and I believe Shirley has stashed about 20 of them to fill orders with. That leaves a raw deficit of 300 copies between the two games. (For those *SP* players who are convinced that this is the only type of game we should release, bare in mind that those 2,138 copies of *GB* were worth as much as 3,790 *SP*s in cash brought in and this business runs on the lean green!)

So, How's Business?

As you can see here, our growth has been very comfortable and encouraging. At the time of this writing, the company is free of all of its periodic bank-note load. We take out the occasional \$5,000 to \$10,000 in notes from our bank to help pay for new game production. Right now that load is zero (I expect to add a little for the publication of *Thunder II*). Our raw cash position (cash assets (bank accounts plus receivables) less bills and notes) stands at about \$20,000 on the plus side which is up from a white-knuckled below zero figure around the time *BRS* came out. All in all, things look pretty good.

Income and Expenses			
Year	Income	Expenses	Profit (Loss)
1988	\$21,838	\$26,337	(4,499)
1989	32,044	42,556	(10,512)
1990	53,962	49,351	4,611
1991	104,614	69,316	35,298
1992	171,442	157,239	14,203
Totals	383,900	344,799	39,101

Unit Sales						
Game	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	Total
1-01 <i>ITQF</i>	942	263	-	1,199	57	2,461
1-02 <i>TatC</i>	732	719	248	-	-	1,699

1-03 <i>Aug F</i>	-	106	1,497	363	269	2,235
1-04 <i>Bar V</i>	-	-	-	1,495	343	1,838
1-05 <i>BRS</i>	-	-	-	-	1,748	1,748
1-06 <i>P-vill</i>	-	-	-	-	1,612	1,612
1-07 <i>EAW</i>	-	-	-	-	1,532	1,532
2-01 <i>B110</i>	-	1,599	588	253	28	2,468
2-02 <i>OS</i>	-	-	1,073	392	247	1,712
2-03 <i>Omaha</i>	-	-	-	1,279	441	1,720
3-01 <i>FEW</i>	-	-	1,278	369	160	1,807
4-01 <i>GB</i>	-	-	-	-	2,138	2,138
5-01 <i>SP</i>	-	-	-	-	2,920	2,920
Totals by yr	1,674	2,687	4,684	5,350	11,495	25,890

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[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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In Brief

Editorial

by Dean N. Essig

First, I want to thank all of you who expressed concern about the reconstruction surgery of my left hand. All went well and Doc Frankenstein seems quite pleased with himself-even Egor has been getting days off lately! Seriously, this one went much smoother than the first and function seems to be returning at a rapid rate.

My three-times-a-week physical therapy schedule has had little negative effect on my ability to spend hours at work. As it occurs at 7:30am, I can make it back to the office by 9:00 and be ready when the phone starts ringing off the hook. This is much better than what I had to do with my right hand--where the actual appointment counting travel time took no less than three hours and the (then) daily appointment was scheduled for 2:00pm. I could work in the morning and the evening--the afternoon was shot. To think, *Omaha* was produced then! I must have been younger.

This issue contains our sales wrap-up for 1992 and earlier. Every figure I could think to throw in has been and I made an attempt to get some numbers from the large distributors to give everyone an idea of how the companies stack up in raw volume against each other. The response from them was very gratifying and I'd like to thank Bob Boyle at Greenfield, Michael Sloan at Berkeley Games, Danny Kilbert at the Compleat Strategist, and Wayne Godfrey at Wargames West for sharing their private information with us, and for taking time from their busy schedules to compile the requested information and send it in. The information they provided should allow players to shift through the pack of conflicting wild claims we an hear of dizzying success, and rumors of failure. In short, it puts all the game companies into some sort of perspective and gives a yardstick to measure each manufacturer's claims.

Dave also gives us his comments regarding the starting of a game company and the two tracks which seem to define a new company's attitude toward life.

I shall attempt to do this in each year's Spring issue and I hope you find it to be of more use than the usual subjective 'who-did-what' wrap-up.

On the design front, I am quite overloaded. Besides the design for *Afrika*, I am up to my literal ears in development of the Napoleonic Brigade Series and its first game

Austerlitz, working on the initial design of *Enemy at the Gates* (OCS #2), and helping Joe Sylvester with the development of *Matanikau*. A full slate; more full than I'd like to have.

I'd like to announce that Rod S. and Mike H. have joined our in-house playtest group and that regular playtesting occurs every Thursday night. For anyone in range, we would welcome you too!

Our two year old private retreat has been opened to the general public. See the information in this issue about it. We will be holding it on the weekend of September 24 through 27. While there is no fee, I request that all interested pre-register so that the limited space can be organized to handle all who are interested. Our retreat is a wargame-play-only event. It is our in-house weekend to relax and play a couple of games with our friends. We are opening it up for those who want an alternative to Origins these days (as opposed to the wargame con of yesteryear). If you can attend, let me know.

I want to also thank all of you who commented on the things you liked or didn't like in the graphics of the fall CWB game releases. That information was of great use to me in refining things for the *Thunder at the Crossroads*, 2nd edition game and future volumes in the series.

This issue was assisted in the proofing department by Mike Haggett and Rod Schmisser who graciously offered their free time to come in and look over my, cough, writing. Hopefully, I can make it a habit for them-we'll all benefit.

The add-in-some-damn-graphics program we started with the last issue was derailed in this one due to space and time limitations. I hope to pick it back up and make further progress with issue 9. The couple of illustrations herein were thoughtfully provided by the author, Dave Demko--now if only his diskettes would work!

Unfortunately, no letters addressed to the editor for publication showed up this time. Pity. I hope there will be some next time.

A few articles from last time had their continuations postponed until next issue due to space considerations.

Good Luck and Good Gaming!

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Out Brief

The Great Game Glut of '92

by Dean N. Essig

Well, my first stab at figuring out where the cattle herd was headed was wrong. In the last issue, I predicted that the next game craze was going to be an Eastern Front one, silly me. In my usual unorthodox state of bliss, I managed to ignore that monster befuddling the conventional wisdom: the Great Game Glut. One must understand that such "wisdom" directs the thinking (for lack of a better term) of the mob.

Over 60 games were produced in the United States last year. That's alot of games. When coupled to the fact that fully 34% of them carne from firms not exactly noted for their stellar track records, you can easily end up with something on the order of 20 to 30 games which are sheer caca to any one game player--probably more given the selective tastes of game players--and numerous borderline models. As any game player knows (game companies are a bit slower on the uptake), there is always a glut of caca-one such game generates a glut.

"Glut Theory" would have us believe that with but a finite number of gaming dollars to be spent each year, with a greater number of games, the portion for each game is driven downward into dangerous levels. Bull. That logic assumes an equal spread of the potential purchase dollars. That game consumers are unthinking robots who don't care about quality and service and will unthinkingly spread their purchases across the board. You and I know better.

With a large number of games available, each game purchaser's hard earned cash will be spent on the products he thinks are best. The good products will attract the dollars, the poor ones won't. For those manufacturers who didn't pay attention at school, that will come as something of a shock and their earnings will drop rapidly unless they make substantial improvements. This most will not do. They will instead blame their misfortune on the great game glut and raise the gloom level even more.

I fully believe that companies with consistent track records of producing popular games with a high level of quality will gamer more than their 'fair' share of those limited dollars. This draw will be away from other companies who are not so disposed. They will have trouble making ends meet and (surprise, surprise) the basic laws of business will force the closure of firms unwilling or unable to compete effectively.

Several companies are already so worried about this glut thing that they are down-sizing to meet it. They are (as far as I can tell) doing this by the illogical method of producing as many games as before, but printing fewer copies of each! In other words, to counter a glut of titles, they are going to keep producing as many as they can make, but will instead raise the unit cost to produce them by cutting the print run. Confused? So am I. If there is indeed a 'Great Game Glut' and you assume it is a bad thing (I don't---anything that gives the game buyer more selection to choose from is a good thing), wouldn't cutting back on the number of titles produced be a better plan? That's what I thought.

Part of what is driving that thought is the constant demand for new products. A full scale game today probably doesn't have a shelf life of more than a couple of months (possibly even mere weeks!). Given the intense amount of effort required of every game (good or bad), this period of useful sales is much too short. I'm not really sure of how to correct this fact-and I'm all ears for ideas. The "new product bent" is driven in part by the numerous game outlets who are much more used to the selling of things like comic books which have little or no shelf life at all. These outlets are in an industry where every month many new products are released for them to sell. To them, the game industry is (in a word) weird.

I think the company who is chopping their print-runs, yet producing the same number (or more) titles per year has given up on producing finely crafted games which will go forth and sell beyond some minimal maintenance level. They expect each title to sell the 'standard' amount and little, if any, more. Therefore, to cut losses due to inventory, they produce fewer of each title. Each title (on the other hand) generates another 'batch x' of sales that can be counted on. So why make more or produce games which will attempt to do more than the minimums? I hope the concerned consumer, voting with his checkbook and credit card, will give them some reason to think about.

I am amazed that in a few short years we went from a barren plain of new games, through 'golden age #2', all the way to the great, evil, game glut. I don't think the number of games being produced these days is a problem, instead, I feel that the intelligent game buyer out there will make his choices carefully with his hard-earned money and the overall best firms will benefit. Those who can't compete (or who don't think they should have to) will, of course, whine. A few will fail, some will learn, all will wise up. The customer is king, and I think some folks are about to be reminded of that fact.

Remember: Good Planets are Hard to Find... Please Recycle

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Game Rating Chart

All Companies' Products

by the readers

Rating -- Game -- Manufacturer

4.682 *Omaha* The Gamers
4.650 *Bloody Roads South* The Gamers
4.600 *Guderian's Blitzkrieg* The Gamers
4.556 *SPQR* GMT
4.552 *Embrace an Angry Wind* The Gamers
4.543 *Perryville* The Gamers
4.517 *Barren Victory* The Gamers
4.444 *Stalingrad Pocket* The Gamers
4.410 *Thunder at the Crossroads I* The Gamers
4.400 *Alexander* GMT
4.304 *The Korean War Victory*
4.286 *5th Fleet Victory*
4.270 *Bloody 110th* The Gamers
4.211 *The Emperor Returns* Clash of Arms
4.160 *7th Fleet Victory*
4.143 *RAF West End*
4.095 *3rd Fleet Victory*
4.091 *St. Lo West End*
4.065 *Siege of Jerusalem* Avalon HW
4.062 *Hornet Leader* GMT
4.019 *In their Quiet Fields* The Gamers
4.000 *Ancients* Good Industries
4.000 *Devils Den* Avalon Hill
4.000 *Force Eagle's War* The Gamers
4.000 *Scorched Earth* GDW-GRD
4.000 *Tokyo Express Victory*
3.893 *Fire in the East* GDW
3.886 *Pacific War Victory*
3.875 *Flat Top* Avalon HW
3.875 *Republic of Rome* Avalon Hill
3.857 *Ambush Victory*
3.857 *Empires in Arms* Avalon Hill
3.846 *East Front* Columbia

3.824 West of Alamein Avalon Hill
3.818 World in Flames ADG
3.800 B-17 Avalon Hill
3.800 Napoleon at Leipzig Clash of Arms
3.800 Objective: Schmidt The Gamers
3.795 Civil War Victory
3.791 *August Fury* The Gamers
3.786 Imperium Romanum II West End
3.778 Duel for Kharkov PWG
3.778 Red Barricades Avalon RM
3.778 Southern Front GDW
3.778 Turning Pnt: Stalingrad Avalon HW
3.769 Peloponnesian War Victory
3.765 Tac Air Avalon Hill
3.765 Yanks Avalon Hill
3.750 Against the Reich West End
3.750 Bloody Kasserine GDW
3.750 Persian Gulf GDW
3.733 Air Strike GDW
3.733 Napoleon's Last Battles TSR
3.722 Air Superiority GDW
3.706 Blue Max GDW
3.706 Up Front Avalon Hill
3.682 Shot and Shell 3W
3.647 Hollow Legions Avalon Hill
3.647 Panzer Command Victory
3.645 Raid on St. Nazaire Avalon HW
3.636 Russian Campaign Avalon Hill
3.625 Beyond Valor Avalon Hill
3.625 The Last Hurrah Avalon Hill
3.625 Wooden Ships and Iron Men Avalon Hill
3.615 Hells Highway Victory
3.600 Code Of Bushido Avalon Hill
3.600 La Bat. d'Eylau Clash of Arms
3.600 Western Desert GDW
3.583 La Bat. d'Ligny Clash of Arms
3.580 Lee vs. Grant Victory
3.571 Rebel Sabres TSR
3.556 Air and Armor West End
3.545 Desert Steel West End
3.533 La Bat. d'Aucrstadt Clash of Arms
3.500 House Divided GDW
3.500 La Bat. d'Quatra Bras Clash of Arms
3.500 Paratrooper Avalon Hill
3.474 Assault GDW
3.462 Third Reich Avalon Hill

3.457 1st Blood SDI
3.429 Carrier Victory
3.409 The Legend Begins Rhino
3.406 Adv Sqd Ldr, Rules Avalon Hill
3.400 Harpoon GDW
3.375 Flight Leader Avalon Hill
3.333 Gettysburg 88 Avalon Hill
3.316 La Bat. d'Alburera Clash of Arms
3.286 Dead of Winter SDI
3.269 Marching through Georgia Clash of Arms
3.226 Edelweiss Clash of Arms
3.222 Pax Britannica Victory
3.219 Campaigns of RE Lee Clash of Arms
3.200 Operation Shoestring GMT
3.200 Balkan Front GRD
3.200 Battle of the Bulge 91 Avalon Hill
3.200 Sands of War GDW
3.182 Black Beard Avalon Hill
3.179 Gulf Strike victory
3.174 Modern Naval Battles I 3W
3.167 Attack Sub Avalon Hill
3.167 Cpt's Ed Harpoon GDW
3.154 World War II 2nd ed TSR
3.125 D-Day 92 Avalon Hill
3.105 Soldiers West End
3.100 Wahoo! XTR
3.071 Chieftain GDW
3.050 La Bat. d'Talavera Clash of Arms
3.000 Days of Decision ADG
3.000 Desert Falcons GDW
3.000 East Front Solitaire Omega
3.000 Prelude to Disaster Clash of Arms
3.000 Rommel at Bay 3W
3.000 Thunder at Casino Avalon Hill
2.960 Mississippi Fortress Clash of Arms
2.917 LAU Victory Clash of Arms
2.882 Modern Naval Battles 11 3W
2.875 Airbridge to Victory GMT
2.875 Campaign to Stalingrad Rhino
2.833 Moscow, 1941 TSR
2.800 Airland Battle Omega
2.800 Civilization Avalon Hill
2.783 Silver Bayonet GMT
2.762 War and peace Avalon Hill
2.750 Afika Korps Avalon Hill
2.750 Ranger Omega

2.733 MBT Avalon Hill
2.696 Central America Victory
2.684 Great Invasion Clash of Arms
2.667 Hitler's Last Gamble 3W
2.667 Light Division 3W
2.630 The Great Patriotic War GDW
2.615 La Grande Armee TSR
2.571 The Longest Day Avalon Hill
2.556 Panzer Leader Avalon Hill
2.550 Open Fire Victory
2.526 Nato, Nukes, Nazis XTR
2.500 Black Gold-Texas Tea XTR
2.462 Four Battles of the Ancient World DO
2.450 Grand Army of the Republic Task Force
2.438 The Urals GRD
2.385 Battlefield Europe GDW
2.375 Main Battle Front Omega
2.375 Team Yankee GDW
2.375 Test of Arms GDW
2.333 1863 GMT
2.267 Modern Naval Battles III 3W
2.263 Tomorrow the World 3W
2.250 Mississippi Banzai XTR
2.222 Pas de Calais Vanguard
2.222 Shell Shock Victory
2.100 Battle Cry! 3W
2.056 Rise and Fall EMS
2.051 Guns of Cedar Creek SDI
2.050 SS Amerika 3W
1.957 1944 3W
1.889 Operation Crusader FGA
1.875 Rorke's Drift 3W
1.865 1962 SDI
1.688 Stand and Die GDW
1.375 WW2 3W
1.222 Tet GDW
1.143 Brother against Brother FGA
1.136 Civil War Classics FGA
1.100 Pacific War Classics FGA
1.083 Eagle and the Sun FGA
1.000 Strategy 3W

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Errata and Q&A

Civil War Brigade Series

1-01 *In Their Quiet Fields*, 2nd Edition

1. M/DM/2 should be M/DH/2 on the counter.
2. 1/3/2 and 2/3/2 are overstacked in the initial set up. Place 1/3/2 in any adjacent hex.
3. A number of Loss Charts were shipped which were improperly printed. If you do not have both Union and Confederate Loss Charts (printed on one big sheet in the 2nd Ed), let us know and we will replace your sheet with a correct one.
4. The Union artillery west of the Antietam violates the 2nd Ed CWB rule regarding artillery supply tracing along roads. All Union artillery units west of the Antietam can fire at full strength if they can trace a path to the Union Supply Train of any length along hexes the artillery could move through.

1-02 *Thunder at the Crossroads*

1. There are no Corps-level anti-initiative ratings for either side.
2. There is no Entry hex I. In all cases, the Union player gets points for Controlling Entry Hex H, instead.
3. The Confederate player gets 10 VP for entry Hex E (not F) and 5 VP for Entry Hex F (not G).
4. Each wrecked Union Cavalry Brigade is worth three (3) VP's, not one.
5. Current Strength Chart:
 - S/J/2 - strength on 3rd and 4th days is 14, not 10.
 - Stwl/J/2 - strength on 3rd & 4th days is 10, not 14.
 - B/Heth/3 - strength on 2nd, 3rd, & 4th days is 8, not 9.
 - A/Heth/3 - strength on 2nd & 3rd days is 9, on 4th day is 5.

6. Loss Chart corrections:

The Iron Brigade (1/1/1) is missing five strength circles. (note: this error is on the original, two-color loss charts only. Later loss charts, all in black, have corrected the error.)

The 2/1/3 should have an original strength of 22, not 12.

7. Union Arrival Schedule:

At 12 noon July 2, Gregg and 1/2/Cav arrive with 1xCh, not 3xCb.

8. Confederate Arrival Schedules: In order to correct a game imbalance, allow the Rebel army supply train to arrive at 4pm July 1, with Anderson's Division. This holds for both the Jackson Lives and historical orders of arrival.

9. Jackson Lives Scenario: Two new divisions are created in this scenario, Ew/2 and LD/2. Their wrecked levels are as follows:

Ew/2 0/0
LD/2 00000/0

1-03 August Fury

1. If for any reason a newly arriving unit finds its entry area blocked by enemy forces, it may appear, one turn later, at the closest unblocked map edge hex, in any formation desired.
2. The CSA RW Supply arrives at 9:00 a.m., the 29th, at area A.
3. Remove the 3v Supply wagon from both Scenario 2 and 6 set ups. The wagon enters at 5:00 a.m. on the 29th with McDowell which is the first turn of both scenarios and does not begin on the map.
4. H/Cav should be listed as part of the option which includes Hill's Provisional Corps.
5. Hatch is allowed to stack with the artillery with his division as if it were one of his brigades in the set up. He must move to one of his brigades when play begins.
6. In scenario 5, the 3v Supply wagon sets up and is on the Arrival Schedule the set up is correct.

1-04 Barren Victory

1. There are two Entry Area F's on the map. The one on the North map edge should be

a G. There are supposed to be two Entry Area G's.

2. The Ammo and Casualty tracks for both sides were set up from 1 to 10 instead of 0 to 9. Please use the 10 as the 0.

3. The use of Kershaw and McLaws is not explained. McLaws is an optional unit for use when the "rest of M/1" variant is used. Kershaw is the normal commander of M/1. When the regular reinforcements of M/1 come on the map he is their commander. When the option is used, ignore Kershaw and bring on McLaws instead.

4. The example of forest in the terrain key was omitted. What the forest symbol looks like should be obvious. The use of the words forest and woods in the Terrain notes of the exclusive rules was unfortunate--Please read woods as open.

5. The dice rolls given as examples in the rules for Lee and Johnston to bypass Wing Structure are incorrect. Johnston needs 11+, Lee needs 9+. The number listed for Bragg (12) is correct.

6. The two optional Reserve Corps Batteries-Rb(5), Rb(2)--should be omitted when setting up the game. Where the setup calls for "Reserve Corps all" it is too easy to forget that these two batteries are optional and should not be set up so be sure to keep them with the optionals.

7. The reference to "5" in 4.2f should be to 4.2e.

8. When the Union Army panics, the center of the "zone of rout" is measured from Rosecrans himself, not his HQ.

1-05 Bloody Roads South

1. The following rules should be added to those already marked Optional 1.2c and 3.1d. As a further option, if 3.1d is used, do not apply it to those Union leaders listed in 3.1g which are capable of issuing themselves attack orders.

2. The Off-Map mvt hex for the Rebs should be A2.01, not A 1.01

3. The Divisional Goal listed for 3/5 in Scenario 3 also applies in Scenarios 4 and 5.

4. 3.1a & 3.1b are not meant to imply that Grant cannot issue orders to division commanders. He can if he wants to, and this would be done with the same column shift on the Acceptance Table as if the receiver was a corps commander.

5. 3.1c: A sentence is incorrect as written. The sentence beginning: "Union corps no longer need to check for acceptance themselves..." should read "Union corps no longer

need to check for Corps Attack Stoppage themselves..."

6. In Strategic Victory determination, Brock Crossing should be worth 2 VP's to either side, not just the Confederates, and the it should be 20 Tac VP's give 1 Strategic VP, not the 5 to 1 as listed.

7. Add to 1.2f: "Wilderness hexes are negated for straggler recovery purposes if they contain or are adjacent to trails, roads, railroads, or open terrain features."

1-06 Perryville

1. The Chaplin River is missing its center dark blue line. It is a river in game terms-- not a stream or a third kind of feature.

2. Our laser printer lopped off the furthest right loss chart boxes for a few units in their C fire level. Each of the following brigades should have three boxes following the lonely "C" on the Loss Charts:

Confederate: I-M-Ky

Union: 34-10-1, 3-1-3, 36-11-3, and 37-11-3

1-07 Embrace an Angry Wind

1. On the Union Order of Arrivals on the back of the rule book, order number 4 (unlisted) is "Rejoin Corps."

2. As in Perryville, the Panic and Status rules are not used in this game.

3. On the Confederate Order of Arrival, the last two entries (10:00pm and 10:30pm) should both be listed as AM arrivals (10:00am and 10:30am respectively).

Questions and Answers

If the fire points fall between columns on the Fire Table (ie: 4 1/2 points) do you go up to the higher or down to the lower?

In all cases in the CWB where fractions are involved, round down.

If the army commander is stacked with a corps commander, can he roll for acceptance without delay?

Sure, in fact, that is a great way to command the army. Have the army commander run his own orders instead of using messengers. Its a bit faster and has a better chance of acceptance-as long as you coordinate his activities so that he is where he needs to be

when he needs to be there.

Can a unit without orders (or orders to defend) move toward the enemy in an attempt to engage it or to counterattack in order to exploit a weakness?

To counterattack troops which are attacking it, yes. An attack launched against a docile enemy who happens to present a weakness of some manner would not be considered a "counterattack." Limited spoiling operations (skirmishes) and feints are allowed of units without orders, but players must be very astute to the bounds of these extremely limited operations. When in doubt, give me a call to determine the issue in a case by case manner.

In a situation where an extended line's parent is forced back due to a morale result, must the extended line reorient to make the arrow identify the parent and potentially present a flank target to the enemy?

The "arrow must point at the parent" rule causes many players problems. The rule is only there so that extended lines and their parents do not become lost in the shuffle. It was never intended as a restriction on facing. As long as both players are aware of which extended line belongs to which brigade and the two units are adjacent at the end of any given phase-the extended line may face any direction. It operates as any other unit (as long as the above is true) and as long as ownership is not in question-the arrow rule may be safely ignored. There is no requirement at all to adjust the facing of extended lines as the result of retreats.

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Errata and Q&A

Tactical Combat Series

2-01 Bloody 110th

1. Add the 38th PzJg Bn (all) to the Historical Order of Arrival to the other units arriving at 0200, 17 Dec 44. The 273 Flak did not enter the map is correct and it should not be on the Order of Arrival
2. Only one German Bridge may be built during the game. If a bridge allows the use of Area, 3 and 4, the player need not wait to reduce Hosingen before using Area 3 when the bridge is up. Hosingen only makes units wait which are trying to enter Areas 4 or 5.
3. 2 PG Regimental troops, 2x Gw38(t), enter with 2/2 PC in the Historical Order of Arrival.
4. One 38th Pioneer Platoon was printed without a morale. It has the same morale as the others in its company (5.)

2-02 Objective: Schmidt

1. Teaching Scenario #4, Forward Observer, ignore the portion of the U.S. Victory Condition that calls for occupation of all of Vossenack.
2. Scenario 3: Ignore the German 150mm Artfflery ammo supply. It is not needed.
3. Scenario 5: Under German Artillery Batteries Available, 1/843 should instead be the 1/4/89.
4. The German Fus/275th should have morale boxes for each company, 1 through 4, instead of just one box for the battalion.
5. D/86 Chem Mortars should not be on the Order of Arrival-it sets up at start.
6. American Variable Reinforcement Schedule result number 5 should include C Company, 20th Engineers.

2-03 Omaha

Counters:

1. The Panzer Lehr Mk V's should have a defense of 4 and movement of 18.
2. One mortar platoon in each of 4/1/915 and M/3/116 is incorrect on the back --they should read A A 4.
3. An MG section in H/2/18 is incorrect on the back-should read A A 5.
4. The M3 in D/745 with A A 6 on the back should read the same as the other M3's
5. One of the Recon platoons in the 1st ID Recon Company is listed as A B on the back, should be A A.

Rules:

1. Scenario 9 lists Panzer Lehr's artillery as 105mm, it should be 150mm and the ammo for the Germans should also be this type.
2. Add the following to the German Variable Reinforcement Table in scenario 1: The dice roll result of 5-6 on the Reinforcement Table should read 1/352PJ or 2/352 PJ. The German player has his choice of one of these units-if one is already in play, he gets the other on a later roll of 5 or 6.
3. Pill Boxes are never considered dug in for terrain effects. All the Pill Boxes on maps A and B are used when determining the survival roll modifier. Pill Boxes do not get the benefit of "being stacked with infantry" on the AT Ron Table-unless an actual infantry unit is present in the pill box's hex.
4. Fortified Zone effects and other terrain effects are cumulative. The net modifier for terrain on a pill box in the open should be 0. Note that PB's are not considered AT Guns for terrain effects-they act like immobile tanks.
5. Artillery vs. Rocket Pits on the Artillery vs. Point Target Table: Rocket pits; are assumed to have a defense rating of more than 2 and no modifier is applied for the reason of "weak defense."
6. LCT(R) fires whose center hex drifts off-map or into the sea are lost and of no effect. There is no effect for the "edge" of a rocket fire which a player might argue is still on the beach. If it goes out to sea, it is all lost. Let's keep it simple.
7. PB squads are considered dug in-in the hex their Pill Box was located -if they are in

fire mode. If they move from that hex, they lose that status.

8. The Shingle modifier (-2) is in addition to the normal terrain effects of the hex the target is in - i.e. open

9. AT Rolls against Pill Boxes at ranges one or less are allowed. Range two is not.

10. Leaders land with any of their own units: CO 1/16 lands with any unit of 1/16, CO 16 RCT would land with any unit of the 16 RCT, etc. Note the restrictions on which leaders are allowed to make up the pool on page 7. In the one map scenarios, divide the number of leaders to be selected by 2, round up.

11. Change the headings of the Pill Boxes Remaining Modifier when playing one map landing scenarios, use the following:

Existing Headings	0-5	6-13	14-20	21 or more
Scenario 3	0-2	3-5	6-8	9 or more
Scenario 4	0-3	4-8	9-12	13 or more

12. The Variable Reinforcement Table for Scenario 2 has two places where a roll of 9 would end up. The dice rolls for each table position should be 2-9, 10,11-12.

13. The "1st Flak Corps" mentioned in the German Order of Battle should be read as the Ist Flak Regiment, 3rd Flak Corps.

3-01 Force Eagle's War

1. Two of 2/E's ITV's were printed with the same info on the front and back. The backs of these units should read P B 15, like the others.

2. Modern Expansion rule 3.3c is in error. The T-80 may fire an AT-8 or its main gun during a single fire-neverboth-and this dual system does not free it from the standard "one shot per unit rule."

Questions and Answers

I've come up with a house rule on AT rolls in Bocage. No matter where the Bocage hex is in relation to either the firer or target (provided the AT roll is made across such a hexside) treat the target hex as if it were forest. Comments?

That would work well in showing the effects of Bocage country on tanks. *Omaha* players should try this rule out.

Does a secondary road (1/2 MP for vehicles) apply in a city hex (1/3 MP for vehicles) even though the city cost is cheaper? Does movement in a city entitle the +2 modifier to overwatch fires?

Use the city terrain cost when moving on a secondary road in a city hex. The roads in such an area would qualify as something better than run-of-the-mill farm lanes. Movement in a city (if done using the road movement rate) allows the use of the +2 modifier for overwatch fires. To avoid this, the moving player must move through the hex as if it were clear terrain and pay the full one MP per hex.

Which unit receives an overwatch marker when a mortar fires overwatch as indirect fire, the observer, the mortar, or both? Who rolls for permission, specifically, when the observer is within three hexes of the target and the mortar is not?

Only the mortar is marked with an overwatch marker when it fires overwatch, never the spotter. The firing unit rolls for permission. If the target is within 3 hexes of the spotter, the spotter gets the benefit, not the mortar.

Are only building symbols LOS obstacles or the entire hex (including hexsides)?

The building symbols themselves block LOS, not the hex. Many players use the hex anyway to avoid LOS "arguments" but technically only if the building lies on the LOS does it block.

Can tanks engage a single pointfire target as a group or must they shoot singly? Same question applied to area fires?

Tanks can engage a single target as a group. When doing area fires, they are added together. In point fires, they fire one after another independently. Either way, the firing player engages the desired target with whatever he has before play alternates as alternation is done by target, not firer.

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

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Errata and Q&A

Operational Combat Series

OCS Series Errata

1. The Attrition Table modifier reading "more than 2, but less than 4" should read "at least 2, but less than 4."
2. On the Barrage Table the following column and dice combinations should have 1/2, not 1 results: 25-40 @ 7, 69-116 @ 5, and 117+ @ 2-3.
3. The order of rounding for Dump Capture needs more explanation and is as follows:
 - A) Roll die to get initial %.
 - B) Take that % of the dump (the amount captured or destroyed) and round.
 - C) Remainder of dump displaces.
 - D) Halve the Captured-Destroyed amount and round. That much is captured.
 - E) Remainder is lost
4. A unit cannot enter Reserve Mode if it is adjacent to an enemy unit--as is also the case with Strategic Move Mode.
5. Air units executing an abort are exempt from interception by the air units with which they were just in air to air combat.
6. A unit has its Reserve Marker removed from it die instant an overrun is declared against the hex it is in.
7. Artillery units can never make more than one barrage attack in a single phase. The first sentence in section 12.4 is not meant to imply that artillery cannot fire at adjacent hexes--only that they can fire at hexes further than those which are adjacent.
8. Barrage, Table: A player can use modification 1 OR 2 in a single barrage resolution--he may never apply both of them at the same time.
9. DELETE the "exploit result, flip to combat mode" rule. ADD: Units which get an exploit results do not change mode, but may only move at 1/2 of their movement allowance in the Exploitation Phase. Released reserve units may still move their fall

movement allowance after release.

10. The Air Drop Table in the Charts & Tables Booklet and that listed in rule 14.19b conflict. The Charts & Tables version is correct.

4-01 Guderian's Blitzkrieg

1. The First Stab at Tula scenario's victory conditions for the Soviet player has the descriptions for Major and Minor flip-flopped.

2. The 3rd Motorized Division's MC Bn should have the same Move Mode values as any other MC Bn.

3. The Moscow Defense Hexes should be "close' terrain, not "very close."

4. In Scenario 7 and the turn 10 set up, The 19 Pz units should set up in hex A43.25, not A48.25.

5. The "1" unit referred to in the historical set ups as part of the 3rd Pz is the "1 Rec" unit.

6. Wagon load/unload costs in Deep Snow should be 1 MP (as is the case in Rasputitsa).

7. The Soviet "22 Mtrd Div" listed in scenario 2 should be the 220 Mtrd Div.

8. Optional: Count Soviet Tank brigades as 1/2 DSE for supply purposes. If this rule is used, they no longer count as free non-divisionals. This rule does not affect artillery, katyusha, and cavalry brigades which remain free non-divisionals paid for by the extra point.

Questions and Answers

Interdiction, 14.15 Series Rules, p23 refers only to "an enemy unit" that must expend 1 additional MP. Does this also apply to trucks? To Supply Traces (draw & throw ranges)?

Yes, all forms of enemy ground movement, including traces must expend the extra W Interdiction effect.

Can a unit placed in Reserve Mode (under which he is in Move Mode), use rail movement in the Movement Phase, then release and move normally in the Exploit Phase?

No. A Unit in Reserve Mode may not use Rail Movement.

Series Rules, 15.0g, p 25 says "...the air base supply occurs before air bases may be upgraded..." Does this also apply to the building of air bases. That is, On the turn that you build and airbase, can it be used to refit planes?

15.0g refers to both upgrading and building airbases. On the turn an airbase is built, it may not be used to refit planes, since the supply phase occurs prior to the building of the airbase. The newly built airbase cannot be supplied on that turn, thus cannot be used to refit planes; however, planes may land there.

Series Rules, p18,12.4 says "Artillery units may participate in barrage attacks against unit they are not adjacent to" Arty units are not restricted to non-adjacent barrages, that is they can barrage into adjacent hexes (1 hex range)?

Artillery can barrage into adjacent hexes.

Supply & the "adjacent Hex": The adjacent hex applies only on the Terminal end of the HQ-to-Unit trace (and of course only in the Supply Overphase). That is, when you are tracing from the Supply Dump to the HQ for the HQ's draw, you may or may not go to the hex adjacent to the HQ's hex?

Adjacent hex is only on the terminal end of the HQ-to-Unit trace & only in the Supply Overphase. When you are tracing an HQ's draw from a Dump, you start at the HQ and trace/count back to the dump (and must reach the dump - not an adjacent hex). To throw, trace from the HQ to the Units. If it is a Supply Usage (in the Overphase) action only, you may trace to the hex adjacent to the unit, in order to supply that unit.

Are At All Costs Attacks available for Overruns?

Yes

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

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Errata and Q&A

Standard Combat Series

SCS Series Errata

1. The example of combat, pan 2 is incorrect in stating that unit 6 cannot use the Exploitation Phase. In its ending position it can. If it had moved to hex A, it wouldn't be able to do so.
2. The "beginning of movement" provision in the overrun eligibility rule refers to the beginning of the Movement Phase, not the stack in question.
3. Stacking is in effect at the end of movement and at the instant of an overrun attack. Overrunning units may stack with non-overrunning ones when they do the attack. In that case, the total of the two may not exceed the stacking Limit and any adverse combat result only affects the units actually overrunning.
4. Players may never examine enemy stacks; only the top unit (or marker) may be examined.
5. Units with zero combat values may be involved with other attacking units in an attack and may be used to absorb step losses.
6. Reinforcements are placed on the map (and are in-supply at the time) at the very beginning of the Movement Phase. They begin their movement from the hex containing the entry area, not from off-map, etc. Placement is unaffected by EZOCs (hexes containing enemy units are off limits) and entering units may overstack on placement provided the stack is split up properly by the end of the stack's first Movement Phase.
7. Overrunning units (attackers, that is) must enter the defender's hex should it become vacant during the course of an overrun.
8. Retreating units may stick together or split up as the owning player desires The same applies to stacking and advance after combat.

Changes for the Revised Series Rules (due out with the next game)

1. A stack loses one step per EZOC hex retreated through-not one per unit as it currently is, a total of one step from the stack per hex.
2. Stacking points will be used in future games. One stacking point per step with the number printed on the counter Stacking limits will be given in stacking points for each game and the current (confusing) stacking rule will be dropped.
3. Each target hex may only be overrun once in a given phase. Note that it is the target hex, not the units, which may only be hit once. Specific game rules can provide exceptions to this rule for a given game or side in a game.
4. Change the +2 to exit an EZOC to +2 to enter an EZOC.
5. Overruns cost 2 MPs to conduct. Overruns may not be conducted into hexes which would cost the attacking units 2 MPs or more to enter in regular movement (ignore EZOC costs in this calculation). Therefore, to overrun a hex which would normally cost 1 MP to enter would cost as follows: Cost of movement up to (and including) the adjacent hex, +2 MPs for the EZOC there, +2 MPs to do the overrun. That is all.

5-01 *Stalingrad Pocket*

1. The German supply rules infer that one can trace an unlimited distance to a supply source and then proceeds to define the map edge and supply units as supply sources. In the latter case, the distance is limited by the supply range of the supply unit.
2. The bottom Stalingrad Holding Box refers to hex 41.30, not 41.29 as printed.
3. The Supply Summary on the map incorrectly limits the Soviet Supply source to the East map edge. Rule 1.3d is more correct, the Soviets can trace off the East or North map edges.
4. The two German airfields may never be involved in an attack and may never be used to absorb step losses for the attacking side.
5. Yes, that's a Rumanian Panzer Division. The German 1st Panzer is up in AGC's sector.
6. CHANGE: Soviet units must use the HQ of their historical designation for supply purposes. Reinforcements may draw from any Soviet HQ. HQs which do not have units assigned to them may only be used to supply reinforcement units. Units whose HQ is destroyed are perpetually out of supply. German HQs may supply any alert unit and are not subject to this rule.
7. The German 20th Infantry Division should be Rumanian.

8. In scenario 2, the German supply unit which is to set up in hex 36.77, should be in hex 38.27 Also, 524/297/4 should be in hex 40.27, not 40.26.
9. German units which begin scenario 2 pocketed are out of supply at the beginning of that scenario (even though they have not yet had a Supply Phase).
10. German HQs, unlike Soviet ones, are allowed to move off roads. Soviet HQs must remain on road features.
11. The Soviet Naval infantry "divisions" should be brigades.

Questions and Answers

Must I cover the whole front line in the set up, or can I concentrate in important areas, leaving others with gaps?

Yes, you can concentrate and leave gaps as desired—a careful concentration is advised. At any rate, there is no requirement, whatsoever, to cover the whole front-line with units or ZOCs as in other games.

Can a player use roads within an enemy ZOC?

Yes, they can be used to help with movement. The only thing they cannot be used for is to get into an overrun target hex.

Is the map edge a 'hard-boundary' that destroys units pushed off through it?

Yes, if the only available retreat route is off map and the player doesn't take the no retreat option, the retreating unit (stack) will be destroyed.

May units cross a pontoon to enter an overrun target hex? Bridges are expressly forbidden by rule 6.0g, but no mention is made of pontoons.

Like bridges, pontoons cannot be used to enter an overrun target hex.

Is the standard rounding rule applied to movement points as well?

Yes, an out of supply unit which has a normal movement allowance of 5 would now have a movement allowance of 3.

Do out of supply units have ZOCs?

Yes, units have the same ZOCs regardless of supply status.

Can HQs advance after combat? Participate in Overruns? Is there any sort of replacement for HQs lost in combat? Wouldn't some sort of Adhoc HQ be formed to take a lost HQs place?

HQs cannot advance after combat or participate in overruns. German HQs can 'affect' both combats and overruns but cannot participate in any advance result-even in the case of overruns where the attacking units must enter the defender's hex should it become vacant. There is no replacement available for lost HQs. Adhoc HQs would be formed, but in the context of the game, a lost Soviet army HQ would (for the period of the game) completely derail the efforts of that army.

[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

[Back to Operations List of Issues](#)

[Back to MagWeb Master List of Magazines](#)

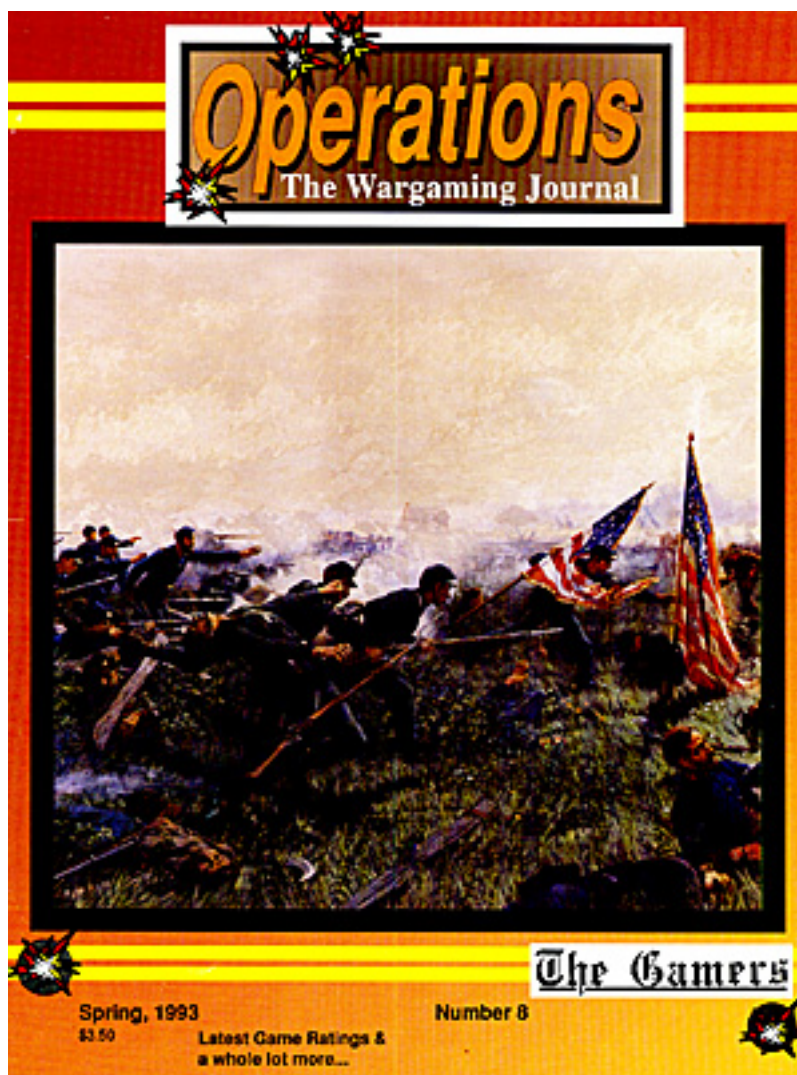
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[Back to Table of Contents -- Operations #8](#)

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[Number 23 \(Winter 1996\)](#)

[Number 22 \(Fall 1996\)](#)

[Number 21 \(Summer 1996\)](#)

[Number 20 \(Spring 1996\)](#)

[Number 19 \(Winter 1995\)](#)

[Number 18 \(Fall 1995\)](#)

[Number 17 \(Summer 1995\)](#)

[Number 16 \(Spring 1995\)](#)

[Number 15 \(Winter 1994\)](#)

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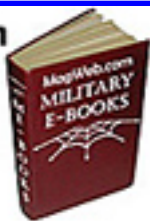


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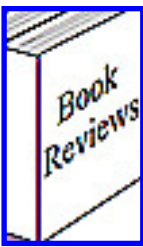





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