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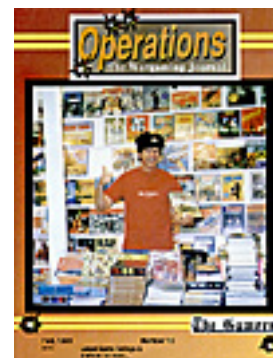
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Civil War Leaders

Personality in Command

by Dave Powell

When I first began to read Civil War history, I became fascinated by the range and scope of leadership and personality inherent in the conflict. Even casual readers will notice how differently writers treat leaders in later struggles such as WWII. Personality in modern warfare seems submerged within the greater scope of a global war machine. For every Patton hoisted to fame in the Second World War, Lees, Grants and Jacksons abound in our nation's bloodiest affair. In short, corporate warfare has become largely depersonalized.

Lack of modern tactical communication and only rudimentary staff development amplified both the abilities and failures of individual leaders. The Civil War general, brigade or corps commander had to operate with a comparative lack of information. Intelligence provides a good example. Modern armies derive intelligence about their foes from diverse sources. At the operational level they can develop close estimates of enemy positions and strength. The Civil War commander did not have such opportunity. His intelligence network most often consisted of his own cavalry and a few enemy newspapers. Civilian spy networks provided occasional flashes of brilliance, but the Pinkerton detective agency assembled the only real effort in this area and was a failure. Lee got better service from the able cavalry commander, JEB Stuart (though Stuart had notable lapses, such as Gettysburg). Ultimately, the Civil War General often had to act on guesswork. This confusion was also true on the tactical level, where subordinate officers faced rapidly changing events amid the confusion of battle.

Given the conditions and the scale of the conflict, it is hardly surprising that so many men of such varied ability led troops in battle. While West Point training was one good way to a General's straps, many officers came from political backgrounds as well. As a result, ability ranged from outstanding to truly abysmal with commanders learning on the job. The game designer must find a way to reduce the glorious riot of personality to a representative system that will provide a method of simulation that is at the same time colorful, simple and accurate. It is not an easy task.

Our answer was the command system in the CWB. Dean devised a basic system that captures the feel of Civil War orders (including a degree of uncertainty) without an excessively complex process. One simple value quantifies each leader's tactical skills.

That value does duty on several levels portraying command effects. What does that single number represent? To say that Lee is a four, indicates that he is better than McClellan, laboring along with a zero, but fails to define the qualities that comprise that difference.

The CWB rates two types of leaders: army commanders and all others. Army commanders' ratings derive from two criteria; their ability to handle large formations on the battlefield and the impact they have on troop morale. Other officers' ratings stem from the above factors and include the assessment of a particular leader's combat initiative.

The primary consideration in rating an army commander must be how effective he is in coordinating the efforts of the numerous forces at his disposal. The morale effect is secondary. An example is John Pope, the Union army commander at 2nd Bull Run. Pope repeatedly failed to organize a single concerted attack on Jackson on August 29, while that Rebel general remained isolated from the rest of Lee's army. On August 30, Rebel counter strokes disrupted Pope's entire plan, and he was mostly ineffective. He failed to rally his troops and prevent an ignominious retreat from the field. With morale he was no better and many Federal soldiers disliked him intensely for his perceived insults offered them in comparison to western Yankees.

Pope's rating of 1 in *August Fury* is perhaps even a trifle generous. Another example worth examining, if only for the unusual nature of the circumstances, is Gettysburg. In *Thunder at the Crossroads* I Lee carries a dual rating, reflecting the difficulties the Army of Northern Virginia faced at Gettysburg. Lee is a 4, but a game special rule limits the Rebel commander to issuing orders as if he were a 2. (A variant allows Lee to use his full faculties.) Poor command coordination marred the ANV's performance there. I felt that Lee, by failing to find the measure of his two new corps commanders (Ewell and Hill) was a major factor in that defeat. Nonetheless, the morale effect he could have on his men was nothing short of amazing, and merited a 4 at the least.

Of special note is *In Their Quiet Fields*, since it represents an extreme example of problems in rating leaders. In the end, McClellan's performance was so bad, and the Rebels so good that the situation pushed the envelope of the system. Finally, Dean settled for a series of special rules that captured the unique quality of the battle without disrupting the full command rules. Any attempt to force the command structure to conform to these extremes and still produce a workable game would have irrevocably damaged the system by overburdening it with complexities included to hinder McClellan. The system needs to cover the generalities of Civil War command, while leaving true aberrations to be handled on a case by case basis.

Initiative, which army commanders do not use (in game terms), provides the base value of other leader ratings. An officer's ability, not just to make a decision, but to make the right decision with limited external information, is crucial. Initiative is not just the measure of how quickly a general could reach a decision. Union Major

General Sickles, again at Gettysburg, decided that his assigned position was untenable. Quickly, he seized the initiative and advanced his 3rd Corps forward to the Peach Orchard salient. Sickles saw a problem and acted promptly to solve it. Unfortunately, Longstreet's attack on July 2 virtually eliminated the 3rd Corps, exposed and unsupported as it was due to Sickles unilateral action. Clearly, despite almost 50 years of post-war partisan politicking, Sickles' decision was a grave mistake.

Worse than rashness, however, is indecision. Failure to act cost both lives and battles. Some men, like Sigel at 2nd Manassas, who passively watched as the Union Iron Brigade engaged two Rebel divisions, fully earned their low ratings. In *August Fury*, for this and other failures, Sigel merits his 0. Similarly, on July 1, 1863, Ewell hesitated after the capture of Gettysburg, held back by heavy losses, Lee's urging for caution on the previous day, and simple newness to Corps command. He failed to press on to Cemetery Hill where the Union army was rallying. It is not certain that such an attack would have brought victory, as many critics claim, but at least he could have tried.

While Ewell justified his 1 rating in *Thunder I*, the above circumstance is also a good example of another device useful to the designer in the CWB: anti-initiative ratings. Some degree of Ewell's caution was due to Lee's urging "not to bring on a general engagement until the rest of the army was up". Poor communication on July 1 meant that neither A. P. Hill, who initiated the fight, nor Ewell, whose timely arrival won the day, were clear about what was happening until late afternoon. By that time, the Federals had recovered their equilibrium and brought up fresh troops. Lee's general anti-initiative rating reflects this problem.

Not that inactivity is wrong. Longstreet seemed to wait forever at 2nd Manassas to launch his counterattack. Critics have questioned this delay. Was it a mistake? When Longstreet struck, all Union reserves had finally become engaged. Only one small division was in place to hold back the Confederates. I believe that the Southern victory was greater due to this timing. Despite taking little action from his noon arrival on the 29th until 3:00 p.m. on the 30th, his strike was successful because of the wait. This is why he is a 4 in *August Fury*.

It is the quality of doing the right thing that merits high numbers. However, not all good decisions were informed decisions. Some were mere gut feelings. Rating leaders is a subjective business. Biased accounts can prejudice one's opinion. I try to read many opinions on a topic to locate a middle ground from which to work. The Civil War is rife with post-war examples of reputation bashing from old soldiers scrambling to justify themselves and squelch their rivals. One might wonder how such a collection ever managed to function as an army, let alone a good one.

One decision that has raised some hackles was that of rating each officer's worth on an individual battle basis. Instead of always rating Jackson or Longstreet a 4, the values

are not constant. Even the best commanders had off days. Longstreet, a 4 in all games so far, put in a poor performance at Seven Pines. His delay and confusion were prime causes for the South's failure to organize an effective general attack. His force was the main effort of Johnston's plan. Some blame belongs to Johnston for failing to issue clear and concise orders. However, Longstreet did not do well here or in the aftermath of the battle. He even had some hand in an effort to conceal the truth and direct blame away from Johnston. In a game on Seven Pines, Longstreet would not be a 4 but rather a 1 or even a 0.

The same is true for Jackson during the Seven Days' campaign in front of Richmond. Jackson arrived from the Valley campaign with a brilliant reputation. However, for the next few days he did not live up to that fame. He consistently failed to meet promised schedules and dealt with unexpected problems as if in a daze. At White Oak Swamp, his failure to become involved with the battle allowed McClellan's troops to escape. It was a time when intervention on the Union flank could have spelled disaster for the Army of the Potomac. In games dealing with the week from June 26 to July 1, 1862, Jackson will have to carry a lesser number.

All Civil War commanders were expected to provide leadership by example. Therefore, the leader counters must be capable of influencing morale. The morale effect is secondary 'in the rating process, since it is a less important effect in game terms. Fortunately, there are few examples where a leader's inspirational abilities differ radically from his command skills. The most extreme example is that of McClellan. In 1862 he won the undying admiration of the troops, but his crippling caution was at odds with the 4 deserved by his morale effect. Interestingly, McClellan was either a detached and distant observer (Antietam) or not present at all (most of the Seven Days) in all the major actions fought by the Army of The Potomac. At Mechanicsburg, Game's Mill and Malvern Hill, McClellan was not even on the field but let subordinates run the show. His actual combat morale benefits never get used. It was this lack of activity at Antietam that precluded any need for a special rule akin to Lee in *Thunder*. *The Seven Days'* games will penalize him accordingly.

Subjectivity is a major factor in all aspects of the leadership question. Debates have raged among historians and participants concerning the relative merits of individual men. I doubt that gamers will agree with all of my choices in assigning values. If I have slighted your favorite general, forgive my transgression. Change the numbers to suit yourself. Experimenting with a game is another way to provide further insight into the historical event. I welcome thoughts on various aspects of leadership and game design as well thoughts on the men themselves. Who knows? Maybe you can salvage the tarnished reputation of a personal favorite and convince me of my error. At any rate, I would enjoy listening to you try.

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Effective Use of Fire Power in the CWB

Analysis of Tables

by *Brandon Einhorn*

To play any game well, one must understand the tables that govern it. The CWB is more complex than most games because there are several tables that one must consult to resolve a combat. I have done a mathematical analysis of these tables and the results follow. You may lower your losses by 5-10% while increasing those of your opponent by 5-10% using the information from these tables with several tactics described below.

Allocating Fire Points or Whom Do I Clobber?

Have you ever had two lines blasting away at each other and wondered what the most effective allocation of fire power is? Given 14 fire points, do you make two 7 point attacks or two 5 point and one 4 point attacks?

[Ed. Note: Remember, you must split fires along Fire Level lines. I'm not sure our author is following that rule here. Future editions of the CWB series rules may preclude fire splitting entirely.]

The four tables below can help us answer these questions.

Assume the targets all have B morale. The expected losses from two shots on the 7-8 column are 2.76 hits (Table one, 1.38 x 2) and 2.2 stragglers (Table Two, 1.1 x 2), for a total of 4.94 casualties (Table Three, 2.47 x 2). The expected losses from two 5-6 shots and one 3 point shot are 3.19 hits (1.17 x 2 + .85) and 2.63 stragglers (.96 x 2 + .71), for a total of 5.82 casualties. This is an enormous difference!

From these tables we can see that you should try to maximize the number of shots on the 3-4 column, with shots on the 2 and 5-6 columns being very good also. It is generally wasteful to expend nine points on one shot. Spread out your artillery. Make many five and seven point shots rather than nine and four point shots.

Of course, there are exceptions. It may be worth concentrating firepower on a unit near breaking or with low morale in the hope of wrecking or disorganizing it. Also,

broken or disrupted units may yield so many extra stragglers as to render the unit useless for the rest of the day.

Reverse Slope Tactics or Denying the Enemy Return Fire

Instead of placing your units on hills and ridges where the enemy can fire on them from a distance, there are times when it is better to set your line on lower terrain. Try to set your line such that if the attacking enemy units must retreat by the morale table, they cannot return fire. By denying return fire, you can lower your casualties substantially.

Assume two units with A fire levels and B morale are shooting at each other, There is a 19% chance the enemy will suffer a retreat result from the morale table (Table Four). The effects of this retreat on an A level return fire are (43%) Shaken-fires on 2 column .51 hits + .39 stragglers = .9 (43 %) Disorg-fires on 1 column .22 hits + .2 stragglers = .42 (14%) Routed-No fire possible

Expected Loss = .31 hits +.28 stragglers = .59 casualties

Expected Loss from the 3-4 table = .85H +.71S = 1.56 casualties

Taking the retreat into account gives $81\% * (.85H + .71S) + 19\% * (.31H + .28S) = .75H + .63S = 1.38$ casualties.

Thus, when the enemy returns fire, it will inflict somewhat less damage (11.5%) than your unit caused. If you situate your unit so that a retreating enemy unit cannot fire on it, the expected loss to you drops to $81\% * (.85H + .71S) = .69$ hits + .58 stragglers = 1.26 casualties.

This is a 9% further reduction in your casualties and it costs nothing to implement. You never know when having a strength point will make the difference in fire level or becoming wrecked. If the enemy unit has a morale lower than B, your losses will drop more, because the enemy is more likely to retreat when fired on. An attacking C morale unit will inflict 11 % fewer casualties.

Obviously, you do not want to surrender key elevated points from which the enemy artillery can enfilade your line. This tactic works best when the enemy attacks you across a gently declining or inclining field without slope hexsides to benefit him. Defending in or behind a forest will also yield this benefit.

Distribution of Artillery Batteries or Hold That Line

What is the most effective use of artillery? Is it better to mass four five-point batteries in a row, or spread them in alternate hexes, or break them into detachments? It depends on the circumstances. If the enemy is about to charge into Sharpsburg, move all the cannons you can get your hands on in front of him. If you are short on artillery you

can try placing a battery in alternating hexes. You can more effectively distribute your fire strength into seven and five point shots if the hexes without artillery are strong enough to withstand Close Combat.

However, there is a more effective deployment. If there is a line you want to hold, and you do not have much artillery, place a detachment of one to three gun points in each hex. (We play keeping track of fractions of artillery points fired with an extra marker.) This works best when the enemy cannot bring artillery to snipe off your cannons.

There are two benefits to using this tactic. First, you have a more effective distribution of firepower. You will have more shots on the 5-6 column. Second, because your infantry is with artillery, you will have to retreat much less frequently. This will maintain the integrity of your line, and lessen the need to limber cannons in enemy ZOC. If forced to withdraw a one gun point detachment, you can only lose one gun point. A five point battery can lose three points. This will save you gun points in the long run.

Because you retreat less often you will inflict greater casualties. The enemy will take more losses when you add the additional losses inflicted by your superior firepower. You will be able to hold your line longer, take fewer casualties, and lose fewer gun points.

Defending in Front of Roads

By denying the enemy use of roads running parallel and adjacent to the line of battle, you can limit his flexibility in directing his attack. In forest, try to defend in front of or along a road. This will greatly expand your command control, while limiting that of the enemy. You can also move units around more easily. If you are forced out of the road, retreat two hexes to deny him the road benefit to his command control.

Optional Rules

I strongly support The Gamers philosophy of not losing the forest for the trees. Adding many special case rules (Me Wilderness catching fire) adds very little to the realism of the game. Many of the suggested optional rules in Operations (unit density, artillery straggler recovery, etc.) add little to the simulation, except complexity and book keeping. We use all the optional rules in the Revised 2nd. Edition rules, with three additions.

First, we keep track of fractional artillery points. This is very easy. Use a spare marker on the artillery ammo track. You need this only if you use many artillery detachments.

Second, as mentioned in Operations #8 we use the night sleep rule. After dark, a unit must spend six consecutive turns stationary, not firing or being fired on. If you do not meet this condition, reduce the unit's morale by one for lack of sleep.

Third, we use a modification of the optional rule that units in column require one hex per B fire level. We play that a road is in use for the period of time a unit in column is moving along it. If two columns are moving in opposite directions across a bridge there will be congestion and only one column will be able to use the bridge. The other column will have to expend movement points waiting for the first column to clear the bridge. We keep track of traffic jams with extra numbered markers. We mark them from 1/2 to 6 by 1/2 increments. These represent the period of time a bridge or road is being used, and other units may not use it. The other units must wait (expend mps) until the road is clear. An AA unit takes four hexes of space. If it were two movement points from a bridge, we would place a 2 marker and a 3 1/2 marker in the bridge hex. Thus, there is a window in which any unit reaching the bridge by expending 2 to 3 1/2 mps must wait for the first unit to pass. If a unit reached the bridge on its 2nd mp, it would have to expend 1 1/2 mps waiting for the first unit to go by.

Boring, tedious, and inconvenient, you say? Well, it takes a little getting used to, but it is not too bad. It is not a problem for a column of reinforcements, because the brigades are far enough apart that they do not interfere with each other. The only time this is a problem is when many units are crowded around a bridge, or two columns are moving perpendicularly across each other. A major delay will occur when a fresh corps on one side of a bridge wants to relieve a spent corps on the other side. You will be able to move units in only one direction, forcing the spent corps to wait a few turns for the fresh corps to clear the bridge. This can have a large impact on the game, and it should.

Many a plan was thwarted because some column was behind schedule, snarled in a traffic jam. Longstreet, at Seven Pines, did more than anyone to bungle Joe Johnston's attack by using roads earmarked for others. Throughout the Seven Days, both sides had major traffic problems. This rule emphasized good road networks, and planning troop shuffling movements carefully.

Limited Intelligence

A simple way to implement a degree of reduced intelligence is by the use of six to twelve blank counters to keep the identity of your units hidden. You may also place a hidden marker over a few bogus fire level markers, fooling the enemy into believing you have a strong hold on an empty hex. You must reveal an empty hex and remove the hidden marker if the hex is in enemy LOS. Now an opponent will not know if a strong or a weak division holds an area. Is that mass of troops behind the enemy's lines a division or a bluff. This adds little complexity, and makes for an interesting game.

How I Constructed The Tables

I used a spread sheet to calculate the probability of each result for each column of

every table. In Table One, the second column has an expected loss of .22. I calculated this as follows: 1 hit x the probability of rolling a 10 (3/36) or 11 (2/36) or 12 (1/36) = $6/36 * .5 = .166$ losses, and .5 hits x the probability of a 9 (4/36) = .055, a total expected loss of .22.

Table Two was more difficult to calculate. For each column on the fire table, there is a different probability of going to each straggler table. For each morale, I had to calculate the expected stragglers generated by each straggler table, and weigh them by the probability of using that table.

Result	under 1	1	2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	18-20	21+
Expected Loss	0.08	0.22	0.51	0.85	1.17	1.38	1.54	1.72	1.94	2.18	2.44
Increase Over Prev Col	-	0.14	0.29	0.33	0.32	0.21	0.17	0.18	0.22	0.24	0.26
Effect per Fire Point	0.17	0.22	0.26	0.28	0.23	0.20	0.17	0.14	0.13	0.12	0.12

Result	under 1	1	2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	18-20	21+
A (.03)	0.04	0.06	0.13	0.24	0.33	0.39	0.44	0.47	0.50	0.52	0.53
B (.11)	0.12	0.19	0.39	0.71	0.96	1.10	1.21	1.31	1.38	1.42	1.44
C (.14)	0.16	0.25	0.51	0.92	1.22	1.39	1.53	1.64	1.72	1.78	1.81
D (.22)	0.27	0.44	0.86	1.49	1.88	2.07	2.23	2.36	2.46	2.52	2.56
E (.33)	0.36	0.58	1.13	1.88	2.25	2.42	2.56	2.67	2.75	2.81	2.83

Note: This table includes the expected straggler loss from the Morale Table. The number in parenthesis is the average straggler loss from the Morale Table.

Result	under 1	1	2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	18-20	21+
A	0.12	0.28	0.64	1.08	1.50	1.76	1.98	2.19	2.44	2.70	2.97
B	0.20	0.42	0.90	1.56	2.13	2.47	2.75	3.03	3.32	3.60	3.89
C	0.24	0.48	1.02	1.76	2.39	2.76	3.07	3.36	3.67	3.96	4.25
D	0.35	0.66	1.38	2.33	3.04	3.44	3.77	4.08	4.40	4.70	5.00
E	0.44	0.81	1.64	2.72	3.42	3.79	4.10	4.39	4.69	4.99	5.28

Table Four: Morale Table Results								
Morale	BL	NE	SH	SHb1	DG	Rout	% Retreat	Straggle Loss
A+	17	61	11	6	6	-	11	0.03
A	14	61	14	6	6	-	11	0.03
B+	11	64	14	6	6	-	11	0.03
B	8	58	14	8	8	3	19	0.11
C+	6	58	17	8	8	3	19	0.11
C	6	50	19	11	11	3	25	0.14
D+	3	39	22	17	14	6	36	0.22
D	3	31	28	19	14	6	39	0.22
E+	3	28	28	19	17	6	42	0.22
E	-	19	31	22	19	8	50	0.33
F+	-	11	33	25	22	8	56	0.33
F	-	8	33	25	25	8	58	0.36
G+	-	-	36	25	28	11	64	0.44
G	-	-	28	28	31	14	72	0.56
H+	-	-	22	28	33	17	78	0.67

Table Five: Acceptance Table Results							
Results	under -2	-2 to -1	0 to 1	2 to 3	4 to 5	6 to 7	8 +
Dt	25	17	11	8	3	3	3
D2	61	53	47	36	22	14	14
D1	14	31	42	42	53	44	39
A	0	0	0	14	22	39	44

% Probability of Acceptance							
Turn	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D1	33	56	70	80	87	91	94
D2	17	31	42	52	60	67	72

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CWB vs. NBS

Four Differences in Design

by Dean N. Essig

Someone on GENie requested I write an article that would lay out the differences between the CWB and NBS series rules in terms of the mechanics of how things work and why. I will dispense with things like cavalry charges, countercharges, and squares because a simple answer of "Duh!" would suffice.

This article is a look at the differences between the two series. I will not look at every die roll modifier or minor "make-it more-intuitive" changes such as changing the rally roll from 2 or less (less the leader) to 5 or more (plus the leader).

What then, are the major mechanical differences between the two series?

1. Command and Control

The Command rules in the NBS are almost identical to that of the CWB. The only change of even minor significance is in the Acceptance Table. This table was split further. This allows minor differences between leaders and conditions to have more impact. The old column structure leveled the playing field too much, so one further delay status was necessary. The extra delay status (one with a 50% chance of success each turn) allows the transition between the different delays and straight acceptance to be smoother and more elegant. Lastly, the table was refitted to an 11.66 dice roll to smooth the progression of changes in probability. This leaves no big probabilistic jumps as in the earlier two dice 2-12 roll table. In the original table, attempting to smooth the probability jumps generated interesting "all-over-the place" result columns. With the 11.66 table, I could standardize so the statement "You want to roll high in Gamers's games" applies here, too. The only places left where you do not want to roll high, in any of our games, is in the field of morale checks. Don't ask me why.

2. ZOCs

Another major change between the two series is the complete elimination of ZOCs in the NBS. This was a product of the shorter weapons ranges of the period. These shorter ranges had a strict limitation on a unit's ability to influence its surroundings over distance. The result is that the game gives a distinctively different feel. It is a

mobile non-linear appearance much more reminiscent of Napoleonic warfare. On the other hand, the CWB gives a linear slug fest look that is appropriate for that period but not the earlier one.

Besides changing the feel and look of unit handling, the elimination of ZOCs greatly changed the handling of artillery in a way that fits nicely into accepted Napoleonic thought. The limitations on artillery unlimbering next to the enemy were thrown out. Thus, the artillery assumed its correct Napoleonic offensive status. Now, artillery can roll right up to 200 yards of the enemy, unlimber, and start pounding away—just like in the textbooks!

3. Offensive Slant of Close Combat

Due to the short ranges of Napoleonic weapons, most fire fights where a decision occurred, it was within the same hex as the defender. The close combat therefore becomes a standard way of righting once you decide to push the matter, not just the final act of pushing the enemy over the edge.

Close combat lost some of its desperation character. Troops of the Napoleonic era expected these close ranges, so the morale check modifiers for these combats needed to slant toward the offensive. This shift adds even more to the non-linear feel of the game. Moreover, the shift toward the offensive means that the player who takes charge and chooses to do something will find his aggressive behavior rewarded. Whereas, the player, who sits on his position and leaves the initiative to the enemy, will not.

4. Combined Arms

While this might fall under the column of "Duh!", I want to point out that combined arms means something in the Napoleonic sense. It really did not in the CWB. Civil War cavalry is a relatively impotent arm. Artillery merely adds some extra firepower to attacks. One protects himself (or doesn't) from artillery fire the same way as he does from infantry fire. This is the same faulty application of combined arms as the guy who thinks he's using combined arms when he calls in an air strike and artillery on an enemy position. To protect yourself from the air strike, you dig in, to protect yourself from the artillery, you dig further...

Napoleonic combined arms, however, do fulfill these conditions. When threatened with cavalry, infantry should form square to defend itself. This is the wrong move if enemy artillery or infantry is near. The player can use this to his advantage to force his opponent to make a mistake of which he can take advantage.

The result of the above is a more active, fluid game where the reward goes to the player who correctly applies aggressive play. The combined arms effect of having three almost equally important weapons systems generates more emphasis on tactical

unit handling. The player that most correctly assembles the pieces of the puzzle will see rich rewards on the game map. This contrasts sharply with the typical Civil War attritional slain-dance, and generates a more fun and exciting game.

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Desert Orientation

A Playtester's Notes from the Development of *Afrika*

by Rodney Schmisser

Afrika, the second game in the Standard Combat Series, presents even the veteran grognard with a rich depth of strategic, operational, and even tactical problems to solve. It is in a unique class of wargames. It forces each player to plan and react to the opponent as well as outside events which players can influence, but not control.

In the Player's Notes section of the *Afrika* rule book, Dean Essig presents, briefly, the keys to understanding the game system. The purpose of this article will be to expound upon those three brief, concise paragraphs. I will offer examples from the many playtests Mike Haggett and I conducted during the Winter and Spring of 1993. *Afrika* proudly carries forward the banner of the Standard Combat Series. Much like its older brother, *Stalingrad Pocket*, it will see considerable action on your gaming table. It is perfect for a gaming diversion when you need a break from pushing hundreds of counters. Although not a short game (the full campaign can last a whole day), the few counters and several lulls in the campaign allow for the game to progress rapidly. If you liked *Stalingrad Pocket*, you will enjoy *Afrika*, and, like me, will look forward to *The Ardennes* in 1994.

Marshall Graziani's Pasta Rations or the care and feeding of Axis soldiers

One of the first important lessons an *Afrika* player must learn is the supply mechanics of the game. You've laid out the map sheet and punched out the at-start units. Before long, the novice Italian player starts licking his chops staring out into the Egyptian frontier at the weak sisters the British empire has placed between his healthy legions and the Nile delta. Visions of glory and the rebirth of the Roman Empire dull the senses. There is only one problem. You have to feed these guys! It is sometimes more difficult than it sounds.

Strategically, supply for the Axis player is a twofold dilemma. First, you have to get it across the Mediterranean Sea. Then, you must ship it, truck it, or throw it from your only true port, Tripoli. That is a long, long way to your rear. You will never quite get enough and never where you need it unless you plan carefully. To play *Afrika* well, you must plan and solve both sides of the equation. There are obstacles you must

overcome with each portion of this process.

In the middle of the Mediterranean rests a small, rocky island named Malta. The British managed to hold it throughout the war. They based various elements of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force on its rocky shores. Those forces represented a dagger aimed directly at the heart of the Axis supply lifeline from Italy to Tripoli. Kesselring, Rommel's superior, made a deal with "The Desert Fox" during the Gazala battles. After storming Tobruk, *Panzerarmee Afrika* would mark time on the Egyptian frontier while the Luftwaffe detachment returned to Sicily to assist in an airborne invasion of Malta. Rommel reneged on the deal because chaos gripped the British 8th Army after the wild Gazala battles and the specter of the Pyramids was too large a prize. He argued a quick strike to the Nile was too great an opportunity to pass up. The Luftwaffe units never returned to Sicily, and Malta survived to strangle the *Afrika Korps* on the vine outside Alamein. Historians have argued that the Axis lost the campaign in North *Afrika* with this decision.

Afrika allows the Axis commander to balance the needs for tactical air power with the pressing need to neutralize Malta and keep the supply line flowing. The table forces the Axis player to make tough strategic and operational decisions. Do I blast away with a major offensive, mix things up in a running battle, or pause, rest a while, and rebuild my supplies? Without a continued effort to hammer Malta by the Luftwaffe, the supply situation will quickly worsen. With due respect for Murphy's Law, it will do so at the worst possible opportunity for the Axis player. In our first major playtest, there were enormous running battles around Gazala and Mersa Matruh. My *Panzerarmee* disintegrated before my eyes when a combination of fragile battle-scarred units, perilously low supply arrivals and abysmal coastal shipping rolls ripped me apart. I had Mike on the ropes (or so I thought!) and in an instant, it was over. My remnants were limping back to El Agheila and he was on me like a wet blanket. Aargh!!! The lessons of history are sometimes painful.

The need for aggressive Axis action, the supply mechanics and the Malta Suppression Table all force the Axis player to walk a tightrope between offensive actions and the need to rest so he can continue fighting. The game's inherent replay value and fluid situations offer the gamer many opportunities to experiment with varied courses of action. There is no such thing as a "perfect plan" in *Afrika*, and even good plans can go awry. A skillful Axis player must be able to improvise when the Gods of War cast their favors elsewhere. Plan ahead where possible, and improvise when needed.

The initial Axis actions in *Afrika* must lean toward keeping those Italian hordes alive, especially considering the Italian Surrender Rule in effect through February 1941. Every Italian unit the British kill now is one less unit for Rommel to maneuver when the Germans arrive. Always remember that the vast majority of killed Italian units will never make it back. If your Axis Dead Units box has taken on a decidedly greenish hue from all the dead Italians inside, you have problems! If the British player gives you an opportunity to inflict some pain, do SO. However, remember your supply line can easily serve as a noose around your neck by British armored forces sniping at your

heels. Try to concentrate your forces for supply efficiency although you must make some exceptions when the British player starts to make threatening moves during the winter. Garrison everything that matters. If you leave Bardia, Tobruk, or Benghazi open for some British armored unit to stroll in uncontested, don't come crying to me. You will have learned an important lesson for *Guderian*, *Afrika*, or any other game!

O'Connor's Offensive-The British side of the story

PSST! Hey, you! Can you keep a secret? Do you remember reading Dean saying the Italians can win on Game turn 2? Well. ...(Insert sheepish pause here) ... they can. I was the idiot British player who showed Dean (and Mike!) how to do it. Okay, confession time is over. Yes, I did it. I just told you how not to repeat my folly. Garrison everything, remember? Those two units in Cairo and Alexandria moved up into line. Babini sneaked through and boy did the shit hit the fan! Churchill was not amused. (Besides, I wasted an hour of playtest time. It was a bad day!)

British play in the early turns of *Afrika* must resemble a central Illinois mosquito. Dance around the Italians head, be a nuisance, and then dive in and get your dinner. Mike is a skillful player. He never let an opportunity to slap an Italian unit around go by the wayside. Form a raiding group, overrun if possible, but make sure that you can get the hell out during your exploitation. Beware of "quicksand defenses" that let you step in but then suck you in and leave you unable to extract yourself during combat. The Italian forces have some punch and if your raiders stick around too long and wear out their welcome, they will fail to come home alive.

Nuisance tactics will get you through the immediate threat in September 1940 and allow you to mass a small but potent offensive force. However, the time will come when you must cut to the chase and toss the Italians out of not only Egypt, but Cyrenaica as well. Conservative British play now will make life for the Axis that much simpler and you will dance to his time for most of the contest. To survive and win you have to use your resources to their utmost to fling a substantial Italian force out of two fortified minor cities and across an entire mapsheet. If Rommel arrives in Libya to find the Italians have managed to hold onto Tobruk, life is just grand for the Axis. Just as Rommel found out in 1941, you cannot operate very far with Tobruk occupied in your rear by hostile forces.

Your major weapons must be speed and panic-your speed and his panic! Do not think of taking the Italian head-on. He has many units, lots of steps and two fortified minor cities to fall back on. He will bleed you white then turn and thank you for playing right into his hands. You must rum the Italian position inside out, force him to run and then bag him against a choke point that he cannot crack. Remember that the Italian Surrender Rule can turn a fortified Italian line into a column of prisoners streaming east along the coast road in a single turn. The most promising choke point on the frontier is Halfaya Pass. A small multiple-step force occupying that pass with a single supply point trucked in to last the rum will, 99.9% of the time, turn any Italian force in

Egypt into a desperate mass of future POW's. Another choke point is Gazala at the gate of Cyrenaica. Use the coastal escarpment to grab the coast road in force and watch the Italians scream bloody murder trying to escape the bag. Crack the minor garrisons left behind in Tobruk and Bardia along with whatever supply points the Italian got to the front in excess of routine subsistence. Then start setting up some defenses for that Rommel chap you know is coming in just a few moments.

The Duel in the Desert: *Afrika* style

The middle game is usually an ebb and flow affair with each side punching and counter-punching, turning lines with end-around movements or punching through an overextended line and trying to bag the ends of the line. These comments apply to both sides equally and should be on some use to new players.

For the Axis player, those large four-step British armor brigades can be a major menace. If possible, try to knock the shine off these brigades with a step loss or two. The majority of British offensive power is in these units. The first step loss takes quite a bit of stuffing out of them. If you can keep these units below full strength, it allows your offensive actions a little more latitude.

The British player should take advantage of his relative wealth of supply by building boxes to strengthen the defensive lines he will need to draw across the *North African* desert during play. With the exception of the Alamein line, do not bet the house payment on any defensive line you construct. It can and most certainly will be turned. However, a box here and there will make the German pause and consider before embarking on the typical overrun, assault, 'knock your brains in' offensive that will send you streaming back to your next defensive line.

The *Afrika Korps* packs a lot of punch but cannot take endless punishment. Keep your divisions intact to take advantage of divisional integrity and combined arms bonuses. When step losses start hitting the Panzer regiment, think twice about shutting things down. Axis replacements are not plentiful and it may take quite a while to piece you units back together a step at a time. You can bet the British player will not sit back and wait patiently for you to finish your regrouping in peace.

With a proper understanding of the supply system, *Afrika* will provide many hours of gaming pleasure for all. It is a challenging game that remains fun to play. I am sure you will enjoy setting it up and giving it a play. Let us hear from you!

Conclusion

Veteran readers of Operations have no doubt read many tales of the playtesting rites and rituals that have elevated the tiny hamlet of Homer, Illinois to prominence in the Wargaming world. Words and phrases like burrito run, change of the week club, and But Dean! are now firmly planted in the vocabularies of many a weekend warrior

whose pilgrimage has taken a providential turn through the quiet streets of Homer.

Since I joined the ranks of the Gamers' weekly playtest group, my Thursday nights have never been the same. I have been fortunate to have helped in the "birthing process" for *Afrika*, *Austerlitz*, and *Thunder at the Crossroads II* and look forward to many new games in the playtest pipeline. It's a great experience. We need more playtesters! Mars needs women!! Homer needs Gamers!! If anyone in the Indianapolis area would like to help, let Dean or me know. I would enjoy the company on the two hour drive. Those of you within driving distance of Homer, give Dean a call and help make a great game company even greater!

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The Italian Gambit

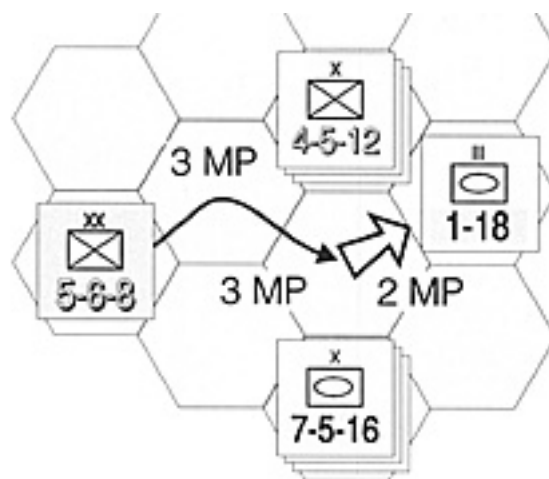
Strategy in Afrika

by Don and Dave Demko

My father (Don) introduced me (Dave) to wargames when *Afrika Korps* was the only North African game in town. Turnabout being fair play, I ordered him a copy of *Afrika*. He and my brother dug into the game right away, so I had a large and varied store of ideas to draw from in doing an article on the Italian phase of the campaign game. This article does not "crack the code" of *Afrika* or even pretend to be the definitive word on early game strategy. Rather, I'll share some of my Dad's observations (in italics) and the results I got when I applied them to the game. And although the game is essentially operational, not tactical, I win also add a few points about tactics and the way that *Afrika's* scale gives it a significantly different feel from from its Russian cousin, *Stalingrad Pocket*.

March, Eat, March, Eat ...

I like the aggressive Italian policy. In chess (another of Dad's absorbing passtimes), a gambit is an opening strategy by which a player risks material in order to gain an advantage in time or space. In the first six turns of *Afrika*, Italian material is easy to lose. With careful, unambitious play, the Axis player can avoid big trouble with the Italian Surrender Rule. But with some daring---the willingness to risk big losses----the Axis can take lots of ground before the Allies can mount strong opposition.



Even the game's slowest units can infiltrate and overrun.

East of Bardia, the terrain gets narrow. When you get a chance to take ground, TAKE IT. If you lose a few divisions, so what?

Here's a bloodthirsty point: you need more troops to take ground than to defend your gains, so why not send more Italians into combat than you can afford to supply?

In the player's notes, Dean is of two minds about the fullblooded Italian onslaught. He points out that it's a good strategy so long as you can keep the troops fed, and then hints that the Allied player should tempt his opponent to overextend the Italians. Understandably, the Axis player will be wary, perhaps too wary. The ten Wiation is to bunch up with the Italians around your supply. But don't do it. Why not? Keep in mind that one Supply Point will sustain, at most, 4 Italian infantry divisions plus two smaller units. Plan accordingly, or you'll end up marching or shipping units out to starve somewhere. Oops.

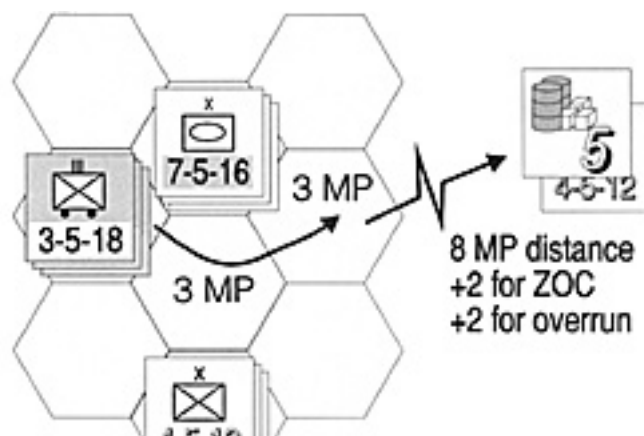
Move your supplies around, and don't worry too much about using them up or even losing them. Keep in mind your actual supply needs and forget about any extra. Italian units sitting in Tripoli eating SPs will accomplish nothing. If you plan to march them onto the map, try trucking out some *SPs* into prepositioned dumps along the way, and keep the marching groups small enough to consume just one *SP* per turn. Remember too that the further you march from the west edge, the more truck points you need to keep a given reinforcement group alive.

An overland offensive, then, is difficult to push all the way to the combat zone east of Bardia. One way to ease the crunch is the Trento truck option. With that extra truck point, you can move 2 Supply Points 20MPs each.

I find I would much rather have that truck capacity than a motorized division. The Axis player also needs to make the best use coastal shipping. The Italians need to move supplies as fast as possible, by truck and ship. Keep the supply cycle moving, and don't let supply points sit for a turn. To get this sort of optimal supply throughput, take another look at that simple but significant part of the Coastal Shipping rule (1.9a) that allows flexible combinations of land and sea movement. Trucking and shipping, though they look separate on the surface, are interlinked. The person who is skillful at combining these capabilities will win the game. Let's say the Axis is pushing the Allies back onto map B. Bardia's port capacity is inadequate at best. But with one shipping point plus one truck point, the Axis can float one *SP* into Tobruk and, assuming the Italians own the coast road, truck it far enough to feed units attacking Mersa Matruh. With good planning to combine trucking, shipping, and movement, the Axis can get units out there into ports and supply them.

Springtime for Hitler

Mersa Matruh is a good objective for the Italians. An Axis win by sudden death is rare. For that matter, early victory like this feels a historical. Maybe hindsight makes us unlikely to imagine an Italian victory in *North Africa*. It would have been a long shot, as the game makes clear. But Mersa



Matruh is not an overly ambitious objective, and it's a good stepping-stone to victory. The port there is crummy, but every potential Supply Point is precious. At this point in the game, it's too early to think of holding the town to prevent an Allies win. But the Axis need to be playing in their opponent's back yard to maintain the credible threat of sudden death victory. The challenge in doing so is operating at the end of a stretched logistical tether. Mersa Matruh's port may supply the last, badly needed *SP*, and by holding it the Axis player automatically lengthens the Allies supply lines for any westward drive. You could do worse than be holding Mersa Matruh when the *Afrika Korps* shows up.



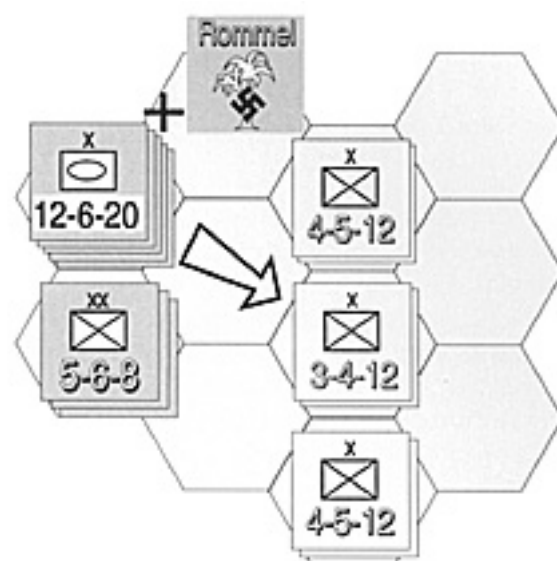
This is not Stalingrad Pocket: the traditional alternating ZOC defense is no guarantee against deep raids.

When the Germans get on the map, BOY do they move fast. As in chess, the whole point of the Italian gambit is to win the opening, not the whole game. Hit hard, even if a few critical combats call for more units than the Axis can supply. Clear map A and consolidate in the good defensive terrain of the El Alamein/Alam Haifa area. Pile in enough supply to last through turn 6 and hunker down. The Allies will be coming in force. But if Il Duce's boys can hand Der Furher's star performer a solid positional advantage, dominance of Map A and some key parts of Map B, Rommel should be able to call the shots, for a while at least. The downside of winning the Italian gambit is that the Axis will be operating far from Tripoli, while the Allies will be able to push supplies and reinforcements into the front line the same turn they arrive.

Then again, the downside of losing the gambit is worse: lots of Italians in the dead box but no territorial gains. More on this aspect in my sample game.

The Commonwealth Response

Say you're playing the Allies and you see the Italian Gambit coming at you. Your set-up looks rather weak, but you have a good supply of leg infantry coming as reinforcements. The British 7th Armoured has lots of set-up latitude, but I'd be conservative with it. If you use it to screen, the division won't survive long enough to make decent counterattacks. The Allies can move fast, but they can't afford to do so. Considering your turn I situation, your first job is to fight again another day, a day when combat losses and supply constraints have weakened the Italians, while your troops are thicker on the ground. Given the balance of forces and the sudden death victory conditions, the Allies should not start running around like the



Rommel leads a narrow breakthrough...

Rat Patrol. Then again, if the Italians are making a strong push, you don't need to be so aggressive. The way to defeat the Italian gambit is to be conservative, steady, and clever. Preserving and strengthening your forces, wait for the right moment to strike a big blow and unhinge your opponent's plans.

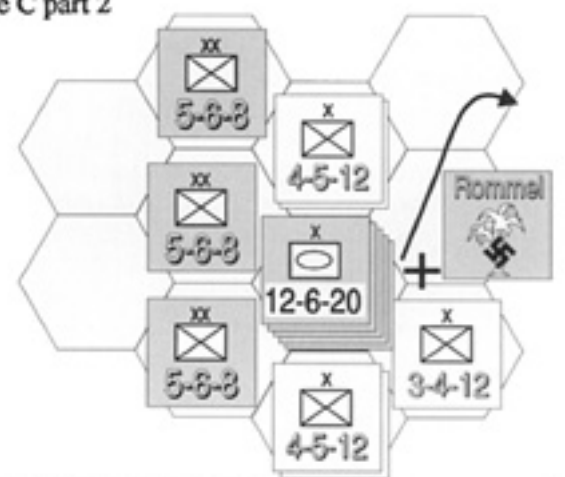
If you're playing the Allies, don't forget things. Don't get lazy. For example, the Allies have only one air point, which seems an almost insignificant resource when used for a single column shift or a mediocre bombardment. What the hell are you going to do with it? Barrage a port. If you're lucky, you can make things pretty miserable for the Axis. And how! A hit on Tobruk or Bardia at the right time can make some Italians evaporate. If the Axis player captures Mersa Matruh, he won't be foolish enough to trust in a lucky port capacity roll to keep the garrison supplied. But he's just as bad off if he can't get enough supply trucked over from his other ports.

The Allied player has to make the best of all his small advantages. Don't forget that you can rebuild those dead guys, especially dead British armour. Most of all, squeeze all the advantage you can out of the supply system. The Axis player is well aware that of his need for optimal supply handling, but the Allies might tend to forget the possibilities of shipping. The guy who's the better quartermaster will probably win even the Allies. Spread those supplies out and be ready to exploit. If you're lazy and keep your dumps in Alexandria, you pass up possible opportunities. It's easy enough to supply troops defending the Mersa Matruh area from dumps in Alexandria. And knowing how hungry the Italians are, you might want to keep your dumps back to guard against their capture. But by pushing SPs toward the front, you increase the range, and therefore the threat, of your mobile units. In the sample game I provide for this article, I enabled the 7th Armoured to turn a local advantage into a decisive counter strike by positioning SPs to support a deep exploitation-phase strike.

Tactics School

In the opening of *Stalingrad Pocket* the Romanians have to hold a broad front against slow-moving Soviet forces, so it makes sense for the Romanians to stack their divisions and use an interlocking ZOC deployment. Even if the Soviet armor does infiltrate between Romanian-occupied hexes, it will be difficult to supply, so any breakthrough will be limited, a threat to the front line but not to the rear areas. In *Afrika* the situation is reversed. Some of the best places to defend are the historical choke points with difficult terrain and a narrow frontage. But the attacker has some highly mobile units which, once they ooze through

Figure C part 2



...and exploits, leaving some units as a supply "carpet" while Italian infantry holds the shoulders.

your front-line ZOCs, can drive deep. Follow-on units can lay a "carpet" through those ZOCs to allow a supply trace-and even trucked supply points-to sustain the blitzing units.

On defense, unlearn your *SP* habits and take a cue from *Guderian's Blitzkrieg*: if you want to hold a hex, garrison it. At least that way the guy will have to fight to dislodge you. But don't spread your units thin, or the other guy will break through with trivial overruns. Setup some units in traditional interlocking-ZOC position behind the line to bog down exploiting units. Italian and Commonwealth infantry divisions are good for holding a line or holding open the shoulders of a breakthrough, use mobile units to exploit through holes or to counterattack. The short scenarios on El Alamein are a good classroom for learning these tactics.

Attacking in *Afrika* is fun. Admitting that he tends toward conservative play, Dad says you have to be more free-wheeling. A conservative-style gamer will find the game hard to win. One daring tactical idea is to use exploitation-capable Italians to set up a "checkerboard" of ZOCs behind British lines to cut their supplies and slow them down. I made a variation on this trick work once. See my sample game, below, for how a high-mobility Italian stack gummed up the Allied works for a while.

In this game ZOCs have interesting effects. Each game turn represents a month, not mere days as in *Stalingrad Pocket*, and this choice of map and time scales emphasizes the open, sweeping feel of the *North African* campaign. Given the high movement rates of most units, ZOCs are a much flimsier barrier to movement than in most ZOC-based games. On the other hand, an unnegated EZOC is an absolute barrier to supply trace and truck movement. Unless the other guy throws up a wall of units anchored on impassible terrain, you can run all over the place. But using that high mobility and keeping your troops supplied calls for some fancy footwork and careful coordination of units, truck points, and shipping capacity. It's a game of movement and supply, and of allocating your supply. Mobility is a force multiplier, not because (as in *GB*) a higher movement allowance enables more overruns. It doesn't. But a highly mobile unit projects the threat of overrun much further, perhaps even into the opponent's soft underbelly: his dumps, his roads, and his ports.

Mind you, just about every unit in the game poses an overrun threat to the enemy front line. Figure A shows an Italian division poking through an EZOC and blasting a weak victim. (By the way, these illustrations show Axis units in gray, Allies in white, movement with thin arrows, overruns with hollow arrows, and regular combat with fat black arrows.) Follow-on units can open a supply line to this unit, which may be part of a big attack on the Allied infantry stack in the Combat Phase. Given the same sort of opportunity, a fast unit can skip the front-line combat and go for the other guy's logistical jugular, as illustrated in Figure B. If the target stack were a few MPs further away-too far away to supply the Allied units shown--the German motorized infantry would merely have to wait for the combat phase. Of course, they had better capture some of that supply, unless the Axis player has had the foresight to move up units to negate EZOCs and then truck through an *SP*.

Now let's say that, having looked at these examples, the other guy knows better than to leave empty hexes in his line. Rommel can help you break through the crust and exploit deep since he enables even units embedded in EZOCs to use exploitation movement. The only consideration slowing down the breakthrough in Figure C is that old logistical tether. Remember, keeping *SPs* near the front can extend your range in the Exploitation Phase.

Most attacks have to succeed without Rommel's help. But the sequence of play itself helps the attacker. If you manage your forces properly, keeping a good number of units free of EZOCs and organizing your stacks, you can hit a hex three times in a row before the other guy can counterattack or even redeploy. The Axis units in Figure D gang up and use overruns plus regular combat to put their targets in double jeopardy. By not advancing after combat, the panzer division stays free for the exploitation phase.

How do you defend against such tactics? Remember that the examples above show what happens when coordinated attacks work right. Maybe the attacker will roll an inconclusive A1D1 or even suffer a bloody repulse. But you need not, and should not, trust to luck. As I mentioned above, some units positioned behind your front, with interlocking ZOCs, can bog down a breakthrough and make exploiting units very difficult to supply (and therefore easier to kill). General Colin Powell said of another desert opponent: "First we're going to cut him off, and then we're going to kill him." Well, if you can do the first to the Italians, the second is automatic. Second, remember that in mobile warfare, the most elegant defense is a sharp counterattack. If, flushed with victory, your opponent gets sloppy in the Exploitation Phase and fans out too much, find the weak points in his deployment and smash them. Remember, now it's your turn to run up to three attacks in a row.

A good defense has to be durable to take repeated poundings. Figure D shows that a thin line (1 unit per hex) is not much good. Neither, for that matter, is a weakly held box. Despite the D x2 benefit, a box full of wimps is not difficult to crack. You're wasting the *SP* it cost to build a box if you don't put inadequate strength. And if you build that box where you don't want to give ground, you'll need troops enough to survive taking the no-retreat option.

Boxes and cities, however, provide some protection against overruns. My pictures show attacks through perfectly clear terrain. The lesson to the defender: use terrain to your advantage. Escarpments are great for canalizing the enemy's attack and protecting your flanks. But it's not fun defending with your back up against an escarpment hexside. Mountain, rough, ridges, and wadis are wonderful. Sure, these terrain types give decent defensive benefits, but best of all, they protect against overruns. Use that terrain to deny your enemy CRT dice rolls. If he can hit you only once, he will kill fewer steps and he won't get very far before you have a chance to react. The best CRT modifier of all is not being attacked.

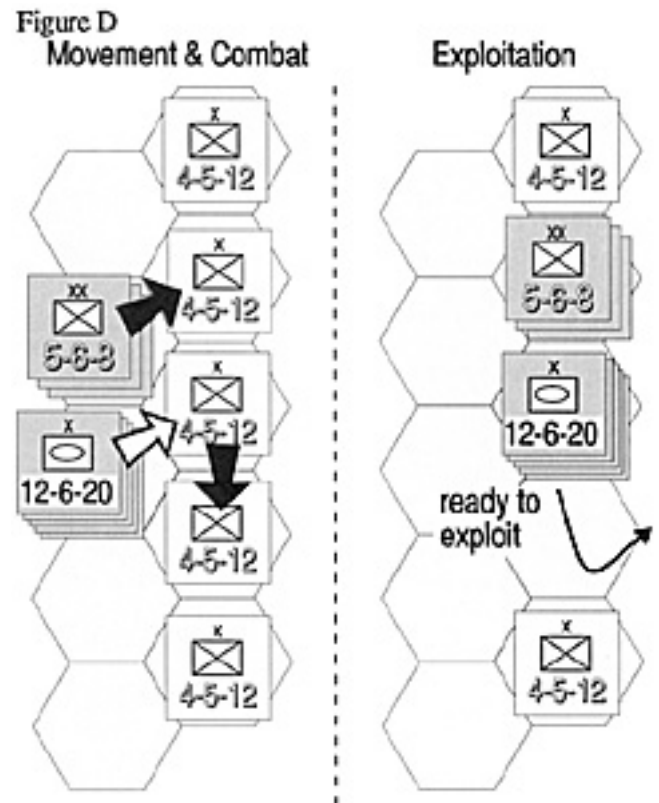
A similar idea applies when defending those all-important cities. Garrison the city, to be sure, and build a box if it lacks printed fortifications, but also deploy a ring of defenders outside the city to deny as many attacks as possible against the city hex itself. Make the other guy use up his steps and his attacking opportunities righting over clear terrain instead of pounding on your favorite port. Keeping his artillery out of bombardment range is a good idea too. Make him bleed for that objective, and maybe by the time he gets through the outer ring, his force will be too weak to do anything but die against your strong stack with its D x4 modifier.

Sample Game

Make no mistake, the Italian gambit can succeed. But let me relate the course of a solitaire game in which this strategy cost the Axis both ground and casualties, if only so you'll get a clear picture of the risks involved.

The Allies set up the 7th Armoured all in one hex for survivability. Therefore, nothing but a Nile delta hexside stood between Alexandria and the Italian Babini brigade plus the Maletti group on Turn 1. The Italians made a straight-ahead rush for Mersa Matruh with their forces on the Egyptian border; units further west consolidated to garrison ports and share supply efficiently. The Babin Waletti stack made a swing around the Allies' right flank, but, declining to commit suicide attacking Alexandria, used the "short hook" to stay within supply range. When the 7th Armoured rolled a lousy overrun, it failed to break out of the Italian envelopment. The Babini/Maletti force remained in position and cut the supply line from Alexandria to Mersa Matruh. Foot soldiers from both sides traded step losses around that town. The trouble was, the Brits rolled a zero port capacity for Mersa Matruh, so ammo and rations grew scarce for the defenders. They had to rely on a relief attempt by reinforcements from Alexandria.

Meanwhile, the Italians had a hard time maintaining the momentum of their first-turn strike because they were coordinating supply and unit groups to make sure everyone got fed. Shipping and port capacity were adequate, so long as some units hung back in the Tobruk area. I could have sent more units to the front, had I been willing to let them starve off after one turn of combat. That option is not as crazy as it sounds, if the



Basic Line-Breaking, with no help from Rommel: the Panzer Division starts outside any EZOC, overruns, then pivots to attack. With some luck, Axis forces will blow a big hole in the Allied line.

fighting around Mersa Matruh is difficult. As it was, the Italians did take Mersa Matruh on Turn 3. In their following player-turn, the Allies finally destroyed the Babini/ Maleni stack and so gained a little elbow room. More importantly, they used that one air point to get a hit on the Tobruk port knocking its capacity down to zero after the Turn 4 Axis port capacity roll. Jolly good show!

Turn 4 was the turning point for the Italians' fortunes. With no port capacity east of Benghazi, supplies were scarce. And in my eagerness to damage the Allies and take ground, I had spread some Axis forces out too far to make optimal use of my remaining supply points. Whole divisions ceased to be, about doubling the Axis casualty rate for the game in one fell swoop. The Allies then sought to magnify this disaster by cutting off and killing the remaining Italian force, which was still pretty considerable in terms of steps remaining. While the 7th Armoured swung around behind the Italians, infiltrated some ZOCs and wiped out an artillery park (3 units), the RAF bombed Mersa Matruh. A frontal assault against hex 2.17 was a bloody failure, but the Italians were still cut off, for supply purposes, by the Allies' ZOCs. I had pushed supply forward to sustain the British mobile units, and in the Exploitation Phase the good old 7th Armoured swung further west (to A54.19), threatening to bag a few more enemy units.

The port capacity roll for Mersa Matruh on Turn 5 was a 5, but a bombardment hit brought the capacity down to zero. The best the Axis could do was to ship one *SP* to Tobruk. The dilemma was whether to truck it, through a leaky British encirclement to the Mersa Matruh defenders and so let the forces in the Bardia/Tobruk area starve, or to pull back from the hard-won Mersa Matruh. The Axis opted to retreat, since the odds of keeping an isolated garrison alive in Mersa Matruh were next to nil. Trying to hold that gain would probably have cost the Axis Bardia and Tobruk, and the guy who has Tobruk will probably tie or win,- the guy who doesn't have it will probably lose. The Axis consolidated as well as possible on Bardia. Meanwhile, the forces left in Mersa Matruh, written off as goners in the supply phase, made a suicide breakout attempt. The attack was a bloody but futile 1:1 shot against the 14/70th Division and the Poles.

On Turn 6 the Italians were hunkering down on their start line, having suffered more casualties than they inflicted. They had played their gambit and lost. Kicking the ashes of their enemy's failure, the Allies combined some powerful Combat-Phase attacks with a dramatic Exploitation-Phase overrun by the fresh 2nd Armoured to take Bardia. Che mala fortuna! In the end, the Allies had suffered bad losses in the 7th Armoured and 4th Indian, while the surviving Italians comprised only a few infantry divisions, most of the Ariete Division, and a handful of artillery and AT battalions.

Luck, Skill, and Risk

Now it may seem that the Italian gambit came apart in this game because of a few unlucky port capacity rolls. Actually, the combination of an aggressive Italian posture,

some poor luck, and some astute Allied action--port bombardment and manoeuvre against the Italians' immediate rear area--was what made the Axis bite the dust. Some gamers might complain that a small number of die rolls, those for Axis port capacity and coastal shipping, have a disproportionately great effect on the game's outcome. After all, a couple of bad rolls can wipe out the Italian army, right?

Well, the Axis player can work to minimize this danger, but only at the price of moving slowly enough to keep surplus supply near all his units for a rainy day. The Axis might try the "delayed Italian gambit" in which he stocks up and pre-positions supply for a turn or two before launching his offensive. But by the time he jumps off, the Allies win be considerably stronger. I don't deny the strong random element injected by the supply rules. My point is that the Axis player has to gamble big if he wants to win big in the Italian phase of the game. If an early advantage is not important to you, then try a conservative approach and wait for the surrender rule to lift and the *Afrika Korps* to come charging over the hill. But an early Italian offensive will certainly lead to a more Free-wheeling opening. Win or lose, the Italian gambit is dramatic.

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More *Afrika* Scenarios

Standard Combat Series

by *Hank Meyer*

Here are two optional rules to consider as well as two shorter scenarios to play with. The optional rules give the turn sequence a more interactive feel.

Immediate Counterattack

Any unit of the non-phasing player may counterattack any adjacent unit which attacked or advanced after combat in the Combat Phase. It occurs as the last thing in the Combat Phase, before the Exploitation Phase begins, and has no effect on the ability of units to function later in the turn. In other words, if a unit makes one of these attacks, it is not giving something else up.

Interactive Sequence of Play

Movement Phase (all friendly units can move their full movement allowance)

Combat Phase

Enemy Reaction Phase (exploit-capable enemy units may move 1/2 MA and conduct overruns)

Exploitation Phase (exploit-capable friendly units may move 1/2 MA and conduct overruns)

Supply Phase

The above preserves the total MA of the exploit-capable units for the turn at the rate it currently exists. The player may make more attacks per turn using this system and must be careful not to generate an operational tempo which will create losses which exceed the unchanged level of reinforcements and replacements. While adding an Enemy Reaction Phase after the Combat Phase, a change may be needed to the Replacement procedure. A Supply Trace will be needed to a unit receiving a step-loss replacement to an *SP* or a port in order to make the replacement possible--in other words, to gain replacement steps, units must be in and be eligible to be in supply.

New *Afrika* Scenarios

These make good, short tournament games. Change sides and compare results to

determine tournament winners. These make good scenarios to try out the optional rules presented above. These scenarios eliminate most of the variability inherent in the game's supply, shipping, and replacement systems.

Special rules for both scenarios:

1. Malta Reduction is not used.
2. The Axis player gets 3 *SPs* per turn. The Axis Supply Table is not used.
3. The Axis player gets a Coastal Shipping of 3 each turn, the die roll is not made.
4. Benghazi has a port capacity of 2 at all times, all other ports are set at their maximum value. These values may be degraded by barrage attacks normally.
5. Reinforcements arrive as per the Order of Arrival Charts,
6. Truck points may be used proportionally- 1 truck point could therefore move 1 *SP* 10 MPs, 2 *SPs* each 5 MPs, or 10 *SPs* each 1 MP (etc.).
7. The Variable Reinforcement Tables are not used. On turns 1 & 2 (Sept and Oct, 1940), the Allied player gets two steps per turn. From that point on, he gets 1 step per turn. The Axis player always gets 1 step per turn. There are no mandated withdrawals. Possible British withdrawals have been integrated into the above reinforcement rate.
8. The victory conditions are based on the historical outcomes. To justify the tournament quality of the scenarios, players must play each side and compare results. The victory conditions are not guaranteed to come up a 50-50 chance of each side winning.

Scenario 5.1 a O'Connor's Offensive

Length: 7 turns (turns 1 through 7)

Set Up: As per Scenario 5.1

Victory Conditions:

Smashing British Victory: Control of Bardia, Tobruk, Benghazi, and El Aghelia.

British Major Victory: Control of Bardia, Tobruk, and Benghazi.

British Symbolic Victory: Control of two of Bardia, Tobruk, or Benghazi.

Axis Symbolic Victory: Control of two of Bardia, Tobruk, or Benghazi.

Axis Major Victory: Control of Bardia, Tobruk, and Benghazi.

Glorious Axis Victory: Control of Bardia, Tobruk, Benghazi and Mersa Matruh.

Draw: Other than the above.

Scenario 5.1 b The Race for Tobruk

Length: 6 turns (turns 8 through 13) Also try lengths of 5 or 7 turns. Alternatively, roll one die starting at the end of turn 12. On a 1-3, the game is over. Otherwise, the game continues. The game automatically ends on turn 14, if it has not ended earlier.

Set Up: As per Scenario 5.2--add a Box and 23 Bde-70 Div (less one step) at up in Mersa Matruh.

Victory Conditions:

Smashing British Victory: Control of Bardia, Tobruk, Benghazi, and Mersa Matruh.

British Major Victory: Control of Mersa Matruh, Bardia, Tobruk, and Sidi Barrani.

British Marginal Victory: Control of two of Bardia, Tobruk, or Sidi Barrani.

Axis Marginal Victory: Control of two of Bardia, Tobruk, or Sidi Barrani.

Axis Major Victory: Control of Benghazi, Bardia, Tobruk, and Sidi Barrani.

Glorious Axis Victory: Control of Bardia, Tobruk, Benghazi, and Mersa Matruh.

Draw: Other than the above.

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Playtester's Lament

Part Three

by Owen Fuller

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A Soviet Analysis of the German Threat

I must admit, without apology, that my comments to date have been rather partisan towards the Red Army. The major reason for this is that I have not yet played the German side. A successful German player, like Dean, must be very aggressive. He must stomp through weak front line positions, drive deep into enemy rear areas and create maximum chaos. My playing style best suits the initial Soviet defense, where it is more important to react to German moves without panic. Besides, the German reinforcement and supply situation gets worse as the game goes on, while the Soviet position continues to improve. Like, I'm not totally stupid!!!

However, I am being coerced into leading the Wehrmacht. To prepare for this fate, I would like to discuss the German threat from a Soviet perspective. This analysis includes operations that Dean has previously used to ruin my peace of mind, as well as ideas that I might try as the German player. Some possible Soviet reactions to these situations also follow.

General Notes

There are usually three factors listed as the reasons for the failure of the Wehrmacht to capture Moscow in 1941: (1) the extreme Russian weather, including deep mud and bitter cold; (2) inadequate German logistical support; and (3) the Red Army. While most authors, especially former members of the Wehrmacht, tend to rank them in this order, I think that each is equally important.

In *GB*, as in 1941, weather does not become a crucial factor until four or five weeks into the campaign. The Germans must capture all geographic objectives and establish supply lines by the end of Game Turn Four. Eventual victory or defeat can be decided during this initial period. This is not to say that blunders or brilliance in later turns cannot change the course of the game, but major German advances must occur before

the weather deteriorates.

To have a chance at victory, the Germans must take and hold Spas-Demansk, Bryansk, Orel and Kursk. Orel and Kursk should be easy, if captured quickly but are vulnerable to the eventual Soviet counteroffensive. Spas-Demansk and Bryansk will be more difficult, but are easier to defend. In addition, to balance heavy German losses and the Red Army counteroffensive, the Wehrmacht needs to take one or more of Vyazma, Kaluga or Tula, and two would be even better. Yelets is possible, but is very difficult to keep. Capturing Voronezh or Moscow would be outstanding, but any reasonably intelligent Soviet player should make both of these supply cities too costly to consider. However, if your opponent leaves you any victory point objective, take it!!! *GB* will devour the kind, the meek and the dull-witted.

The Wehrmacht is like a very large, angry gorilla. It goes anywhere it wants and does serious damage. However, large gorillas need lots of bananas. Supply is a limiting factor for the Germans, and transportation of supply is as difficult as it is important. The intensity of the initial blitz must link with the weekly supply situation. A low die roll means a limited offensive with careful supply usage. A high die roll allows the Germans to go all out Continued operations, as well as survival of the Wehrmacht after the bad weather hits, depend on how well supply is pushed forward. German players must learn to move supply efficiently and to balance aggressiveness with supply availability.

While skill (knowledge of the game system) and luck (good die rolls) are important in achieving German objectives, victory also requires a good plan. Since the German player sets up last, this plan will depend on Soviet strengths and weaknesses. While the execution of this plan must be flexible and react to changing conditions, the primary goals are fairly rigid. To satisfy victory conditions, the German player must capture as much territory as possible, but must also limit losses. The Wehrmacht must attack aggressively to break through Soviet front lines in several places, and then spread like the plague throughout Soviet territory. After making these breaches, however, German units should avoid combat, except where necessary to maintain the advance, open supply lines and capture vital objectives. The smart way to destroy Soviet Armies is to let them wither on the vine. The German player should pocket large numbers of Soviet units, then watch them die from lack of supply.

The remainder of this article will discuss German options for the first four Game Turns, starting at the north end of the map.

German units in the north (mainly 4th Army) will probably have to wait until Game Turn Two to launch serious operations. German players who start a major northern campaign on Game Turn One usually end up with serious supply problems. However, these units can maneuver at low Supply for future operations. Be sure to garrison Smolensk, unless you enjoy watching suicidal Soviet tank brigades grab your supply dumps.

VYAZMA: The German player can take Vyazma if he is willing to commit the resources, but this will not be a trivial task. It will require the use of both units and supply that other units may need, and must be completed before bad weather arrives. The German 8th and 9th Infantry Corps, in front of Vyazma, do not have the necessary strength or mobility to capture the town. You must assign no less than two mobile units (Panzer or Motorized Infantry Divisions) from Game Turn One reinforcements to help, and other units may be necessary to accomplish this mission.

Any operation to capture Vyazma must include all or parts of five elements. First, the Luftwaffe must destroy the rail lines into Vyazma, and reduce the nearby air base and supply dumps. Second, a heavily reinforced 9th Infantry Corps must attack along the Smolensk-Vyazma road to pin the Soviet 16th Army as far west as possible. Third, a mobile pincer should move through the lightly wooded area north of Vyazma. Its aim is to cut the Vyazma-Moscow road and rail line east of the town, and to threaten the town from the north. Fourth, another pincer should move through the area south and west of Vyazma to cut the rail line, which will also help isolate the SpasDemansk pocket. Finally, units of 2nd Panzer Group moving north from Orel, along with units breaking through at Spas-Dernansk, must cut the rail line to the south and east of Vyazma to seal the pocket

A smart Soviet player will do everything possible to prevent the loss of Vyazma. If he can block both pincers and establish a strong, well-supplied defensive position, this area can tie down large numbers of German units.

The relative skill of the two players, as well as the resources that each is willing to commit, and the fortunes of war (the dice) will determine the Battle of Vyazma. It will be a big drain for both sides, since each can use these units and supplies elsewhere. Therefore, each player must decide how much these ten victory points are worth

SPAS-DEMANSK: The German player must quickly take Spas-Demansk, using 7th, 20th and possibly 12th Corps units from 4th Army, and a large portion of the early 4th Panzer Group reinforcements, in a classical grab them by the nose, kick them in the butt operation. Pin frontline Soviet units to the west, then use mobile units to punch through the weak southern flank into the weaker Soviet 33rd Army. When complete, this operation exposes Bryansk from the north and opens the road to Kaluga. The Wehrmacht can then curl both north and south to pocket other Soviet units.

The Soviet player has only limited resources with which to defend Spas-Demansk. Front-line units must hold out as long as possible as they withdraw into town, then retreat toward Vyazma. and Kaluga.

BRYANSK: The German player must take the city of Bryansk, since it sits astride all of the roads and railroads through the center of the original Soviet frontline. This operation will not be easy, because the Bryansk area is a ready-made defense position with a river, forests and a major city to help the Red Army. Unless the Soviet player

does something stupid, Eke leaving the city empty, a frontal assault is not recommended. The plan to cut off and wear down Bryansk needs to contain several elements. First, units from the 12th, 43rd and 53rd Infantry Corps should move in on Bryansk from the west to pin down and put pressure on the defenders. Second, mobile units, most likely 1st Cavalry Division, should swing north around the city to cut the rail lines and the road to Kaluga. Third, 2nd Panzer Group should detail units from Orel to seal off Bryansk from the east. Finally, German units should pursue the remaining elements of the Soviet 3rd and 13th Armies into Bryansk from the south. After Bryansk is cut off, make sure it stays cut off, and that supply lines cannot be reopened, including supply by air units. This could be the largest and most important pocket that the Germans form. The more Soviet units in this pocket, the faster the supplies run out.

The Soviet player can realistically hope to accomplish two goals at Bryansk. First, the city must be held for as long as possible to disrupt the German supply situation. Create an all-around defense position with as much supply as possible. It will be amoral victory for the poor defenders if the city does not fall until after the heavy rains begin. Second, save as many mobile units from the Bryansk pocket as you can. Leaving the weak and slow to defend the city, the remaining units must break out towards Kaluga. These units might also be able to hold a temporary supply corridor open to Bryansk, which will surely upset any German plan.

SOVIET 13TH ARMY: The schwerpunkt of the German 2nd Panzer Group must penetrate through the positions held by the Soviet 13th Army. It will be in this battle that the German player will find out exactly how well he understands all of the subtle nuances of the OCS. The Wehrmacht must punch through, and effectively destroy, the 13th Army during the First Player Turn so that Orel can be captured before Soviet reinforcements arrive. Open the attack with Luftwaffe hip shoots. Then, overrun units again and again until they die and the roads are open. Next, strike with the Luftwaffe and artillery barrages. Follow that with regular attacks. During the exploitation phase, use units that were in reserve to drive deep into the Soviet rear areas. Do not forget that these reserve units can also use 1/2 of their movement allowance during the normal movement phase.

The Soviet player must set up 13th Army to create difficult road blocks for 2nd Panzer Army. As mentioned before, these units will die glorious deaths in defense of the Rodina, but they must slow down the German advance as much as possible.

SOVIET 40TH ARMY: If the German player decides not to destroy the Soviet 40th Army, he must at least screen and pin it. Left alone, the 40th has enough strength and mobility to be a thorn in the German side, as long as it can remain in supply.

While the primary mission of the 40th is to kill as many Nazi slime as possible before being crushed beneath Panzer tracks, a good Soviet player can use this army to cause the German player more than a few well-deserved headaches. If used properly, it can

tie down a large number of German units, threaten the German supply base at Konotop, move back to defend Kursk, or just generally harass the German southern flank.

After the Breakthrough

The German player has several options after breaking through the Soviet front lines. First and most important, Orel must be taken and established as a major German strong point and supply base. The next logical objectives will include Kursk, Yelets and Kaluga. Look at the situation after Orel is taken, and plan accordingly. Tula, Moscow and Voronezh are also possible objectives, but only a Soviet fool will leave them vulnerable. Attempt these only after careful study, or as part of a deception plan. Most importantly, as Game Turn Four approaches, prepare your defense and supply plans. The middle part of the game belongs to the weather. The end of the game should belong to the Soviet player. The German player will have to hold on to the gains which he makes during these all-important first four game turns, and preserve what remains of the Wehrmacht.

Until Next Time...

As I type this final paragraph, *Guderian's Blitzkrieg* is being collated and shipped in Homer. [Ed. Note: A year ago, that is ...] It is a 2 1/2 pound box of goodies that is absolutely worth the price. (OK, so I'm biased.) To all future German players, remember the old

saying: Some days you get the bear, some days the bear gets you, and some days you shouldn't even go out into the woods. To all future Soviet players: Keep the faith. At least you have another article full of hints on the way. When teaching doesn't get in the way, I will be playing *GB* and collecting all of the tips that didn't make it into the first two articles, so that the third and final episode in this series will be as helpful as possible. In the mean time, you can work through the teaching scenarios and play a couple of the shorter regular scenarios. Then you, too, will be ready to experience all of the fun I have had over the past year with Scenario 8: The Campaign to Capture Moscow.

More Playtester's Lament

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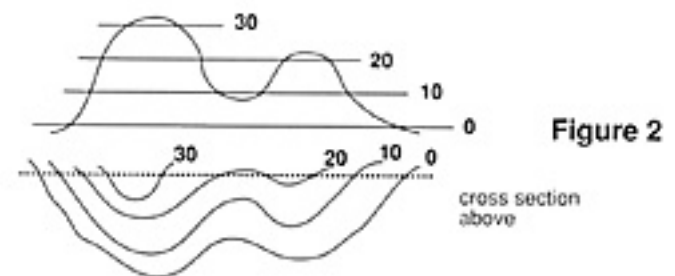
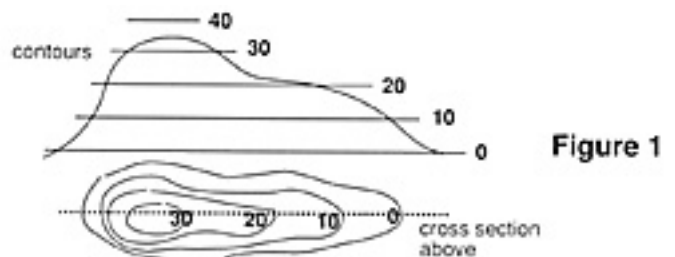
Learning to See

Map Reading

by Joe Sylvester

Perhaps the most critical skill battlefield commanders learn is how to read a map. The commander and staff use the map to figure out where they are, assess the battlefield situation, and plot their deviant behavior. At lower echelons, a crucial part of reading the map includes an understanding of the 'Line of Sight' (hereafter referred to as LOS). A commander must use LOS to make such decisions as which hilltops are key terrain, which avenues of approach will hide the unit from enemy sight, and where to post forward observers. The contour map is ideally suited for these purposes. Unfortunately, the average wargamer does not receive formal training in reading a contour map. Here is a crash course.

First, one must understand how contour lines work. A contour line marks the series of points that lie at a certain elevation. To show how this works, take a bowl and turn it upside down on a table. Wrap a rubber band around it such that the rubber band is the same distance from the table all the way around the bowl. Do this with several rubber bands and look straight down at the bowl with one eye. The image is that of a 2-D contour map. Obviously, you can do a-Lis with any shape. Figure 1 illustrates a shape just as you might see it on a map. Note that the terrain slopes smoothly and continuously between contours. Many people mistakenly view the contour map as a series of plateaus. Later examples will illustrate how the 'layer-cake heuristic' may be misleading.



Most wargamers can draw a contour picture given the piece of terrain but reading a map requires the gamer to conceptualize that terrain given the picture. Conceptualizing is easy when one recognizes the patterns that contours take on. The simplest pattern to understand is the spacing between lines. As contour lines get closer, the slope gets steeper. The hill mass in figure I shows this as well. As a limit, contour lines on top of each other represent a vertical drop or a cliff. Alternatively, lines

that are very far apart would represent a plain.

It is rare, however, that contours will be the same distance apart and the slope constant. To arrive at the correct picture, just put the different slopes together. If the contours are far apart at the higher elevation and closer at the lower elevation, the shape is convex. If the contours are close at the higher elevation and far apart at the lower elevation, the shape is concave. An example of concavity would be the left side of figure 1, while convexity would be on the right. By piecing the slopes together like this, one can picture any undulation of the land (see figure 2).

Not only contours affect the LOS between two points. Obstacles to LOS also include buildings, woods, and other features that break the landscape. Here, the 'layer-cake' approach is a little more appropriate. At the edge of the obstacle, the elevation instantly changes to that of the next higher contour level. However, one must remember that as the ground underneath the obstacle slopes, so does the elevation of the obstacle (see figure 3). For LOS purposes, it is also important to note that the unit is at ground level and not at the highest level of the obstacle.

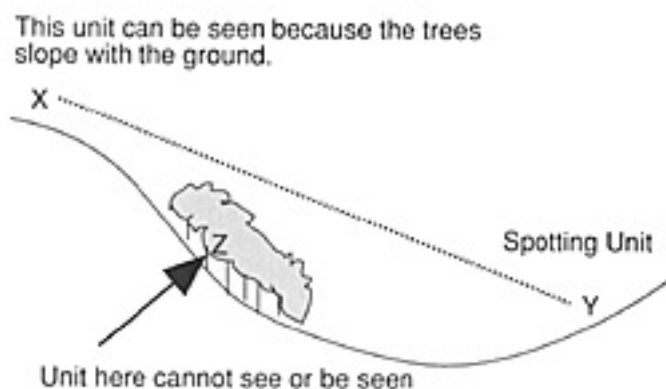


Figure 3

Wargame commanders have yet another hurdle in reading a map than their real life counterparts. In real life, the commander finds out for better or for worse when the action starts while wargamers must agree on the lay of the land to determine LOS. Players rarely dispute LOS when both endpoints are at the same level. Either the obstacle is there or it isn't. Problems most often arise when one of the endpoints may be in a blind spot created by an obstacle or the changing slope of the land. Blind spots occur when the slope close to the lower endpoint is steep relative to the slope close to the higher endpoint. Fig. 1 provides an excellent example of the slope concept. A unit at the foot of the hill on the left side would be in a blind spot since the hill gets very steep there when compared to a unit at the top of the hill. Obstacles such as trees and buildings have a vertical slope on the opposite side and will often provide a blind spot. As fig. 4 illustrates, the closer the potential obstacle is to the lower point and the higher it rises above the lower point the more likely the chance that the unit is in a blind spot.

People using the layer-cake heuristic will have trouble figuring out blind spots because the heuristic eliminates the role of slope in determining LOS. If one uses plateaus to conceptualize the terrain they will be able to understand

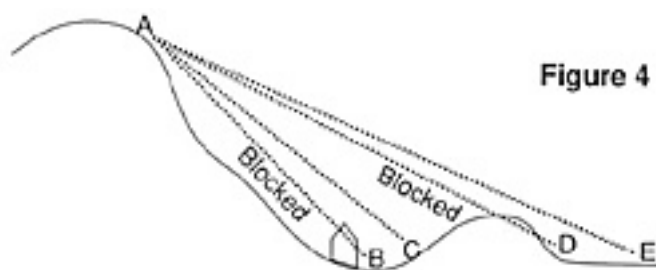
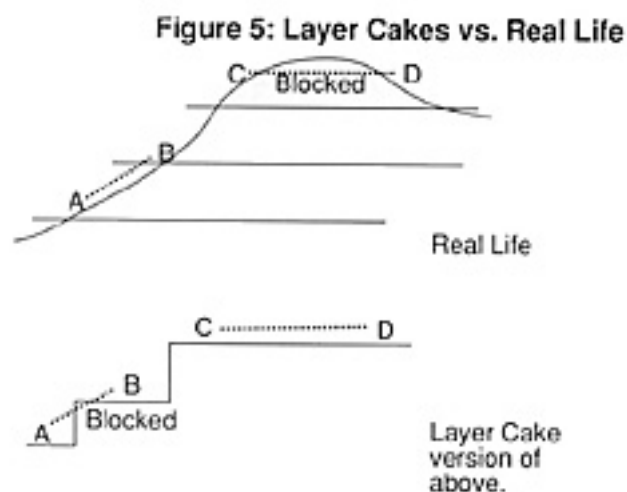


Figure 4

B can't be seen because of the house.

the general shape of an area but not the delicacies of the slopes. As shown in figure 5, LOS that normally exists for a concave slope will often be blocked using the plateau approach. Often, players using plateaus also forget that the highest elevation (e.g.: hilltops or ridgelines) has some curvature that may block LOS (also shown *in figure 5). The ability to recognize the actual lay of the land will not only add to the realism of play but also the ability to play well.

B can't be seen because of the house.
D can't be seen because it is closer to the hill than E.



Of course human perception is a creative thing and even two players with an excellent grasp of map reading will sometimes disagree about the existence of a LOS. Therefore, games that include the use of LOS must have some rule to resolve disputes. The third edition of the TCS rules will settle the problem by comparing the relative slopes between firer-obstacle and firer-target with the person claiming no LOS choosing the hex that he thinks blocks the LOS. Players who can visualize the terrain will have a distinct advantage over their opponents. They will be less likely to waste shots or run into those surprise LOSs that can ruin an operation. For those just learning to read a contour map, it may be helpful to try drawing some LOSs using the ideas in this article. Use a contour map to find some sample LOSs and draw the cross-sections of them. If you have time before a game, this is a great way to plan a defense and see what you can and can't cover. After a while, the pictures will no longer be necessary and by just looking at the map you will be able to see the shape of the terrain.

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Desert Panzers

February 1941-December 1942

by Arnold Blumberg

Two Panzer regiments, the 5th and 8th, fought in the Western Desert under Erwin Rommel from February 1941 through December 1942. There were two tank battalions and a regimental headquarters company in each. At first, each battalion had a headquarters company (protected by a platoon of light tanks), one medium company (with four platoons totalling 22 tanks), and two light companies of 22 tanks each. Starting in August of 1941, a fourth tank company joined each battalion. On paper, a full strength armor battalion would have fielded about 100 panzers.

The Panzer regiments that fought in *North Africa* never achieved the theoretical paper TO&E. The strength of these units fluctuated up and down (mostly down) during their entire careers in the desert.

Upon its arrival in March 1941, the 5th Pz Rgt mustered 150 tanks: 70 light Pz Is and IIs, and 80 medium Pz IIIs and IVs. This was the tank component of the 5th Light Div that later became the 21 st Pz Div. With this meager tank force the "Desert Fox" swept the British out of Libya and to the Egyptian frontier by mid-April. However, the cost to the 5th Pz Rgt resulting from Rommel's stunning exploit was high.

By the time the *Afrika Korps* reached the enemy fortress of Tobruk that April of 1941, the 5th Pz Rgt had left a trail of breakdown armored vehicles across the length of Cyrenaica. Relative to combat, 5th Pz Rgt had ceased to exist when the first Germans started probing the Tobruk perimeter during the last part of the month. They recovered many of these breakdowns and put them back into fighting condition, but that took time. It caused Rommel to delay his planned assault on the British bastion until April 30. The delay allowed the English vital time in which to prepare for the German onslaught with disastrous consequences for the 5th Panzer.

On the date of the attack, 5th Pz Rgt could field only 81 runners: 9 Pz Is, 26 Pz IIs, 38 Pz IIIs, and 8 Pz IVs. The Pz Is and IIs were of little value against fortified positions and artillery because they had only a machine-gun (Pz Is) and 20mm (the Pz IIs) armament. The effective combat strength of 5th Panzer during the battle rested with its worn-out, in-need-of-repair 46 Pz IIIs and IVs.

The main battle tanks (the Pz IIIs and IVs) grouped into a single four-company battalion designated "Abteilung Hohman" and lead the attack. However, 5th Pz Rgt failed in its efforts to break into the enemy positions. This meant the collapse of the attempt to take Tobruk and more punishing losses in both men and material. By the end of the day's fighting, Abteilung Hohman had 35 tanks remaining (3 Pz Is, 12 Pz IIs, 14 Pz IIIs and 6 Pz IVs).

It was about this time (first part of May) that needed Panzer reinforcements arrived on the scene in the shape of the 8th Pz Rgt, 15th Pz Div. Only the first battalion of the new regiment deployed in mid-May ready for action. It may have had about 50 tanks, half of which were Pz IIIs. These, together with 5th Panzer's second battalion, were enough to frustrate the British counter stroke, Operation Brevity, initiated on May 15 to break the German siege of Tobruk.

After their tactical defeat of only three weeks before, the British again tried to relieve Tobruk. Launching a new effort, codenamed Battleaxe, they ran into a strengthened German tank force. Although the *Afrika Korps* had received no replacement panzers since March, 5th Panzer Regiment had repaired most of their disabled tanks. Although still not present in full force, the 8th Pz Rgt did have 100 tanks, half being medium Pz IIIs or IVs. Upon entering the combat, 5th Panzer had about 96 runners of which 57 were mediums.

Operation Battleaxe gained the English another defeat plus heavy losses in men and armored fighting vehicles. The Germans suffered severe tank losses but retaining the battlefield allowed them to recover and repair all but 25 of them. They also recovered a small number of British tanks and put them in fighting trim. Not long after the battle, a small company of captured and reconditioned British Crusader and Matilda tanks replaced the Pz Is of Rommel's headquarters guard. They also served as an operational reserve.

It was not until the November battles of Operation Crusader that any large scale tank actions erupted after Battleaxe. The respite gave the panzer regiments time to absorb the few replacements that arrived as well as the rest of the tanks of 8th Pz Rgt. Pz IVF1 vehicles came to Rommel in small numbers, as well as the Pz IIIs. Both types retained the shorter L24 75mm (Pz IV) and L42 50mm (Pz III), but both also carried thicker armor than earlier models.

During this time, Rommel banished the Pz Is from the battlefield and regulated them to reconnaissance and artillery observation roles. The Pz IVs formed a fourth company and added to each panzer battalion. *Afrika Korps* entered the Crusader battle with the following numbers of tanks:

Vehicle	5 Pz Rgt	8 Pz Rgt	Total
Pz II	32	38	70

Pz III	64	75	139
Pz IV	15	20	35
Total	111	133	244

During this period, the regiments did not have any of the excellent long barrelled 50mm Pz IIIs or IVs called by the Allies "Panzer Specials".

Rommel barely avoided total defeat during Crusader. By December 1941, the Allies drove him back through Lybia to the area around El Agheila. Recovering, he advanced again and faced his opponent in front of their Gazala line in February 1942.

Late May saw the Germans strike the Gazala positions on the front and by the southern flank. Leading the way were the panzer regiments, each one containing the recently arrived Pz IIIJ and IVF2 Specials. (In the early actions the Pz IVF2 remained out of the fighting until supplied with armor piercing ammunition.) The *Afrika Korps* started the operation with the following AFVs:

Vehicle	In Pz Rgts	In Reserve
PzII	50	10
PzIII	223	38
PxIIIJ	19	19
PzIV	40	1
PzIVF2	0	9

Rommel won the Gazala battles and took Tobruk by the end of June. Down to 60 tanks, he then crossed into Egypt and faced the British at El Alamein. Unable to break the thin enemy defenses there, Rommel settled in and began building his strength up. He was waiting for the inevitable British counter-offensive that finally broke over his head on 23 Oct. The German commander would meet the British with the number of tanks listed below:

Vehicle	In Pz Rgts	Under repair
PzII	31	2
PzIII	85	1
PzIIIJ	88	1
PZIV	8	2
PzIVF2	30	0

The German Panzer Regiments under Rommel's desert command were almost an all-tank unit in practice as well as in action. These units controlled their own supply and maintenance functions. The divisions handled all reconnaissance, engineering and anti-aircraft responsibilities. They never possessed superiority in numbers or weaponry. It was tactical flexibility, in the form of combined arms, that made the 5th and 8th Panzer Regiments the source of the legend that came to be known as the *Afrika Korps*.

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Focused Design

Design Theory

by Dave Powell

Perhaps it is inherent in the hubris of Wargaming to attempt to design the "ultimate" simulation--the definitive treatment of the subject at hand. Hence, we see a continued parade of monster games that have grown ever more detailed with time and the evolution of the art. Even when the designer declares the project finished, gamers labor on their own to throw in more detail, to capture every subtle nuance of history and reality. What is the result of all this? Is it "the Game to end all games"? Or, is it a project so overburdened with process that playing it-if one can play it---soon acquires a sheen of desperation and deadly ennui?

Manual simulation is a medium of limited range. As a designer, asking your players to wade through tons of process is asking for a game that will disappear with all those other abandoned items on the shelves. Dean and I believe that a game must begin with and retain a steady focus on the angle of reality the designer wants to highlight.

The Civil War Brigade Series provides a case in point. The most frequent criticism of the CWB is that it allows a dichotomy of detail. Command is a detailed, layered process ranging from writing the order through delivery to acceptance and action (or lack thereof). On the other hand, artillery is generic and the movement and combat mechanics contain nothing unusual. More than one person has wondered why a game so detailed in one aspect glosses over other details.

The answer is simple. We chose to emphasize the longignored command control aspects of tactical Civil War engagements. Players can only handle so much intricacy before the flow breaks down and tedium sets in. Expanding the reality horizon in all directions at once overloads the game structure to the point where the player can no longer manipulate it easily. Take the case of die roll modifiers. DRMs most commonly portray specific historical effects simply and easily. The more DRMs a designer tosses in, the more specific effects he models. This increases the process's historical accuracy. On the other hand, the average gamer can only remember a few DRMs (10-12 max, and that's pushing it) before having to refer to the charts. Each chart referral decreases the ease of flow that ultimately determines the success or failure of a game.

In short, detail in one area must be compensated for in other areas, if the designer expects to see the game played. Hence, there is the need for focus. Choose your main

area of emphasis. Place your desired level of detail there, and craft the rest of the process to flow smoothly in support of that desired highlight. In the CWB, the highlight on command control is visible in the orders system, the morale system, and the degradation-over-time effect of stragglers. The rest of the system is the supporting structure. The intent is to produce realistic overall effects without the same depth of process.

In the Tactical Combat Series (TCS) we also focused on command as well as unit cohesion (reflected in the morale process) and artillery. On the other hand, Dean streamlined individual tank combat since others have covered that in detail elsewhere. Even with the proposed 3rd Edition changes, the focus will remain on command, cohesion, and--to a much lesser extent--artillery.

While this may sound like a simple truth, sometimes I think that the whole history of Wargaming is an exercise in unreasoning idealism. Someone is always striving for that ultimate detail in the face of incontrovertible proof otherwise. Dean frequently receives letters from starry-eyed gamers asking to add his pet realistic touch to the system. Admittedly, each small change is a minor deal, but if we include everything, we'd crush the system under the weight of them all. Examples of this particular phenomenon abound. Games like *War In The Pacific*, *Campaign For North Africa*, *Sharpsburg* and *Road To Washington* represent efforts to push the envelope in all directions. All were failures as games. Simply put, they weren't much fun to play. Still, the quest for the ultimate game goes on.

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G-2 Game Assistance Program

Computer Bookkeeping

by Steve Newhouse

G-2 is going to make your dice, unit rosters, charts, tables, paper and pencil obsolete. This GAP runs on an IBM compatible PC using Microsoft Windows 3.1. This is not a stand alone game but rather a way for you to enjoy your games by using the computer to do your bookkeeping and game CRT resolutions. It tracks and updates rosters, orders' op-sheets and leaders automatically. It also covers combat, straggler loss and recovery, morale, order issue and acceptance. It is ready to play as soon as you install it.

All Gamers series will be available. The CWB Series will be ready by October 1, 1993. The NBS will be next followed by the OCS. The Gamers will release both before the end of 1993. If there is sufficient demand, we will do the TCS and SCS as well. Also, if enough gamers request it, G-2 will be available in a DOS program. When technology allows, we will be releasing a version to run on the AC.

I have wanted to write programs for games ever since I learned to program and have been playing games since Blitzkrieg in the early seventies. A programmer since 1982, I have worked mostly on IBM business oriented software. Since I never have time to play my favorite Civil War games, I decided to eliminate as much 'busy work' as I could.

I found a good data base management software and an object-oriented programming language about a year ago. The idea formed. Starting the prototype around December 1992 I initially wanted simply to track my CWB fire combat and unit rosters. After I got it working, I decided to add other features such as straggler loss and recovery and leader loss. The basic goal was to speed up fire combat and keeping track of losses. It soon grew to a fun blown game system. Now, almost every function of the CWB that can be tracked or automated is.

During the Winter and Spring, I worked on the command system and refining all the programs. I found out what the term 'labor of love' really means. There has been much trial and error in learning how to assimilate the flow of a board wargame with the functionality and power of a computer. I would not hesitate to say by the time you read this I will have logged 800 hours of programming, research, rules reading, and playtesting.

Enough about me, it's time to give you a summary of the programs. These games work best with a mouse or trackball, but you can play them without one. All programs have buttons to click as well as pull-down menus that execute the same functions as the buttons. Each GAP program takes up very little memory. The largest program to date has a memory usage of 26K for a program using 11 screens, and 160 data fields from 9 files. I am playing on a 386 40 with eight MB of memory and have no performance problems. I can even keep several of the most commonly used programs open simultaneously. The number of open files is more critical than lack of memory.

The highlights of the CWB Series GAP follow:

Continue: The options are to continue the current game, start a new game, Help and Exit. Help and Exit are on each program. Help does two things. It tells you what the program is for and how to use it. We will select the option to start a new game.

Series Menu: Select the game you want to play. All available series games are listed. After you select which game to play, you advance to the following:

Scenario: This is where you pick the scenario and any game options. You can also continue a saved game. G-2 only loads the leaders and units in play for the particular scenario. It includes each scenario and every option. If you select any options, it will show the victory point cost total.

Game Menu: This displays options in the order of the turn sequence of play. These include:

Change Turn: This allows you to track the game turn. It is very important to keep it up to date as it will not allow you to roll for order acceptance or delay reduction unless the game time is current. Buttons advance the time 'Up' or 'Down' and return to the Game 'Menu'. Yes, night turns are hourly and the date will change at 00.00 hours.

Order Issue: The first field is a selection list showing the army commanders. Select the commander to send the order and the screen displays Ids rating, and command points. Next, enter the arrival time. The available primary leaders will display in a selection list. If you need a divisional goal order, click the button for it. You will then see a list of available secondary leaders and generic artillery batteries, cavalry and infantry brigades. Otherwise, select from the primary commanders. After selecting the receiver, you need to determine the type and cost of each order. The picks are familiar as this GAP attempts to be a reasonable facsimile of the orders game function. Select from: In Person, Aide Delivered, Oral, Written, force level and complex or simple. A running total for each order cost displays on the screen. Type your order and click on the 'Write' button to record the order. If you do not have enough command points the program will inform you. It will subtract the points from your commander's available points and you continue to write orders until you run out of points, or ideas.

Corps Stoppage Table: This is one of the few programs that looks like the paper table. You click on the number of divisions cross indexed with the number of wrecked divisions. Then select the leader rating, and whether or not the commander is lost. If needed, it will pick the modifiers for night and defensive orders. Click on 'Roll Dice' to see the result of the check. It will tell you to carry on or if your check failed.

Initiative Orders: The first screen lets you select the side, Rebels or Yankees and the type, Primary or Secondary. Primary refers to leaders who take their orders directly from the army commander. Secondary leaders get their orders from primary leaders. After making your selections, choose any available commander and as always, roll the dice. The results screen will tell you if the poor soul has no initiative (which you already knew!), gets to write his own order, or is the dreaded Loose Cannon. If your man has no initiative, you go back to the first screen, if there is an order to write, you proceed there and write it before returning to the first screen.

Delay Reduction: This program displays a side's orders that are in delay status. Click the 'Roll Dice' button and the result displays accepted or still delayed. If accepted, the status of the order is changed and you may act on the order. It will display the text of the order. so if your memory is short, you can review it. Only orders that have not been checked in this turn are available for reduction. This is one reason it is important to change the game turn.

New Order Acceptance: This allows you to deliver orders to your commands. The acceptance check shows the status of the order accepted, distorted, delayed, or Loose Cannon (Thanks for all the exceptions to the rules, guys--You made me scratch my head more than my dandruff!) The text of the order is shown here also. You will only see orders with a delivery time equal to the current turn.

Unit Functions: This is the heart of the system. All the above programs are small change compared to this monster. This GAP tracks both Union and Confederate rosters. It gives up to the second statistics with the click of a button. Many game functions are executed from this GAP. You select which side to display, Rebels or Yankees, and may search for any corps not displayed on the screen. Displayed data include Unit ID, Morale, Fire Level, Beginning Strength, KIA, Stragglers, Current Strength and Wrecked Status. Initiate fire combat by clicking on a Unit ID, or selecting 'f' as an option. Other valid options include '1' and '2' for straggler checks on tables one and two, 'r' for straggler recovery and 'in' for morale checks. When you elect fire combat, you advance to a second screen displaying the defender, a field for fire points and boxes to click for fire combat modifiers. Enter the fire points, click the fire button and watch the combat unfold. If casualties; are incurred (1/2 is calculated automatic ally), you will go to the straggler check screen. It also displays the defender's information and number of strength points lost. There are boxes for straggler modifiers. If you have a leader(s) in the defending stack, you may click a button to see if he is still kicking or becomes a statistic.

The Morale Check is next and it also displays defender information as well as boxes to click on to adjust the morale modifiers. The last screen displayed is a conclusion screen showing the results of combat (including die rolls). This takes longer to read than to execute as each combat takes about 30 seconds to execute and record. The conclusion screen has two buttons-'Record' and 'Roster'. 'Record' will adjust a unit's strength, casualties and file level. 'Roster' will position you back on the roster screen with the previous defender's corps at the top of the data table. You handle straggler checks and recovery the same way: Display appropriate screen, show results and record results. You may click on the 'Totals' button for an update on army casualties. The unit roster screen displays 13 units at a time. Most corps will display in their entirety.

Other programs will allow you to change any order or unit values, as mistakes happen anytime people and computers are together. A Leader Roster program allows you to change leaders of armies, corps, and division. It is for battlefield promotions as well as any 'exception' rule when leader status needs to be changed (acting commanders, Trimble in Thunder). I even included a 'Zero Out stragglers program for those of you who want to recover all stragglers with one click of a button.

The CWB Series will evolve as more playtesting is done, but the basics covered here will not change much. If you have read this far, you already know how to run the programs. I expect to release NBS after all the bugs are worked out of CWB. OCS and SCS will follow quickly as they do not involve tracking unit rosters. The TCS will be last as the Third Edition Rules are still pending.

I will offer customer support for this product as Dean does not need the extra headaches. I am doing these projects after hours and on weekends. Do not expect to catch me between 8:00 and 5:00, Monday through Friday. I welcome phone calls from anyone who would like more information, but I cannot return long distance calls at this time. You can reach me at 817-283-8744 and ask for Steve. By the time G-2 is released, I hope to have BBS on-line help.

Depending upon the acceptance of this product, I am already thinking about version 2. If it proves to be a successful GAP, version 2 may include 'hypertext' help text for the game rules. For those of you who do not know what hypertext is, it allows you to click your mouse on a key word to display detailed information about the subject. 'Commander Profiles' have also been discussed. These would be orders sent automatically by your solitaire opponent emulating a personality. We could use typical computer 'illogic' to reproduce Pope's strange orders at Bull Run. Grant's 'Steamroller' tactics at the wilderness or Lee's crafty 'sixth sense' when you least expect it are also possibilities.

I hope these game series will be accepted enough to warrant fully computerized versions of Garners brand games. I do not know if it can be done in my spare time or not, but rest assured that as long as there is an interest, I will pursue it.

Each G-2 Gamers Series GAP engine will sell for \$25.00. Each game within a Series that requires an order of battle roster will sell for \$10.00, plus shipping. I will start with *Thunder at the Crossroads*, move to *Embrace an Angry Wind* and work my way to *In Their Quiet Fields*. *Austerlitz* of the NBS, will be the only game of that series until the backburner games are released.

I hope you will find that G-2 reduces your frustration with the records keeping and enhances your enjoyment with the fast paced combat resolution programs. The GAP has sped up my play greatly. I no longer have to shuffle paper and roll dice. I simply let my computer work for me. I welcome your questions and will appreciate any help or suggestions you can give.

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European Wargaming Games Spectacular II Report

by Dean N. Essig



This past May, Sara and I had the delightful opportunity to travel to Europe. We attended the Games Spectacular II in Eindhoven, The Netherlands. It was our first trip abroad and our 10th wedding anniversary. I could write volumes on the trip and what we were able to do and see in our one week there, but not for this magazine.

GB at Eindhoven. From left to right: Joseph Vanden Borre, Bernard Sperling (obscured by Joseph almost completely), myself (with coffee), Chrisloph Ludwig (Gamers' T-Shirt), Dirk Blennemann (partially obscured) and Michael-Peter Sturz (while shirt). Note that all the Germans (with the exception of Bernard) elected to play the Russians.. I guess they learned their lesson the first time around!

I would like to talk about my observations of our hobby in Europe based on what I witnessed during our short stay there. The Games Spectacular was held by 999 Games. Michael Bruinsma (see the magazine cover) is the owner. Michael was our host during our stay and attended to our every need as best he could while singlehandedly running the show. I don't know how much speed he took to run about with the energy level he showed, but all I can say is he will need more assistants next time. (I thought I was manic!)

Michael runs a mail order house that serves much of Europe. Because of that, there were only a few of our European business customers in attendance at the show. Andy Ashton in England summed it up by saying that it was 999's show and he didn't feel

right as another retailer there. I do not know if this affected the show. However, it was a bit disappointing not to meet some more of the people who have helped us over the years.

The show itself was in a good hall with excellent booth facilities. Some other American companies in attendance were Clash of Arms, GHQ Miniatures, Flying Buffalo, and GMT. Of these, only GMT was not represented by one or more principals. Gene sent Richard Berg and John Kranz to occupy his booth.

GHQ put on two great miniature game/displays--a full scale Tarawa game and a Russo-Finnish battle. They always had a large crowd whenever they had an event running. Greg Scott and Ed Harris ran things and seemed to attract a lot of attention.

Ed Wimble showed up in a blaze of glory just before the show started (about the time I learned how to drive an Opel truck on the main drag between Amsterdam and Eindhoven). He had two players set up and run through a massive combined game of *Ligny*, *Q-bras*, *Mt. Saint-Jean* (what else?). It was fascinating to watch.

The highlight of the show, for me, was meeting and talking with Ulrich and Dirk Blennemann, Hans van Deventer, Bernhard Sperling, M.P. Sturz and his constant companion Chrisoph Ludwig, and the entire population of Belgium led by Joseph Vanden Borre. (Joseph was also noteworthy for showing up each day with one or more new Belgian beers to try ...) All were delightful people and excellent game players-Joseph, you're still too darn slow! From them, I learned valuable lessons in dealing with players in other countries from quibbling over translating numbers in multiple languages, to ordering at a McDonalds in Dutch.

The German contingent taught me about conditions for gamers in that country. It seems that German gamers are essentially underground-open "war" gaming is both rare and socially unacceptable. On the other hand, just about anything goes for the Dutch. (Although, they tell me the red light district in Hamburg is better than that in Amsterdam.) Belgium is much the same except their roads and signposts seem worse now than during the war.

Strangely, the weakest presence at the show was from France. I met at least a couple of fellows from Spain, at least two Scotsmen (Ellis Simpson & John Evans), numerous Englishmen, and some Italians, but I don't recall any from France. Perhaps the show's advertising was unable to penetrate France. Sara had the opportunity to meet the gentlemen from ORIFLAM which is a French distributor.

Discussions with Ulrich Blennemann (editor of *Der Musketier*) and Ellis Simpson (editor of *The Letter*) indicated an intelligent, capable, and sympathetic audience for wargames in Europe. However, besides the other problems, there appears to be an insufficient infrastructure (at least in Germany). It seems retail shops carrying games are quite rare in Europe, especially so in Germany. Distribution is fairly weak in a

number of European countries which leaves an opening for aggressive distributors (US or otherwise) who can push product into the assorted hobby shops on the continent.

The convention showed a good foundation for excellent success as it informs more Europeans of the existence of Wargaming. The population is well educated and likes many types of games. Were it not for the recent tragic, memory of what real war is like, Wargaming would be incredibly popular in Europe. With today's neofascist movements and the like, attempting to bring Wargaming out of the closet might well get a player labeled as "one of them." The conclusion is that the potential for enormous growth (beyond even the US market in size) is there, but recent history and current turmoil cloud its progress.

The trip was a resounding success and I hope we can go again next year. Many were responsible for our good time. Our customers in Europe went out of their way to show us uncommon hospitality. Michael Bruinsma took great care of us despite being so busy. Dirk Blennemann & Hans van Deventer planned and guided us on a tour of Aachen and the *Ardennes*, and the wives and girlfriends put up with and entertained us graciously. Now, if only imported German beer tasted like the real thing...

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Origins '93 Report

Convention Recap

by Dean N. Essig

Well, Origins 93 has come and gone. Besides the amazing collection of lovely women in Texas (not even counting the beauty pageant contestants), there isn't much to report.

I was worried that all the bad mouthing about the show that began after last year's fiasco would have the effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It did. The turn out was quite low (someone told me 3,000). Those that did come seemed an apprehensive bunch. A few, who had been predicting doom and gloom even showed up to ask me if their predictions had come true. Was the con as bad as they said it was going to be?!

If everyone had shown up to play or (at least) not been frightened away by the voices of gloom, the show might have turned out to be good. There was plenty of gaining space available. Although, I heard that they closed the hall too early at night for the more energetic players. While it was blisteringly hot outside, the hall itself was fairly comfortable.

John Reed ran demo games for us of *Austerlitz* and *Afrika*. He showed quite a few folks how to play them and had at least some fun and laughs himself. If anyone in the San Jose area can help us by setting up games next year and running things, let me know. We all need to work together to make the con a fun success for an. John did his part this year. We need to hear from others for next year.

Mike Haggett ran a *GB* tournament all day Saturday and all eight players had a good time. We hope to run quite a few of these events next year and establish "a con within the con" for you guys but, again, we need help to do so. Manpower is a critical asset for these things. I need to know who can be of help for next year's show soon so we can plan it out.

We learned a valuable lesson about company seminars -- only do one. Our seminars drew an ever dwindling crowd. Everyone showed up to the first one, had their questions answered, and then didn't need to go to any others. Only the true hard-core were at the last one. Lesson learned: Do but one seminar, my son.

The dealer area was pretty active. In terms of raw bucks, it was our best show ever.

We shared our booth with Scott Hamilton and his brother Doug from HPS (the makers of ADC). They took us out one night to pay off their portion of the booth--a good meal and a good time. Both are really nice fellows and I hope the industry will be seeing much of them.

I picked up a copy of *Armee du Nord* (which we have since played) and of a couple of new 3W games. (Yes, I'll own up to it--I bought *AGC* and *Blitz In the South*). I also bought a copy of *High Seas*, a dreadfully complex pirate game from a new company from Madison, WI (DRSG, Inc. PO Box 359 Madison WI 53701). The game is remarkable in that--- aside from being the Blackbeard version of *Airwar*--it put down its design roots while the designers served in Saudi Arabia during Desert Shield-Storm. They also had a small quarterly magazine, the name of which escapes me.

I was disappointed that GMT was unable to have completed copies of *Victory In the West* and *Lion of the North*. There were no counters for these. The rest of the parts were there and you could buy the game at a sizable discount (with the counters coming in the mail later). I wanted both, but couldn't see myself getting half the game now and the rest later. (I'm more impulsive than that) Oh well.

Strangely (or maybe not so), 3W and FGA-Rampart were not present to display their own wares. The Weekend Warrior represented 3W and Lou Zocchi had the market cornered on FGA products.

In the gaming areas (about 30% filled), Task Force Johnson did their usual tour-de-force of *Europa*. I saw Jim Dunnam's playtest maps for his Salerno game--a company-battalion level game that looks really good. There were many smaller games going on as well as a good number of miniature games (of all types and sizes). There were some excellent terrain layouts by GHQ and (I assume) the other miniature companies in the miniatures area.

Lastly, Sticky Combs and I played one mean game of *Intruder* in the van on the way home. (Stick, I should have won that last game. I had you dead to rights. Those aliens--even at their highest levels--were too easy to kill. But, I'm not bitter ...)

In summing up, I feel this year's show would have been a reasonably decent one had fewer people been dissuaded from coming because others said it was going to be horrible. I assume the "gloom guys" ("proof" in hand) will go home convinced of their ability to predict the future. They will start spreading words of doom about the show next year or perhaps the show itself. When someone tells you personally, or in print--that Origins is a disaster and how it's going to die, etc., just ask him what he is doing about it.

As I said last time, the show will fail unless we all take an active interest in making it live and be worth the trip to those who must plan vacation time, etc. If anyone is interested in running our tournaments or demo games, or signing up to set up and play

one of our games in our "con within a con", please contact me about it. It's not too late to turn the show around, if we take our best shot at trying to make it happen.

I don't know what will happen to the show. Right now it is in a self-defeating (and destroying) loop. The only people capable of breaking that loop are the players themselves see you on the other side.

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In Brief

Editorial

by Dean N. Essig

Once again, these have been interesting times for us. As usual, it is difficult to raise one's head rushing from one fire to another. I hate it when events happen so fast that I can't answer the question of what is happening!

Sara Essig on Tiger II at La Gleize. No I couldn't get her to pose the way I wanted...she even wouldn't got for the swimsuit option!



The most important event around here of late was the hiring of Mike Haggett as our production manager. His job (in addition to helping with other areas in all our peak periods) will be the muscling through of our games after the artwork stage to get them produced and ready for shipment. I Will still be handling all the artwork-Mike will handle the post-artwork production. That job requires a lot of leg work and effort in pestering various producers into getting the job done on time. For the fall games, I will work with Mike to show him the ropes. By next year, I should be able to hand him the artwork and let him rim with it. The upshot is that we should be able to up the number of games we can produce each year (to about 6) so that games which seem to be languishing on the schedule can see the light of day faster.

The all-volunteer ADC effort is finally beginning to pick up steam. We have a master symbol set for the CWB (thanks to a whole gang of guys on Prodigy The initial efforts at inputting have begun. The number of people volunteering to input will make it tough for us to get them all done. We need more in putters! If anyone out there is interested in helping in this effort, give me a ring. In the same vein we all owe a great debt of thanks to Rick Delaparra, John Kincaid, and Gerry Palmer who put in all the effort required to make the symbol set-thanks, guys! We all appreciate it; you made it happen.

Steve Newhouse showed off his Game Assistance Program (G-2, see the article this issue) at Origins. The program worked rapidly through the game's tables to tell you the results as well as update the Loss Charts for you. My concern regarding this sort of program is the need to fill in all the modifier information so the machine gets the right answers. Steve's program worked around this matter by making all the modifiers a push-button effort. You click the ones you want with the mouse. (I think it works using just cursor keys, although more clumsily, to be sure.) I might even learn to endure fire combats again. I encourage everyone who hates to keep track of his Loss Charts to pick up a copy. At the time of this writing, the final product has not yet arrived, but it should be before Autumn.

The game production schedule has had some interesting events occur recently. The surprise addition of *GD '40* to the line up for this year is the big one. At this writing we are in the middle of playtesting and having a blast. I chose this game to add to the series at this point because its combined arms feel will showcase the new 3rd edition rules better than *Matanikau* can alone. I decided to do both-I hope I will survive the production process.

At one (we did too many-next year there will only be one!!!) of the seminars at Origins, someone raised the question of why we don't publish the number of votes with each game on the Games Rating Chart. My reasoning was that I didn't want to encourage "spot voting" for, or against, games with fewer votes. In this issue, I'm going to give it a shot and I'll rely on your honesty to keep your votes to the games you care about, and not make surgical strikes.

Also, a couple of players asked about the different versions of our series rules (as they developed over the years) and what each one was. Here is a complete rundown of each version and how it changed (or will change) from earlier versions:

CWB

First Edition: Came in *ITQF*, *Thunder I*, and *August Fury*

First Edition with 2nd Edition Bridge: Came with *BV*, it included a sneak preview at some of the 2nd Edition changes.

2nd Edition: Came with *BRS*. A complete rewrite of the original with limited actual rule changes to tighten those rules to a higher standard.

2nd Edition, Revised: Came with *P-ville*, *EAW*, and *Thunder II*. Also due out with *Murfreesboro* next year. This version corrected some errata and typos from the 2nd Edition.

TCS

First Edition: Came in *Bloody 110*.

2nd Edition: Came in *Obj:Schmidt* and *FEW*. Same as the First edition with the

addition of the Miller Tables.

version 3.0: Due out with *GD '40* and *Matanikau*. A reworking of these rules-from the ground up-to streamline play.

OCS

Version 1.0: Came in *GB*.

Version 1.5: Due to come out with *EatG*. This will include all errata from version 1.0 as well as a handful of changes to eliminate certain gamey techniques and other things noticed in repeated play of *GB* and in the playtests of *EatG*.

SCS

Version 1.0: Came out in *SP*.

Version 1.5: Came out in *Afrika*. Contains a couple of rules changes (Supply Phase position in the Sequence of Play and ZOC costs for entry instead of exit).

Version 1.6: Due out in *The Ardennes*. This will contain corrections for errata in version 1.5, but no actual changes.

NBS

Version 1.0: Came out in *Austerlitz*.

Version 1.5: Due out with 2nd NBS game, same as version 1.0 with errata corrected.

As you can see, except for the TCS ver 3.0, the above have been revisions made to insert corrections due to errata or to otherwise tighten up the system. I have also started to use the system of versions used in the computer software industry to keep it all in order. The .5 and other tenth increment changes are all additions of minor errata and the like. The one's version numbers represent large rewrites and the like. Note that in the new system, the "2nd edition TCS" hardly qualifies as a 2nd edition.

This process of correction will rapidly hit the point where each series has the tightest set of rules we are capable of making. It is not an ever-ending, spiral of change, but a continual re-integration of your comments, questions, and ideas. We prefer to correct mistakes we make, instead of ignoring them (leaving you with the problem). We think you would prefer to have these things corrected, so that the latest series rules contain fewer and fewer errors as time passes. That will make each series the end product of our own playtesting as well as the critical eyes of the many thousands of you who are playing these games. We all benefit in the end.

Bob Schindler is opening what I like to refer to (in jest) as "Bob's Discount House of Bruised Game Parts." He has purchased a nearly complete mix of our 2nd quality game parts--all the counters rejected by inspectors and remnant parts (such as rulebooks and maps) which were left over when each game is put together. These parts would generally get recycled. Bob--who was helping with game assembly at the

time--jumped up and said, "Hey, I bet guys would be interested in getting these parts so they could have spares or extras of things." So, he is now in business selling these parts at the best prices he can manage. These aren't first rate parts. However, if you're looking for extra markers, another copy of a crusty old rule book, or a spare map so you can keep your good one pristine ... he's your man. Not all parts are available, so send to Bob for a listing.

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Out Brief

Just Where DOES the FUN Come From???

by Dean N. Essig

A while back, I read an editorial in another game magazine that touted "closure" as the event which causes a game to be fun. The writer felt that it is the end of the game and the determination of who won that is the fun of our hobby. The writer used this view to "prove" that games should be playable in one quick sitting. That way one player or the other would win (and, therefore, have fun) and that would be it. Naturally, such games should be very simple so that no heavy thought need be brought to the game. (Let's not trouble the guys in the Thinking-man's Hobby with having to think!) The game would boil down to a handful of turns where one strives to get 3:1 regularly, and keep his opponent from doing so in return. This should be the fun of wargames...

Maybe for some people.

Aside from these guys (who have every right to like their kind of game, don't get me wrong), what gives the rest of us fun in these games? I contend it comes from the process of play. It springs from the plans you devise and how you execute them against an enemy who is skilled and willful of his own plans and in opposing yours. The fun comes from analyzing the enemy's strengths and weaknesses, in coming up with a plan to attack them, and doing so with the least amount of exertion possible. Further enjoyment comes from rolling the plan into action and watching your opponent scramble to meet the threat. Likewise, should the plan stumble or even fail, you can learn new methods to apply next time that might work better.

In other words, the fun comes from the play of the game against a skilled and pitiless opponent who would like nothing more than to hand you your head. Perhaps you'll come out on top, perhaps not--regardless, a match between two excellent players will bring a great deal of fun. In fact the fan of the play will be so much that in a long game, the matter of who won or lost isn't very important. After all, you were so busy trying to win (and having fun doing so) that the actual victory might come as an anticlimax.

Here are two examples of play. Decide for yourself which would be more fun.

In a heated contest of a large game, two fairly evenly matched players go head to head-

each making and responding with multiple examples of masterful play. They play the game over an extended time with each side taking time between sessions to reexamine his position and that of the enemy. The players consult various historical texts of what really happened (what worked and what didn't). Thus, they return to each session ready to apply the analysis done at leisure when each player contemplated the game and how to approach it. The end of the game may be some time in the future, depending on the available time and how big the "bite-sized" chunks of play are. In the end, one player loses, the other wins.

In the other game, which will end after a couple of hours (the length of perhaps one session above), the two players pop each other a few times. They run around the map some, and end by being the last guy to get a unit into hex 1323. Sure, they can come back next week and run the entire game again with some new scheme to win. However, they can hardly develop new plans based upon an evolving situation of their own making. It reminds me of a single pitch and swing in baseball--the batter either hits the thing, or he doesn't. There is no time to examine the swing to determine that it is a little off and to adjust. The best the batter who misses can do is to step up to the plate and try again.

I'll be the first to admit that we need both styles of game. Some guys just don't have the space to leave something set up for extended periods. As one with small children and pets, I know where they are coming from. The time factor is another issue. If a guy has the space to leave something undisturbed for extended periods, time should not be an issue. If you have two hours a week to play the quick game, you can find the time to devote that period to the larger game in two hour blocks. No one I know tries to run all the way through a large game in one sitting. So, I can only infer that it is lack of space that decides how large of a game you can attempt. I know of numerous large *Europa* games that have even run for years of play (a weekend here, a weekend there). Where space isn't a problem time ceases to be important. Where space is a problem, time is critical.

Thankfully, games of all sizes and times of play are being produced these days. My company has pursued both ways-although the two-hour or less crowd doesn't have much to find from us. As always we strive for a mix. It is unfortunate that so many infer from our "Up & Coming" columns that we are "drifting into more larger games". They see this as a trend (which invariably brings back ghosts of SPI and the like). What they fail to understand is that the larger games take much longer to generate and that they show upon the radar screen years before the smaller ones. The net effect is that the large games show up on the list years in advance, mid many smaller ones that will come out much earlier don't. That, of course, causes the illusion of numerous large games in proportion to the small ones.

So, what does bring about the fun of the games we love? I feel it is the free competition on an intellectual level with like-minded people. It is the process of play. Another way of looking at it is a musical analogy. The "closure" concept says that a person enjoys music because he feels good when the song ends. My version is that

you enjoy the music while it's happening. Take your pick.

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

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Up & Coming

New Products 1993

by Dean N. Essig

Projects at this Time...

Matanikau

TCS. #4 Nov 1993 Designer: Sam Simons. \$34.00 Attacks of the Marines in November 1942 around the *Matanikau* River, Guadalcanal.

GD '40

TCS #5 Nov 1993 Designer: Wig Graves. \$36.00 The defense of the Sedan Bridgehead by the Infantry Regiment Grossdeutschland in May, 1940. Wig gave this to me at Origins this year and it looked so well done that we went directly into heavy playtesting so as to bring it out right away.

The Ardennes

SCS #3 March 1994 Designer: Dean Essig \$32.00 The Battle of the Bulge for the SCS, by popular request.

Enemy at the Gates

OCS #2 Origins 1994 Designer: Dean Essig \$49.00 The operations of Army Group South (and B, Don, etc.) from the encirclement of Stalingrad through the spring of 1943.

Murfreesboro Enemy at the Gates CWB #8 September, 1994 Designer: Dave Powell \$32.00 The Battle of Stone's River for the CWB on one map.

Yom Kippur

SCS. Designer: Al Sandrik. \$25.00 The Battle for the Sinai, 1973 Al is back! The game has arrived. Look for this either with *EatG* or *Murfreesboro*.

Hunters from the Sky

TCS #6 November, 1994 Designer: Wig Graves \$36.00 The Battle for the Maleme Airfield, Crete.

In Development

These games have physically arrived on our door step and will be integrated into the publication schedule as soon as we can give them a thorough going over. None have a date yet, but are closer than those listed in *The Backburner*.

The Seven Days

CWB. Designer: Dave Powell. This set of games was postponed one year to allow for the smaller *Murfreesboro* game to slip into the schedule. The first game might be out in 1995.

Black Wednesday: The Battle of Krasni Bor

TCS. Designer: David Friedrichs. The defense of the Spanish Blue Division against the usual Soviet onslaught. Look for this in 1996.

Arracourt

TCS. Designer: James Meldrum. To be published after *Black Wednesday*.

A Frozen Hell

TCS. Designer: AJ Wambold. A battle in the Russo-Finnish War, 1940. Specifically, the Battle of Tolvajarvi, December, 1939. Al, I still need those historical and designer's notes...

Atlanta

CWB. Designer: John Gilmer, Jr. Dave will have this one ready to follow on the heels of *The Seven Days*.

Drive on Paris

SCS. Designer: Al Wambold. Al has delivered a fine game of the 1914 drive into France. This one may be teamed up with Jim Meldrum's *Plan 1919* if we can work out the bugs and meld the two into a decent package. Look for one or both of these in 1995.

Glory Enough

CWB . Designer: Jerry White. Jerry made the needed changes to this game and it will enter the schedule after *Atlanta*. It covers the battles of Winchester and Cedar Creek.

Champion's Hill

CWB. Designer: Ken Jacobsen. Ken submitted a corrected version of this game just now. Everything looks good and it will enter the CWB lineup about the same time as *Glory Enough*.

Friedland

NBS. Designer: David Powell. This might be the second in the NBS, but if Dave can find his map sources, *Marnego* might beat it out for the number 2 Slot

The Back Burner...

(None have a date yet)

The games below are "in the works" and any of them may be potential releases in the next few years. It is only provided as information for your use. As these games are finished, they will be assigned publication dates in the year after acceptance-if a date is available. Given our schedule, it may be a while before any particular one of these sees the light of day.

April's Harvest

CWB. Designer: Al Wambold. Shiloh. I still haven't seen this one come in.

North Africa

OCS. Designer: Dean N. Essig. This game would cover the entire campaign in *North Africa* on five maps, 1940 until early 1943. This one has been postponed and I won't guess when I'll be able to get back to work on it.

Hube's Pocket

OCS. Designer: David Friedrichs. This will be an OCS game covering the battles of the 1st Panzer Army to save itself in February, 1944. The battle for the Korsun Pocket will also be included in this action, but by itself it is quite small.

Marengo

NBS. Designer: David Powell. Napoleonic Brigade Series Game number three or it might jump to #2 depending on how things go. There is an outside chance that *Marengo* might make it onto the 1994 schedule as the number 2 game-Napoleonic enthusiasts: Cross your fingers!

Tunisia

OCS. Designer: Dean Essig. This will be a two-map game covering the final days in Africa. It will be the third OCS game, unless Dave Demko shows up with Sicily before then or Dave Friedrichs does the same with his game...

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Letters

Letters to the Editor

by the readers

I will be unable to attend this year's Origins in Ft. Worth, Texas owing largely to the distances involved and the July 4th weekend. I read with considerable interest your comments regarding the future of the Origins conventions in Operations #8. My own experience (since 1980) has been that the most successful Origins were those held in Baltimore in conjunction with Atlanticon. The 1991 Origins, for example, was quite good. I would hate to see Origins topple because of dissatisfaction among the publishers and hobbyists.

I suppose I am one of those gamers who does not equate successful conventions with game and tournament play. I play largely solitaire (except when I can manage a local opponent or two on a weekend), and value the conventions for reasons that go beyond competitive play. For me, the conventions are best described as "enthusiasm boosters" for my involvement in the hobby. I've been playing games since my high school days (early 1960's and the era of *D-Day*, *Afrika Korps*, and *Gettysburg*), and have maintained a largely solitaire enjoyment of the designs for about 30 years. The conventions provide me with an occasional reminder that I am not alone in this hobby. I find it absolutely thrilling simply to be in the midst of so many fellow enthusiasts who have such an obvious love for the play, study, discussion, and collection of the games, magazines, etc. My favorite locations at the conventions are the dealers' area and the seminars. I fear that the more competitive-styled gathers (Avaloncon and, perhaps, the "retreat" that you are promoting in September) will gradually siphon off the attendance at larger affairs such as Origins or Atlanticon. The larger gatherings are (for me, at least) an "event" that "restarts my engine" whenever I am able to attend.

I quite agree, however, that the combined Gen Con/Origins gatherings are questionable. My last such attendance at one of these occurred in 1988 in Milwaukee. I was shocked and dismayed at the rather cavalier treatment accorded the "historical gaming" side of the hobby. I certainly don't mind the FRP/Sci-fi arm of the hobby (although I don't have any interest in it), and enjoy seeing anyone delve into their hobby as do their devotees. But when I attend a "wargaming convention," I expect to see board-wargaming have a reasonable presence. Unfortunately, the Gen Con/Origins combinations do not provide it.

I had hoped to at least attend Atlanticon this June, but academic involvements will

prevent me from doing so. I hope to attend next year's Atlaticon (1994), assuming that Origins is again at a distant location for me. I certainly will attend Origins 1995, which, I believe, maybe back in the Baltimore Convention Center. Of course, it is anyone's guess as to whether or not Origins will survive the coming years.

I fully intend to remain an active consumer, player, and hobby devotee for another 30 years or so (although I'm into reading glasses now at 46!) I realize that I may have to do so without attending future conventions. Still, I did not enter the hobby in an era of conventions and my interest in the hobby will not wane should the conventions pass.

So long as I have access to enjoyable games, periodicals, and fellow enthusiasts, I will continue to have a good time.

--TA. Baney, Waterbury, CT

Dear Gamers,

Enclosed is an additional \$5.00 for your most recent prepublication offer.

I'm not in the game publishing business and do not know the ins and outs of game manufacturing. But, it seems to me your return of my pre-publication order for a mere \$5.00 is not a sound business practice. Is there a sound business reason for limiting the prepublication offer to the first 250? If so, perhaps you should consider devoting a few paragraphs in Operations for an explanation. [*Ed. Note: Sure will, see below.*]

My initial reaction to my returned check was "screw it." If my \$55 wasn't enough for you, I'll support my local store and buy the game there. Most likely, I'd only buy the *Afrika* game then, as my interests in Napoleonic games is rather low. Will The Gamers be better off financially by accepting my initial \$55 directly, regardless of how many others ordered the two games, or will your results be better after my purchase of only one game through a retailer?

Financial considerations aside, isn't your return of my order, and probably others, unusual for a company which leads the industry in service and public relations? And, for only \$5.00?

You may think either question is moot as I am sending an additional \$5. However, this \$5 allows me to add my own two cents.

--J. Alsen, St. Paul, MN

We don't get many letters like Mr. Alsen's. His brings up a number of important points which I'm sure he (and others) would like me to address.

Pre-pubs are one part of the equation which makes this company work. They provide cash when it is needed to pay off bills that come due about the time the game goes out the door. At that point, the distributor payments are at least a month away.

We allow 250 copies to go out pre-pub (a point Mr. Alsen and others are painfully aware of as we had to send some orders back this time--for the first time, I might add). We have done this since the very beginning for one simple reason. We are not in the business of competing with our retailers for your dollars. To do so would encourage retail outlets to dump our line (or at least buy minimally) and they would be perfectly justified in doing so. We drew the line to protect them (and the many sales they give us) and we will stick to it.

While we might sell 250 copies pre-pub, our distributors move something like 1,800 to 2,000 (2,500 in the case of Afrika!) in the first couple of weeks of a game's life. The funds those sales generate are what drives the engine here. We use the pre-pub money to take the edge off of some of the early production bills. The distributor invoices provide us the money we survive on.

If we were out for the quick buck, we would try to sell as many pre-pubs as we could lay our hands on. However, we try to think long term. The growth of our distribution and retail markets by the consistent good-will we try to show by not taking advantage of our ability to sell lots of games by pre-pub, will pay off inuch more over time.

In any event, we decidedly do not returnpre-pubs to "try to get the additional \$5." We hold the line to protect our retailers (the guys in the trenches) and, hence, protect our long term growth.

Besides enclosing my votes for your games list, I wanted to comment on a certain trend that is happening in the industry. I believe this trend has a lot to do with our (the players) discontentment than with loyalty induced bias. While reacquainting myself with the hobby, I have purchased many updated and new games. While I am pleased with most of my purchases, I have come across a few companies whom I have no desire to ever purchase another title from. I have also found a few game stores I will no longer support. Most of this has to do with the fact that I purchase historical wargames and not the role playing or expensive "module" games. By "module", I refer to those games that the first game is required to play the next, and the next is required to play the one after that. Though I am a customer of these people, their interest is obviously in the "money maker" category. As a customer, I cannot understand why I am so poorly treated by these people. After all, I am removing "dead stock" from their shelves, so that they may restock all of their favorites.

The articles written by Dave Powell and yourself about the industry have proved enlightening, yet they do lack the perspective of the customer. This is not intended as an insult. I would like to point out a few things that I the customer, look for when purchasing a game today. My five criteria are:

- 1) Production quality: AH pieces included (maps, counters, rules, etc.) are legible, properly cut, and capable of standing "normal" usage.
- 2) Rules clarity: The rules are easy to understand and legible, without tons of errata.
- 3) Playability: Can the game be played repeatedly with differing results? There is nothing worse for a game than to have only one way to win it.
- 4) Customer support: Will I get any questions or problems resolved without hassles?
- 5) Company philosophy: What direction is the manufacturer heading? Will they support this product after release, or dump it?

These points help me pick the games that my friends and I will enjoy, while providing the best value for our hard-earned money. My belief is that if a company does not want to support their product, then they don't want my money. This is exemplified by my local game store. The employees there have decided that role playing games are "it." My type of gamer is made to feel very unwelcome and fewer and fewer of the historical wargame products are carried. This includes magazines, blank die-cut counters, blank hex sheets, and storage trays for counters. Since their "money" is tied up in role playing games, I'll mail order for my games. This attitude is rampant among the larger game companies. I feel (and I'm sure other gamers do, too) that the smaller specialized manufacturers give me the best value for my hardwon dollar. Of course, there are always a few who do not live up to that expectation. As FGA-Rampart is proving, the dedicated gamer will not blindly stand by.

A good product with excellent support will win out every time.

--M. Shanovich, Milwaukee, WI

The hobby has an embarrassment of riches. There are so many good games out that they overshadow each other.

Example: In 1992 we got *Bloody Roads South*. But then a summertime two-pack of Eastern Front games from The Gamers came along and distracted us. Now, it doesn't seem *BRS* is getting the attention it deserves.

This year, we got the "double-A battery," *Afrika* and *Austerlitz* simultaneously. Cripes, I haven't even punched my copy of *Austerlitz* yet, being so absorbed by *Afrika*. But I predict that the NBS game will be more talked about, once everyone gets around to it. Look at how long it took the hobby press to digest *Guderian's Blitzkrieg*.

Speaking of *Guderian*, I'm still a bit stunned that *Stalingrad Pocket* beat it for best WW2 board game. Sure, *SP* was a solid game, but *GB* is outstanding. With its good historicity and excellent replay value, *Stalingrad* deserves its popularity, but it also needed a dose of Okmed D'Ivad's pet peeve--post publication development. Nevertheless, the game gained its following before Dean repaired the victory conditions.

Blame the CSR ballot for not letting us weight our first second, and third choices in each category. I voted for *BRS*, *Lee's Greatest Gamble*, and *SPQR* (in that order of preference) for best pre-WW2 game. Likewise, I went for both *GB* and *SP* (along with *Victory in Normandy*) --one each of small, medium, and large--in their category. Funny how I ended up voting down my personal favorites.

These results helped put the Charlies in perspective: I'm not really to be talked out of my opinions by vox populi. The good news is that voting went a bit askew (as I see it) because of an overabundance of good games, and not a lack.

--D. Demko, Atlanta, GA

I've recently bought a few back issues of yours. In perusing a few articles on Civil War tactics, I've come across the recurring method of attacking in a succession of lines.

Now a brigade advancing with a second brigade behind it in support is an easy tactic to reflect in your CWB games, yet what about brigades attacking side by side in regimental lines (i.e. Operations #5, page 5 fig 2). The distance between the first and second lines would be unchanged, therefore needing two hexes to deploy a brigade in regimental echelon.

So how about using "extended line" markers to deploy a brigade in two lines? Your extended line rules have been clearly explained in Q&A as not restricting a brigade when it comes to deploying into extended lines. They are there to make sure no ambiguity exists between the extended line and its parent. By placing an extended line marker either in front or behind a unit (again with the arrow identifying the parent), and ignoring the extended line marker's depiction of facing (the parent gives the true facing of the formation), no additional rules need be modified, except (perhaps) that a brigade must retreat back into the hex containing the extended line should it be forced to retreat.

Anyway, maybe the suggestion has already been made to you, or its already part of the system and has escaped my understanding. (Napoleonics is my true fascination, yet The Gamers are single handedly responsible for my new passion in Civil War history.)

I look forward to the next Operations and future wonderful games.

--J. Tessier-Lavigne, East York, ONT Canada

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Game Rating Chart

All Companies' Products

by the readers

Rating -- Votes -- Game (Manufacturer)

4.775 71 Guderian's Blitzkrieg (The Gamers)
4.759 166 *Thunder at the Crossroads* 11 (The Gamers)
4.692 91 *Austerlitz* (The Gamers)
4.690 29 Omaha (The Gamers)
4.676 34 *Bloody Roads South* (The Gamers)
4.603 141 *Afrika* (Me Gamers)
4.571 21 *SPQR* (GMT)
4.539 197 *Embrace an Angry Wind* (The Gamers)
4.491 222 Perryville (Me Gamers)
4.442 43 *Thunder at the Crossroads I* (The Gamers)
4.439 16 *Stonewall Jackson's Way* (AH)
4.419 31 *Alexander* (GMT)
4.378 37 *Barren Victory* (The Gamers)
4.321 28 *The Korean War* (Victory)
4.300 10 *Chickamauga* (West End)
4.286 21 *5th Fleet* (Victory)
4.267 15 *Devil's Den* (AH)
4.262 42 *Bloody 110th* (The Gamers)
4.231 26 *RAF* (West End)
4.222 9 *Thunderbolt-Apache Leader* (GMT)
4.217 23 *Horent Leader* (GMT)
4.183 115 *Stalingrad Pocket* (The Gamers)
4.167 12 *White Death* (GDW)
4.154 26 *7th Fleet* (Victory)
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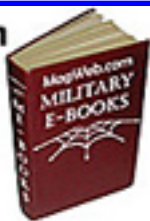


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