

Banzai!!

The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

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Club Notes and Ladder Standings

Since the last newsletter I have gotten calls from two new potential club members. That brings the total number of contacts to 5 since last December when the first issue came out. It's very gratifying indeed, and shows that we can in fact expand our club if we work at it. Let's all do our best to make new club members feel welcome, and also to help them get better at playing the game.

Recent Results (since the last newsletter)

Seningen (Amer) def Hailey (Germ) in The Hand of Fate
Gerstenberg (Germ) def Shostak (Russ) in The Corridor
Purnell (Amer) def K Woller (Germ) in Probing the Villas
Shostak (Germ) def Toreki (Russ) in Acts of Defiance
Hailey (Amer) def Knatcher (Germ) in Defiance on Hill 30
K Woller (Germ) def Gerstenberg (Part) in The Liberation of Tulle
Smith (Russ) def Hailey (Germ) in The Awakening of Spring
Hailey (Germ) def Smith (Amer) in Lash Out
Smith (Germ) def Lester (Belg) in Toujours l'Audace
Smith (Germ) def Lester (Brit) in The Strassengabel Strongpoint
Smith (Germ) def Lester (Brit) in Tussle at Thomashof
Smith (Ital) def O'Quin (Amer) in An Aborted Counterattack
Fritz (Germ) def Lester (Brit) in Going to Church
Seningen (Germ) def Gerstenberg (Russ) in At the Point
Seningen (Russ) def Gerstenberg (Germ) in At the Point
Shostak (Fren) def Hively (Jap) in The Army at the End of the World

The last club meeting was held at Chas Smith's place on Saturday, August 17. Play got started around 10:30. Attendance was good, with quite a few ladder matches played. Mike Seningen, still riding out the momentum from his tournament victory, got a little revenge against Eric Gerstenberg by taking him out in both sides of a double header in At the Point. Beginners George Fritz and Rodney Lester clashed in Going to Church, with Fritz's Germans prevailing. Shostak and Hively got down to business with the unusual scenario The Army at the End of the World, featuring a Japanese attack on a fortified French position on a hill in Vietnam in 1940. Matt's French rebuffed the Japanese with the help of some really hot machine gun fire directed by a 9-2. Chas Smith's Italians stopped Jack O'Quin's Americans in An Aborted Counterattack. Given that the last game still had a ways to go, Shostak, Hively, and Fritz played Peiper's Last Gasp as a three-person scenario. The highlight was when a 90L took out the King Tiger from 36 hexes away with a critical hit. Grilled burgers and dogs kept our intrepid cardboard pushers sated for the day. This was yet another fun, successful club meeting. Thanks to Chas Smith for hosting.

Tactical Tips: Concealment

Chas Smith

I am writing this article based on what I observed, used, and learned about concealment at the tournament. I will discuss defensive methods of concealment and its employment, and how to break up a concealed defender when attacking.

As a defender, using and maintaining your concealment is critical for victory. First, place your dummies in areas of mutual support with real units. This makes it less likely that the attacker will pinpoint your dummies too early. It will also force him to shoot at more stacks before he will be free to move in the open. If possible, rotate units that are concealed from a second line position to your front, and move the units in the front that have lost their concealment back so they can regain it. This will force the attacker to shoot at concealed stacks again. The units that moved back and regained concealment can then be used in the manner described above in your next turn.

As a defender in a large scenario, use a lot of concealment counters in one big stack. Each of the counters underneath can then assault move or advance out with an additional concealment counter placed on top as if it were a real unit. This can make it difficult for the attacker to know which stacks are dummies or squads. It could also be used to make more possible 'victims' by placing them around your best leader and allowing them to take the sniper attacks rather than that 9-2 that is the anchor of the defense.

During the tournament, I saw people shooting as the defender at very low odds which resulted in their early loss of concealment and with no effect on the attacker. Some players used all of their OB provided concealment counters on top of units and created no dummy stacks. These methods strip the defender of his ability to delay and ultimately lead to defeat.

As an attacker facing a good defensive setup, stripping that concealment may seem difficult. There is no sure way of safely taking it away success fully, but here are some tips. First, most defenders shoot at the first thing they see, thereby dropping their concealment to fire and making dummy stacks stand out like sore thumbs. An example is when an enemy stack shoots at 4+1, but then another one does not take a 4-1 or -2 shot. You can immediately strip concealment by attempting to enter the hex with your own infantry, but it could be costly if something is there. A tank that enters an enemy hex does not immediately strip concealment, but even if the defender conducts no concealment loss activity he will lose it at the end of the attacker's movement phase. Unfortunately, your tank is susceptible to some dangerous LATW or close combat.

In absolutely no way have I discussed all the parameters of concealment. I saw some beginners and even a few experienced players making some basic errors in the use of their concealment and this article is more directed at informing the beginner on some tactics and refreshing the old timer's memories.

Fireside Chat: Wintergewitter

Matt Shostak, Tom Repetti, Tim Wilson, Dade Cariaga, Rodney Kinney

(The next best thing to playing ASL is talking about ASL. The following allows you to be a fly on the wall for a roundtable discussion of ASL scenario A70 Wintergewitter.)

[Matt] Any of you fellas ever play Wintergewitter? What a deceptive scenario! I played it a couple weeks ago against one of the newbies in our club, and as the Germans I was able to completely wipe out all his forces while losing only a halftrack. Then last night I played a much more experienced player, but was also able to glide to a relatively easy win. This is very deceptive, in my opinion, because with only 3.5 squads it's hard to see how the Germans can clean the Russians out. Now I have to admit that last night I was helped by the fact that I took out all 3 T34s frontally with APCR shots (one from a 75L and 2 from a 50L). I'm a bit confused as to what the Russians can do. It appears that their infantry can do nothing about the fact that they are going to be surrounded by turn 2 and have a difficult time routing. Also, it appears that the T34's will have to brave a slight chance of being hit as they enter if the German plays his cards right. In last night's game, I had a PzIV go all the way down the left flank and get hull down in the wadi; he bagged one of the T34s, needing about a 5 to hit. I think I have the basic idea of what the Germans are supposed to do, but what are the Russians supposed to do?

[Tim] It's been several months since I've played this one, but I'll try to dredge up some worthwhile info. The only time I played this one I lost a real nail biter as the Germans. My basic strategy was this: - Infantry, 1/2 tracks and the PzIVE cleared out the town with relatively little difficulty. The Pz IIIs and IVHs (?) grabbed HD positions in the wadi. Unfortunately they didn't have any luck with APCR and ended up relying on good'ol AP, which turned out to be most unfortunate.

To my mind the German player has to be pretty canny with his armor and take every opportunity to use Bounding First Fire to your advantage. Both (against the Russian armor and infantry).

The Russian player has to use his tanks somewhat to slow down the German infantry and to take out any armored target that presents itself. Then they need to insure that at least one tank is within the victory area at the end game.

This is pretty much how my game turned out. Harold's Russian infantry was basically toast by turn 3. He'd taken out one of my tanks, I think a PzIII and I'd maybe immobilized one of his outside of the victory area and of course at this point I'd used up all my special ammo. On the last turn Harold had 1 T-34, in motion within the v-area. I had 4 chances at rear shots using BFF, 2 of which were IF. 2 shots from a IVH and another 2 from the IVE, which didn't have any HEAT. I also had the 9-2 and 1.5 squads advance into CC with the Russian beast. Needless to say I didn't hit it with my armor and I gacked the CC roll. But in a game as close as this one was, who cares. Now I've seen this scenario played 4 or 5 times and it seems like it plays out pretty evenly. I always thought that it's trickier to play as the Germans, as they need to be pretty aggressive, but not stupidly so. It is certainly a scenario I'd play again.

[Repetti] Ooh! OOH! Mister Kotter! Me! ME! Call on me!

Them 3.5 squads are pretty damn well-led. Get them into the town safely and just assault fire till the lights turn out. I've been the R's twice here, and both times the Russian infantry had a boring time till the end. If the German infantry gives you shots, take them, but otherwise it's the Mega-Skulk Retain Concealment kind of thing.

[With regard to the decent chance of hitting entering Russian armor] Yes, if the German surrounds the town with his armor. That's a nice strategy, but Rodney whupped me without doing this. He put on a bounding fire clinic and showed me how turreted PzIII's with CE Armor Leaders really kick butt when going against BU T-34's.

Eventually, the tank battle does have to be joined, and if the Germans get APCR, they do well. If they don't, they have to mind their P's and Q's, and the Russian needs to make his shots count. Gotta set the T-34's where they can mutually support each other and keep the Pz's from swarming an individual tank. It can be done, but you have to be careful.

[With regard to going hulldown in the wadi] Yep, Jazz did the very same thing to me. I didn't realize how good a shot it was. The Russians really can't lose a tank this way.

I don't have it figured out yet. Their ATR needs to be kept in the hands of a GO unit so as to keep the German HT's from getting overly bold. Start it up front just in case the German gets careless with a HT, but then make sure it stays around as long as possible.

I think the Russian infantry just needs to retain concealment as long as possible and make the German infantry be careful in their assault. One bad roll with FFNAM/FFMO and the German infantry is crippled. Even if they succeed in slowing down the German infantry, though, the combination of the HT's and infantry and the German tanks will still make the end game a near-thing for the Russians. Those who lose concealment will be in a Stand and Die situation, hopefully buying time for other units.

Rodney showed me how this is really a tank battle. Whoever wins that will win the game; can you imagine either side winning when the other side has the only GO tank left? So the Russians need to hope their infantry can hold off while the tank battle is resolved.

Tank-wise, what the Russians do depends on what the Germans do. A good aggressive German will go for that hull down position you described above, and you need to not let that PzIII kill a T-34 on its turn of entry. It's worth the extra delay just to stay out of its LOS.

Jazz surrounded the town with HT's and Pz's and rained fire from all angles; Rodney went more frontally with the Pz's. Both worked pretty well. Against both opponents, I sent one T-34 to guard the Russian left and the other 2 toward the right. In retrospect, I think keeping all 3 tanks together would be better because they need to mutually support each other so much. Don't just trundle up and give the Germans 2 fire opportunities in a row (dfire and prep); move up to positions where your cmg's can affect the infantry battle but stay out of LOS of the Pz's. Let them come to you and use your numbers and the sequence of play to get off a bunch of shots. Hopefully you can trade 2 tanks for 1. And watch that bounding fire!

I like putting a T-34 in the Rubble hex, even though RK shot it to hell with an amazingly lucky bounding fire shot :-). The wall hex in the middle of town is also good, albeit probably temporary. Don't know if the Russian is one better served by having the tank battle take place in the town or outside of it. In the town offers better TEM and the hull-down hex, but outside the town offers better mutual fire support.

Hard to say. I'm 1-1 as the Russians, but the win was a close one and the loss was a butt-kicker.

Regardless, this is a neat scenario. Neat interaction of infantry and armor, and like you said, deceptively strong German infantry. If your German opponent understands how to use infantry, HT's, and armor in the attack vs. infantry and armor, you're probably hosed. If he's weak in any of those departments, he won't take advantage of how they leverage each other and the Russian has a weight lifted off his back.

[Matt] Ah, so apparently you and Wilson have both played it.

[Repetti] Oh fine, so Timbo sends YOU his reply but I don't get to hear his sage wisdom. Fine.

[Matt] I must say, I also got lucky on one other key point. I drove my HT, 9-2, dmMMG, 548 up and he took an ATR shot and missed. I then drove right up next to him and gave him a 6 +0 in the AFPPh, plus other shots with a PzIV and PzIII, breaking his 8-1 but not harming the ATR half squad. His next shot was an 11 to hit and about a 7 to kill. He hit, but got no kill. Very lucky for me. I shouldn't have risked my most valuable piece in such a way.

[Repetti] Very lucky for you; I'd have been salivating as the Russian.

[Matt] As to the hull down position, like the wall in the center of town, I was able to put my PzIV with the 75* there on turn 2.

[Repetti] The Russian infantry should have been threatening street fighting against this move; on the face of it it seems overly risky. Rodney sent the 75* PzIV up close and personal against my front line boys and paid the price for it in CC. I'm sure my boys got lucky, though.

[Matt] I really like the surround the town strategy, since preventing rout paths pays such huge dividends.

[Repetti] Yes, but what would you do if the T-34's all came in on one side?

[Matt] I would like to know more about Rodney's BFF clinic with leader-led PzIIIs.

[Repetti] I would like to forget :-)

[Matt] I never would have thought to put the leader in a PzIII, since there are PzIVs with better movement, a better gun, and the same machine guns.

[Repetti] Maybe I'm remembering wrong; I think I am. The leader was in a IV.

[Matt] But what exactly were his swarming tactics like?

[Tom] It was awful, officer, just awful... :-)

In his turn 2, he didn't really cover the flanks all that strongly; I think he had all the tanks pretty much lined up on his side of town, with preference to his left. I brought a T-34 up to W8 (??) behind the hedge so it could shoot its cmg down the road into the town. The other T-34 was way back around R9 or so, behind the other wall back there, covering the ass of the guy in W8 and also ready to support the Russian left should Rodney shift his AFV's over there; remember he hadn't committed to either side yet. The last T-34 was on the Russian left, covering the road on that side of town.

Rodney attacked the guy in W8 by sending PzIII's around to his rear CA, stopping in an adjacent hex and trying to get a nice BFF shot against the T-34's side/rear armor. The first one went down to a lucky CH from the 'covering' tank in R9. I say 'covering' cuz he really didn't have very good LOS to cover W8; it was a lucky shot. Then RK sent another PzIII in and I either let it go or missed it, but its bounding fire shot missed. The IV's then went into the cemetery and took up positions behind the wall where they could engage the T-34 in W8 while hull down.

In my turn 3 prep, I think W8 wasted the second PzIII, and rotated his turret to take on the IVs in the cemetery. R9 went into the rubble. Rodney's dfire didn't take out W8, but his turn 4 prep did. Then one of the IV's moved out of the cemetery and got off a BFF shot vs. the T-34 in the rubble from 4 or 5 hexes away. Critical hit, kill. I still haven't gotten over it.

My last T-34 took a stand behind the walled hex in the middle of town, and did pretty well until a malf'd MA did him in. Then it was all over.

Exciting stuff. I learned so much about bounding fire that I didn't mind losing. You don't understand the '4 Shermans vs. 1 Panther' concept till you see it in action. I had been in the start/move/stop/advancing fire paradigm and this opened my eyes to the start/move/stop/bounding fire/start/move/stop paradigm. Sometimes one is called for, sometimes the other. You need to know both, or you will lose to guys like RK. Hell, there's probably even higher levels of Tank Consciousness that nobody's told me about.

[Matt] By the way, the last record I saw had the Russians with a slight edge. What's up with that?

[Repetti] I think a lot of Germans don't know how to do the combined-arms thing and probably try pushing too hard with the 9-2 in a halftrack. If he goes down, the Russian infantry can do a lot better.

[Rodney] I don't think you really need to surround the town in order to cut off rout paths. A couple of Motion halftracks in odd places will do it. The German tanks need to stick together, as I learned when I lost as the Germans against Doug.

In that game, I split up the German armor evenly and went for the HD position with a PzIV in the Wadi. I had a PzIII covering him, but as soon as Doug brought all T-34's on right in my face, I immediately started thinking 'Oh no! What am I thinking?!' Can't provide much cover if you can't penetrate the enemy armor. Another thing about those hull-down Wadis: you're not hull down if he can see INTO the Wadi, so he just drove up adjacent, killed both tanks without losing anything, and I was done for.

I ended up deciding that covering the T-34's approach into town wasn't all that valuable. Either you split up and get swarmed with superior tanks (an ugly thought if there ever was one) or you stay together and he slips through on the other side of the board.

The thing about facing tanks with good front armor is that it's better if you come to him, just the opposite of the normal situation. If he comes to you, he stops with his front facing you, and when you try to start up and move to shoot at his side, he gets that

nice easy non-moving Defensive Fire shot on your first MP. If you come to him, and you're close enough to move right next to him, you can pick your target facing and his shot is much more difficult. In this scenario, minimum of +3 for moving and BU.

Against Tom, it was even better because the hedge allowed me to spend only 1MP in his LOS before moving into his side CA. Suddenly that T-34 was looking at a 5 to hit, but if he didn't fire, the PzIII could stop anytime and fire at the side with a 6 TH (if CE). Luckily for Tom (needed a 4 to hit), his other tank was able to kill the little gnat, which is why it's so important to have the tanks support each other.

I don't think the Russian wants to worry about keeping the German out of the town. Just put the T-34's in the victory area and make them tough to kill. The best use for the infantry is to threaten Street Fighting against places the German would like to park his tanks.

As one who has managed to lose two very close games as the Russians using the above strategy, I've decided the T-34s may need to be a mite aggressive. I had (I thought) a nice little FestungT34 in my game with Bret, but his BFF successfully greased two of the three. If I'd gone hunting myself the previous turn, I would have been up a couple of tanks and Bret would still have had to try the same thing. My Russian Infantry always seems to be too busy running for their lives or quaking in terror to be doing much against the German armor...except one intrepid HS with an ATR, right Bret? I look forward to seeking victory in this one (0-3) some day.

[Dade] Hello all.

Well, I'll break the consensus here: I think this one is pro-Russian. Honestly, the VC are so tough on the Germans that a good skulker ought to be able to win this with out much of a sweat.

I've played Wintergewitter twice, both times as the Russians, and while the games weren't blow-outs, I felt pretty comfortable throughout.

I dunno if I'd call it strongly pro-Russian, but the Germans do need to play a good game.

[Repetti] Agreed.

[Dade] There's not much room for error when you've only got 3.5 squads, well-led or not. A good skulker (which I immodestly consider myself to be) ought to be able to really make it tough for the Jerrys.

[Repetti] I don't think so. I'm a great skulker, and it didn't work for me. The 9-2 and 548's assault fire works just fine vs. concealed units. Once the concealment is gone, the German firepower can't be denied.

You have to skulk, of course, but no way will a good German let that bother him. The last 2 turns should see things get mighty hairy in the pocket of buildings.

[Matt] Guys, I'm not even sure as the German I'd worry too much about street fighting. Sure, there's no need to give the Russian a freebie, but if you just cross that area with a BU tank, the Rooskie first has a PAATC, with a roughly 50% chance of success, then will have a base 5, with a net +1 DRM (-1 street fighting, +2 motion). If not leader-led, this is a low percentage thing, taken as a whole. A halftrack is a different story of course because of the OT modifier, but I wouldn't be terribly worried about street fighting as long as my vehicles are moving. It has the added benefit that a Russian unit might pin. I can't remember if they lose concealment by making a PAATC.

Of course, as the Russian I'd definitely try to take whatever street fighting I can get, because I can't think of any other way they can do damage to the Germans, aside from a moderately lucky ATR shot on a halftrack. I'd also look to close combat opportunities against the German infantry. If any arise, they might be the best way to do damage to the Germans.

[Dade] The estimable Mr. Shostak says: 'I can't remember if they lose concealment by making a PAATC.'

Yep. It's a concealment loss activity. But, against a HT, it's probably worth it. I'd also look to close combat opportunities against the German infantry. If any arise, they might be the best way to do damage to the Germans.

Boy, I agree with this, big time. Once again, the infantry shortage for the Germans becomes pronounced. Every HS counts. Lose one or two in CC and you're going to be scramblin'.

#Warning: Smoke May be Hazardous to Your Health

Tom Huntington

(I came across this article on the world wide web, and since it was obviously out there for the masses to see, and since Tom has written for us before, I thought I'd ask if Banzai could use it. Tom graciously granted his permission. I think this article makes a great (and more complete) companion piece to Smoke Gets in Your Eyes (issue #4), which focused on the use of vehicular smoke dispensers. - ed.)

In ASL, SMOKE comes in all shapes and sizes. Infantry can throw it. Ordnance can shoot it. Tanks can chuck it. Blazing Wrecks and Blazes pour it out with no regard to nationality or personal grand strategy. The problem is, SMOKE is cleverly defined in fits and starts from many different sections of the Good RB, and it's hard to get your hands around SMOKE unless you are used to playing with all these different toys.

General Truths about Smoke:

For now, never mind its source -- what is Smoke? Or SMOKE? SMOKE (all uppercase) is the ASLRB's term for both Smoke (mixed case) and White Phosphorous (WP). WP is a bunch of special rules for stuff that otherwise acts just like Smoke, so we'll just talk about SMOKE until we get into the specifics of what makes WP different.

SMOKE is a Hindrance. SMOKE counters have a +DRM on them to tell you how bad a hindrance it is, and it ranges from +1 to +3. Remember that an accumulated Hindrance of +6 will render someone invisible to your LOS. Normally, one wouldn't expect to ever see hindrance get that thick, but a Smoke modifier of +3 per hex suddenly brings that easily within reach. Any amount of Hindrance between you and your opponent is enough to cover your Infantry from that deadly -1 FFMO modifier, and the more hindrance covering them before they step out in the open, the better. SMOKE is always inherent in a hex, so anyone that is tracing a LOS along a SMOKEy hexspine is hindered by the SMOKE. You can throw more than one SMOKE source into a hex, but the total Hindrance DRM for SMOKE can never be more than +3 in one hex.

You can't use Smoke in Fog. Heavy Winds and Rain immediately remove it from the board. And if you're playing in the Mud or Deep Snow, SMOKE again cannot be used.

In defiance of the reciprocity rules for LOS in the rest of ASL, SMOKE also adds an additional +1 Hindrance to anyone inside a SMOKE-filled hex looking out. So if you hit someone with a +3 Smoke, you'd be +3 to shoot him and he'd be +4 to shoot you. Makes you think about using it offensively against those killer fire groups.

Smoke (not WP) climbs up two levels above the ground level of the hex you targeted. WP climbs four levels. Even if you fired it at someone on a rooftop, SMOKE rounds land on the ground level of the hex and waft their way up two (or four) levels. Conceivably, some rooftop observers could be higher than the SMOKE you're shooting at them. A24.4 talks about 'conventional smoke' (not Smoke or SMOKE, doggone it) landing at the base level of a hex, and later talks about Infantry Smoke Grenades being thrown to a higher level in a building. C8.52 also mentions ordnance SMOKE as "placed at ground level in any target hex, except Interior Building hexes...". This implies ordnance SMOKE always starts at ground level, but Smoke Grenades can be heaved around in the second floor living room -- I think their base level would be measured from the interior building level on which they were thrown. Infantry Smoke Grenades can be thrown inside a building even when the weather is too nasty to use SMOKE outdoors.

SMOKE adds +1 MF or +1 MP to any units that move through a SMOKE-filled Location. This slows down infantry and vehicles -- again, with no regard to whose SMOKE this originally was. Makes you think about using it offensively against groups that are running away.

Everybody (almost) can only make one attempt to lay SMOKE in a phase, and most units only get one phase to try it. The exceptions are WP and Mortars, and I'll describe those later.

Infantry Smoke Grenades:

Smoke Grenades are available if your troops have a Smoke Placement Exponent next to their Firepower. Usually this number is mockingly low, like a 1, and you don't often weigh the advantages of trying it. But if you have a higher exponent, even a 2, you should consider how you could use +1 SMOKE to modify your strategy.

Infantry only get to try and throw Grenades once during their MPh, and they dissipate at the end of their MPh. Croix de Guerre re-released the SMOKE counters with green lettering to remind us that Grenades only provide SMOKE during the MPh, and are removed from the board before the DFPh.

To throw a Grenade, your squad has to make a dr <= its Smoke Placement Exponent. If you roll a 6, your squad ends its MPh (but is NOT pinned). It costs a squad 1 MF to try to throw SMOKE in his own hex, or 2 MF if he is throwing it into an adjacent hex. If you succeed with your dr, you get a +2 Hindrance that goes up 2 levels. But if you combine the MF cost of throwing

SMOKE with the additional +1 MF for moving into a SMOKE-filled hex, it becomes prohibitively expensive to throw SMOKE to cover your advance. You can consider declaring Double Time before you throw SMOKE, or have a Leader stacked with the squad so they can use the Leadership MF Bonus. Conceivably, you could have a squad in position that throws SMOKE to cover his buddies coming up from behind, but it's rare I find squads to spare -- especially if they are up towards the front where I need them.

There are some weird exceptions defined for Smoke Grenades, just because there are some people that would think of these things. If you're throwing SMOKE Grenades up to a higher level, you can only heave it one level higher than where you are standing. Even then, you have to make a dr of 1-3 or else the SMOKE lands back in the throwing squad's hex. If there's a Mild Breeze, SMOKE can only be thrown in a squad's own hex or the three hexes downwind from where they stand.

Deep in Chapter H, we find that if a scenario SSR (or DYO purchase) designates a squad to be Assault Engineers, their Smoke Exponent increases by +2. This means the German 8-3-8's, with their exponent of 3, would suddenly have an exponent of 5 if the scenario said they were Assault Engineers. A dr of 5 or less. Imagine the possibilities.

You can throw SMOKE while doing an Assault Move. Remember you must declare you're doing an Assault Move before any MF are expended, so it does a squad no good to try and throw SMOKE and base its Assault Move plans on the dr's success or failure. You have to plan ahead, and ride out the consequences. Remember that you must spend fewer MFs than your normal limit during your Assault Move, though. Imagine the hex you're moving into is Open Ground. If it costs 2 MF to throw SMOKE in an adjacent hex, and 2MF to enter a Smoke-filled Open Ground hex, then you can't do it as an Assault Move unless you've got a leader helping you move faster. You could throw SMOKE in your own hex before moving, and then Assault Move out of that hex, but it's tricky to imagine a situation where this would actually be useful.

One time when I frequently think about throwing SMOKE is when I'm contemplating a Dash. Like Assault Moves, you have to declare a Dash before spending any MF. Again, you're stuck with the quandary of having enough movement points to do everything. Throwing SMOKE into the street (2MF), Dashing into the smoke-filled street (2MF), and making it into the cover across the street (2MF for a building) is expensive. A squad would either need to be moving with a leader or declare Double Time. There's also official Q&A that says you can't hesitate in the road during a Dash and throw SMOKE in your own hex. You should be dashin', yeah.

So what's different with WP Grenades? First let's look at what's negative about using them. WP only provides a +1 Hindrance. To throw it, you need to declare that you're trying for WP before you roll, and then you need to roll 1 less than your normal Smoke Placement Exponent. And WP is usually only available to the Americans, or to the British in 1944 or later.

So why bother? The hindrance goes up 4 levels instead of the 2 we saw with Smoke. And WP is tough on anyone in the target hex -- anybody standing at ground zero who isn't buttoned up in a CT vehicle has to take a MC. It's an easy MC to take -- a NMC with all terrain modifiers counting as a negative DRM, and all leader modifiers counting as a negative (or positive, if you hang out with 6+1's) DRM. But any MC causes an already broken unit to become DM, and causes a HIP or Concealed unit to become visible on the board. And, if this wasn't temptation enough, if the victims of a WP 'attack' roll a 6 on the colored die of the MC, it is a WP Critical Hit. All the TEMs become positive DRMs for the MC (and if the colored die is already a 6...).

WP can even cause a fire to break out if conditions are Dry or Very Dry. The WP grenade uses special DRMs (in A24.32) for its Kindling roll -- you should look at them. Buildings are especially vulnerable with a -2 Kindling DRM from WP.

In PTO, you can also throw WP into a cave and watch where the smoke comes out -- possibly revealing hidden exits of a cave complex.

So Infantry Smoke Grenades are sometimes hard to use. A squad thinking about using SMOKE will probably need to either be stacked with a leader, or declare Double Time. Otherwise, you're just blowing smoke.

Ordnance Firing SMOKE:

Lots of ordnance gets SMOKE as a Special Ammo type. To fire SMOKE, your ordnance has to declare it's firing at a hex using Area Target Type. Normally, this means you lose your ROF -- unless you are firing mortar. Mortars keep their ROF when firing as Area Target Type, so with a string of luck you can drop a lot of SMOKE on the board from just one mortar.

If you look at the TH tables from Chapter C, you'll notice that SMOKE fired within 12 hexes gets a +2 to hit. With a base Area Target Type TH of 7 at that range, it's likely that you'll hit your target (unless you're cursed with lots of modifiers).

Ordnance SMOKE has some different rules for how long it lasts on the board. Remember that Infantry Smoke Grenades only lasted for the MPh they were fired in -- well, ordnance SMOKE sticks around a lot longer. Full strength Smoke is shown on a white Smoke counter, with a +3 Hindrance and Level 2 Height. When your following PFPh (not your opponent's) comes around, you flip the full strength +3 counter over to its Dispersed +2 Hindrance side. Next turn, again on your next PFPh, you remove the Dispersed Smoke counter. WP from ordnance is a +2 Hindrance, which Disperses to its +1 Hindrance side.

SMOKE must be fired first in the PFPPh or DFPh. As soon as you fire any thing but SMOKE, your opportunity to fire SMOKE is gone for that phase -- you can't shoot someone a lot and then pop a SMOKE cloud to hide behind. If your gun can fire WP, you can also fire it during the AFPPh. Any SMOKE fired at any time other than the beginning of your PFPPh is placed onboard as Dispersed Smoke. So any Smoke you fire during your DEFENDER half of the turn, or any WP you fire during the AFPPh, will go onboard as Dispersed and then dissipate beginning with your next PFPPh.

A Mild Breeze can spread your SMOKE around even farther. In the AFPPh, if there is any source that is SMOKing on the board, you put down a trail of grey Dispersed Smoke counters (+2 for Smoke or +1 for WP) in the direction the wind pushes it. This trail of Dispersed SMOKE is as long as the Hindrance value of the source. So a full-strength Smoke (+3) placed at the beginning of the PFPPh will grow three grey Dispersed Smoke (+2) counters in the AFPPh. On the next turn, when the smoke becomes Dispersed (+2) in the PFPPh, then you remove the trailing grey counter so there will only be two hexes filled with grey Dispersed Smoke counters (all still at +2). When the source of the smoke dissipates, all trailing Dispersed Smoke also is taken off the board.

So where would you want to shoot SMOKE? Straight down the throats of a killer stack or HD tank certainly comes to mind. But there are some generalizations that almost always work. If you fire near the group you're trying to protect, you have a better chance of interfering with a wider range of LOS's coming from the same general direction (the extreme being if you shoot in the hex of your target, it interferes with everyone's LOS to him). If you fire near an enemy stack that you're trying to mess with, then the closer the shot to him the more you mess up his LOS (with the extreme being if you shoot in his hex, you mess up his LOS everywhere) (and he suffers from an additional +1 for being in a SMOKE filled Location). I never thought I'd see it happen, but in one game I had a narrow choke point where LOS was not blocked in the direction my opponent would be approaching from. My guys on the left could see through this point to the right, and my guys on the right could see to the left. My opponent fired Smoke right in this focal point, and ruined everything. Sigh. At least he found a use for his 50mm mortar.

Some ordnance fires WP as a Special Ammo. This works just like it does for Smoke from ordnance, and you also get the WP MC like you do with Infantry WP Grenades, although a critical hit occurs if a normal ordnance critical hit is secured or airburst is obtained for indirect fire, which is quite different from looking for a 6 on the colored dr of the MC. See A24.31.

OBA can also sometimes shoot a module of SMOKE. There's no change to the SMOKE rules, but when it impacts the SMOKE fills the target hex and all six surrounding hexes. Now we see where the +6 Hindrance modifier can completely block LOS. WP OBA would make everyone take a WP MC in those seven hexes. In a Mild Breeze, this could be trailed by nine more hexes of Dispersed Smoke. Environmental impact? Could happen.

The timing of firing SMOKE to cover a charge is awkward. You have to time your movement carefully and run fast when it's right. On turn one, you fire your SMOKE. Now only the guys that haven't fired are still free to move. If you're waiting for a Mild Breeze to create a wall of dispersed grey smoke, you have to wait until the AFPPh (which is after your MPh) for the winds to spread it around. So, should you wait until turn two? By then the Smoke is beginning to Disperse already, and will only be out there for the remainder of that turn. It's your judgement call.

Tanks and SMOKE:

Tanks sometimes carry SMOKE rounds, and the rules for ordnance apply with no change. But some tanks also carry Vehicular Smoke Dispensers. There's a variety and splendid diversity to choose from, but the most typical is the Smoke Discharger (sD).

A tank's dispenser number appears on the back of the counter. Unlike Special Ammo rounds, if you miss the DR to fire off your dispensers you can still try to use them in the future. If you make your DR, a dispenser dumps dispersed Smoke (a +2 Hindrance), usually in the same hex with the tank that fired it.

Dispensers fire during your or your opponent's MPh. When you fire it during your MPh, it must be before any weapon on the tank has been fired. It costs a MP to fire your dispensers, but you only pay the MP if you succeed at laying smoke -- otherwise, it's as if you haven't done anything yet. Just like firing Special Ammo. You can also attempt to fire your dispensers during your opponent's MPh. When you see him spend a MF/MP, you can react just like you would with Defensive First Fire. Again, you can only do this if you haven't already fired any weapons.

One (almost) universal truth -- you add +1 DRM if you try to fire your dispensers while BU. Seeing how many dispenser numbers are in the DR 5-6 range, this +1 can alarmingly modify your percent chances of success.

There are lots of specifics for the different types of Vehicular Smoke Dispensers -- sD's, sP's, sM's, and sN's. The subtleties are left as an exercise for the student. You should be reading up on these before trying to use them anyway.

Note that dispensers fire dispersed Smoke -- that means it's removed at the beginning of your next PFPPh. If you fire it during your opponent's MPh, it isn't going to be on the board for very long. But if you fire it during your MPh, it will last through your opponent's DFPh and subsequent PFPPh. It's possible that the people behind you might benefit (or suffer) from your Smoking.

And Smoke fired during the MPH will spread two hexes down wind during the AFPh. This again might provide more cover than you expected or wanted.

The DRM you get from dispenser delivered Smoke is only +2 -- which is the same DRM you'd get if your parked tank went into Motion as it watched an enemy vehicle approach. If the situation is right, you can try to go into Motion on one MP expenditure, and pop Smoke on another MP expenditure. With good die rolling, you could suddenly become +2 [Motion] +2 [Smoke] = +4 DRM to hit. Squirt an ink cloud in one direction, and run in the other.

In a quick side-note at the beginning of Chapter F (F? who reads F?), we find that vehicles might also carry vehicular smoke grenades. You can lay a 1/2 Smoke counter just like the infantry do if you roll a dr of 1 for an armed-but-unarmored vehicle or BU OT AFV, or ≤ 2 for a CE AFV. But you have one advantage over infantry -- you don't end up stopped if you roll a 6. This Smoke has the same effect as infantry smoke grenades-- you only use it during your MPH, and it disappears at the end of that MPH. Vehicular smoke grenades, however, are placed using the same rules as smoke dispensers. So if you miss your roll, you have not spent a MP. In addition, a vehicle may attempt to use vehicular smoke grenades or a smoke dispenser, but not both, in the same movement phase.

If one of your tanks gets flamed, it can become a Burning Wreck. A Wreck Blaze creates Smoke, which is only a +2 Hindrance -- not +3 of regular Smoke -- and is used instead of the Wreck Hindrance of +1 that non-Smoking Wrecks create. This Smoke stands four levels above the wreck -- or two levels if there's a Mild Breeze blowing. In a Mild Breeze, you'd get two hexes filled with grey Dispersed Smoke counters trailing behind the wreck.

Terrain:

Burning terrain creates Smoke just like a Burning Wreck does -- +2 Hindrance, piling up four levels above it's source.

Well. That's all I know about Smoke, SMOKE, and WP. It can be tricky to use, because you have to capture the timing of when it appears (squads throw it during their MPH, ordnance fires it first before any other fire during the PFPh, sD's dump it during either player's MPH), and when it disappears (remove dispersed Smoke counters at the beginning of your PFPh). The mechanics are simple, but in an attempt to make it fit more cleanly with the game system, some overhead in rules has to be dumped on top of everything else we try to keep track of in this game. But we're getting used to that.

Tactics Tip

It's the last turn of the scenario. Victory hinges on control of a multihex building in which the only unit is your lowly 447 squad at ground level. Your opponent has moved up three 838 squads plus a 9-1 leader adjacent. Miraculously, the 447 survives the advancing fire shot unscathed, but the impending 6:1 (-1) attack in Close Combat is almost certain to kill him and give the win to your opponent. What do you do? In the Rout Phase, voluntarily break the 447 and rout him upstairs. The German can advance good order units in downstairs, but they will not control the building. You win.

Coming Soon...

Nothing. Not if I don't get some more articles, which primarily come from the readership.

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