

The map is a hexagonal grid with letters E through N across the top and numbers 1 through 9 along the sides. The terrain is color-coded: green for forested areas, yellow for open land, and blue for water bodies. Various units and markers are placed on the grid:

- BANZAI** units (red squares) are located in the upper left and center, with values like ML: +1, 8MF, Pin, HoBNA, and 2-6.
- PREP FIRE** units (white squares with red stars) are located in the center, with values like +1 and 50\* [1-16].
- MTR** units (yellow squares with a tank icon) are located in the upper right and lower right, with values like 60\* [3-45] and 3-4-6.
- Other units and markers include yellow squares with numbers (e.g., 3-4-7, 2-3-7, 2-2-8), a grey square with a map icon and +1, and a yellow square with a tank icon and 6-6-6.

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## Editor's Foxhole

**Rick Reinesch**



A question recently appeared on the forums asking when the Golden Age of ASL was. It's a great question that is certainly open to interpretation based on each individual's unique circumstances. Some have argued for the time period of the early 90's, basing their assessment on the number of core modules that AH was releasing at the time, HASLs like Red Barricades, the regular appearance of ASL in publications like The General, the release of the ASL Annuals, and the appearance of some of the classic TPP scenarios released that we know and love to play. But I believe if one were to take a step back, a strong argument can be made that we are living through the Golden Age of ASL today.

It seems to have taken a while, but MMP seems to be finding a nice steady rhythm in regards to re-release of core modules along with a focus on development of Action Packs and ASL Journals. ASL is growing in exciting new directions for players with the release of the half boards expected in Action Pack 6.

The release of the Starter Kits has been the single best thing to ever happen to ASL. There are many reasons that the original Squad Leader was such a great game, but I contend that a big one was the stepped instructional approach to learning the game. ASL is simply too large and complicated to simply 'pick it up'. The SKs have given gamers a great path to learning the basics of the game, leaving the detailed and subtle nuances for the full rules. While those that find those nuances a necessary part of the ASL gaming experience, it is good to see that MMP is treating the SKs as unique games worthy of continued support and development in their own right, since there are a number of

players who may never make that leap to full ASL, but they are still a part of the ASL family.

The maturing of VASL as a mechanism for aficionados from points across the globe to interact to play the game is probably the single development that will keep ASL vibrant for years to come. No longer is a person dependent on having someone close by to play. The bonds that develop between players locally can be maintained long after life intervenes to break up those gaming groups. As long as folks have the ability to continue to play the game, it will continue to thrive.

The growth Third Party Producers (TPPs) and their ability to produce products that rival or even surpass the quality MMP produces, to fill niches in research and play, or to experiment with new and innovative scenario approaches and techniques that MMP cannot commercially justify, adds a richness to the game, drives demand, and influences trends for all players.

There is an active tournament scene for ASL around the world. There are many local tournaments that give players the opportunity to experience the exciting atmosphere that comes from participating in a common activity with like-minded folks. If you've never been to a tournament, I would highly encourage you to check out ones that are in your area, or even beyond, and make plans to attend. You'll dramatically improve your game, get a chance to experience playing styles that you otherwise might not get a chance to, and all the while you will be having a great time.

So get out there and participate in your local ASL gaming group, go to tournaments, support producers with your purchases, and keep an eye out for opportunities to introduce new players to the game. I believe we are living in the Golden Age of ASL today. There is no reason to believe that it has to end anytime soon.

## Fighting With Fire

### Using Fire and Smoke as a Weapon: A Case Study

**Robert Delwood**



It's an obvious statement that to win players need to use all the advantages a scenario offers. For that, they review their forces, the terrain, the situation, special rules, and toys. Typically overlooked are other factors such as weather and environmental conditions. This is understandable. Designers overlook them, too. Often, the more clever players can find loopholes within the victory conditions if, for example, a location is burnt, or a fire breaks out. My

guess is that fire is overlooked because players see it as an incidental, rather than an intentional, obstacle.

One of my regular opponents, Doyle, has a cardboard alter ego who is a pyromaniac. He gets most excited retelling ASL stories not of his wins or losses, (many times he doesn't even include that detail) but of setting the boards on fire. This is especially true of his Stalingrad campaign games. His eyes start to glow when he tells us he's set fire to his entire setup area and how many troops died there. We even let him have his own phase, something about rolls for fire spreading.

Although fire doesn't affect most scenarios, there are times when it does matter. It's used more in campaign games since there is more time to develop them and players have leeway. In contrast, typical scenarios are short and the player's goals are too limited to use fire. However, the scenario *Fighting Withdrawal* (ASL 1) is an exception. The designers intend to use fires. As a result, Doyle found his spot with this scenario. He used it expertly and we can learn from him.

A lot has already been written about *Fighting Withdrawal*. All of those analyses are good and worth reading, but they always leave out fire as a potential weapon. Before discussing that, take a moment to review the scenario. This is an odd showdown. Both sides, the attacking Finns and defending second line Russians, are trying to exit units off the same map edge. The overwhelming characteristic of the scenario, however, is the sheer lack of time for the Finns. The Finns have seven turns to move the length of the board (28 hexes). A unit by itself needs five turns; four with a leader. That really leaves only two turns to play with. Therefore, anything that slows the Finns down is worth considering, and this is where using fire as a weapon makes for a good example.

## The Setting

The scenario begins with two buildings already on fire. There is a mild breeze blowing across the board, and dry environmental conditions (EC). The designers are begging you to do something; you just have to see it. There are four factors to consider.

- **Smoke.** The obvious and most common use is that smoke interferes with LOS, maybe even blocking it, but in this scenario, the Russians are not interested in LOS (given the close-quarter nature of the city fight). Less obvious is that smoke uses up MFs to move through, one additional MF per hex to be specific. One row of smoke may be marginal, but when the fire spreads, you'll get two adjacent rows. Now, crossing those two hexes costs four MFs, a complete turn.

- **Wind.** Unless this changes due to a weather roll, you don't get just one smoke hex, but several of them from each blaze.
- **Environmental Conditions (EC).** The Dry EC means the entire board is a tinderbox waiting to burst aflame. With the breeze, the fire spreads eastward extremely easily and tends to jump locations more frequently.
- **Blaze.** These hexes cannot be entered. The Russians are retreating so it doesn't affect them, but it does prohibit the Finns from using those locations. Kindled locations are also unreliable since at any moment they could produce a Blaze, forcing the unit to move next turn. Lastly, Blazes are self-spreading. Once kindled, you can, pardon the popular expression, set it and forget it.

## The Use of Fire

You'll need to be read the rules on weather rolls, Blazes, Wind, and Kindling to better understand these (A24 and B25). In brief, to use fire, you'll have to use leaders in a new way. Kindling (B25.11) is the first step to starting a fire, and to turn a phrase, where there's fire, there's smoke. This requires leaders and an MMC; in the Russians' case, this must be a full squad. Therefore, instead of setting up leaders near the front (for more conventional purposes such as rallying and directing fire), they need to set up where the fires are to be started. The key is selecting good locations, making sure to complement the existing fires of G2 and U6. Woods and orchards are best but the buildings are the most common. D5/E6, G7, I8, and I5/J5 are good candidates. Remember, ideally, you'd like the fire to spread to adjacent hex rows for maximum coverage. Any leaders on the front should also always attempt kindling. Setting up so far back from the front isn't as bad as it seems. That's where you want the fires to be anyhow, having the most time to blaze and spread, and then having those leaders and squads in position to get off the map. Plus, they can rally any retreating troops.

Kindling occurs in the leader's PFPh as his only action. He must pass a NTC first. If it is passed, any squads with him can make a Kindling attempt, which is modified by a leader's value. For example, in the best case, the 8-1 and a squad attempt Kindling. The leader needs a TC DR of 8, and subsequently, the squad kindles a fire within a woods hex on a 5 or more (basic of 8, +2 EC, and a DR mod of +1). As a side note, Kindling is one of the few times in ASL that you try to roll higher than a given number. Leadership ratings are used as a reverse modifier, hence the +1 for the leader. Overall, it's a 64% chance in this case. A 7-0 leader and squad have a 41% chance. In ASL, both of these are excellent odds. For added fun, use a commissar to get that extra morale point, albeit at the cost of leadership.

The true charm of fire is that it spreads (B25.6). At the end of each Advance Fire Phase after the initial one where it appeared, each Blaze and Flame has a chance of spreading. Each woods/wooden building/stone building has a basic 7/8/9, respectively. There is a +2 DRM for being directly downwind. That means it spreads to an attached, adjacent woods hex on a 5, for example. On the other hand, there is a -2 DRM for unattached, adjacent terrain. Flames can't directly cross streets, so plan to kindle in the upwind-most location of each city block or "island," an "island" being a group of locations enclosed by streets. Then let the fire spread itself downwind. The only uncertainty is the wind. The wind must remain Mild. Drifting smoke is removed during a change in force or direction (A24.61) and for gusts (B25.651). Although drifting smoke is removed during gusts, the fire itself spreads, possibly creating more smoke next turn. For a gust (Wind Change DR=12), one Blaze (determined by Random Selection) spreads two hexes downwind. The number of dispersed smoke counters it produces (A24.61) is equal to the Smoke Hindrance DR of the terrain. Specifically, this is three (3) for terrain fires and two (2) for vehicles (B25.2).

Note that this fire approach should not to be used as the sole Russian strategy; they must still rely on a solid defense.

## Fun With Flags: The Perils of Platoon Movement

Zeb Doyle



Here in the 21st century, even armchair historians are comfortable throwing around phrases about "turning inside the enemy's decision cycle" and "C3I." With these concepts firmly engrained in our minds, the question of whether or not to equip tanks with radios seems like a very simple and obvious one. However, before we start to feel too superior to our predecessors who answered this question incorrectly, it should be noted that the advantages of rapid communication have been obvious since well before the invention of the tank. Historically, it has been the technology and not the theory that has lagged behind. Even the first British tanks of WWI had a slit through which to release homing pigeons to report vital information to headquarters. Later on, many tanks were designed with dedicated "signaling ports," through which flags could be waved without undue exposure for the crew. Even when radios did first become available, the fledgling technology was often unreliable. In the early Soviet BT series of tanks, for example, the radio-equipped model was a favorite of crews only because the non-functioning radio was turret-mounted and heavy enough to serve as an excellent

counter-balance to the main gun. Still, despite all these attempts to use signal flags and homing pigeons, it cannot be denied that a working radio imparts a powerful advantage. This advantage is reflected in several different ways in ASL, but revolves around the flexibility, or lack thereof, of the radioless tank platoon.

Since the battlefield is a confusing and chaotic place, and signal flags are hard to read at the best of times, it follows naturally that radioless tanks would group into platoons even though the resulting organization is not very flexible. In game terms, a platoon consists of a group of two or three AFVs, each of which are adjacent to at least one other AFV in the platoon, have an LOS (ignoring smoke and NVR) to that other AFV, and all share the same Stopped/Non-Stopped/Motion status, including Forward/Reverse Movement (D14.21). Obviously, the range of an ASL signal flag is not very far, so a platoon will have to have tanks that are adjacent with LOS. This can be difficult under standard ASL rules when entering and exiting the board, so for the purposes of D14.21 LOS can be traced to and from offboard units. In fact, unless violating A2.5, a platoon can actually end the MPH partially off map (D14.212). Despite this interesting quirk, it is easy to see that the lack of radios transforms multiple independent tanks into a single larger and clumsier entity. Although this is rarely an advantage, radio-equipped AFVs can join in the fun and form platoons just as if they were radioless. Of course, they are then subject to all Platoon Movement penalties and restrictions (D14.24).

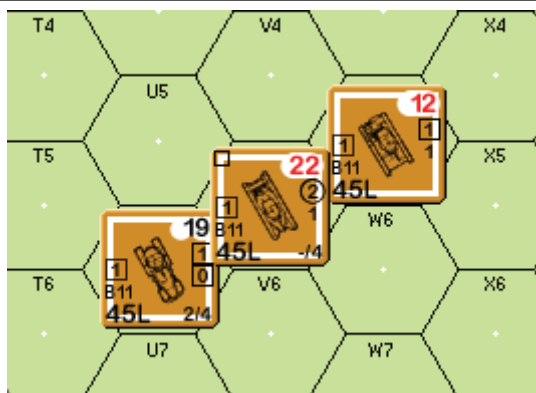
To form one of these ungainly groups, the participating AFVs can create a platoon when leaving a Convoy (E11.252), at the start of their MPH, or during setup. Interestingly, non-AFVs cannot be part of a platoon, so unarmored trucks and the like, although equally radioless in real life, end up having more freedom of movement in the game. It is also important to note that the only time it is actually mandatory to form a platoon is when multiple radioless AFVs are entering play from offboard (D14.23). During onboard setup, it is certainly legal to sprinkle lone radioless tanks across the map if desired, although this is not always the best tactic.

If the decision is made to form a platoon, it becomes a bit like an organized crime group: leaving is even more difficult than entering. In fact, there is only one way an AFV can voluntarily leave a platoon, and that is at the start of its MPH. An AFV can also be forced out of a platoon if it is destroyed, Recalled, or becomes Immobile (D14.22). If one of these unfortunate events occurs, it is quite possible that the remaining AFVs may not be adjacent and thus would no longer qualify as a platoon. In most phases of the game turn, this situation requires no special rules, but if the destruction, Recall, or Immobilization happens in the MPH of the platoon to a two-AFV platoon, the remaining AFV is



immediately freed from the platoon restrictions for the remainder of that MPh. If a three-AFV platoon has a gap created during its MPh, the two remaining tanks would have to move to become adjacent to satisfy D14.21 when they next entered a new hex. If this requirement is not met, the tanks would have to end their MPh in their current locations.

By now, a careful reader will have noticed that although Platoon Movement is the default position for radioless tanks, it brings with it a great loss of flexibility, a host of complications, and is only mandatory when entering play from offboard. So, what is it that prevents these technologically backward vehicles from speeding around the battlefield like their radio-equipped brethren? Why use Platoon Movement at all? The answer can be found in D14.23, which states that at the start of its MPh, any onboard radioless AFV that is alone or wants to break away from its platoon must take a NTC. Failure of this check causes the AFV to immediately stop (if currently Non-Stopped) and expend all remaining MP as Delay MP. The only action the AFV can perform is to unload Passengers and Riders. Since a typical 8ML crew will fail this TC roughly 25% of the time, radioless tanks will be grouped together more often than not. There is only one instance in which this TC can be avoided and that is when a single AFV enters from offboard. The rest of the time, any radioless AFV will be rolling, and hoping, if it wants to move independently. This is a huge penalty for any nationality, but especially for those with 7ML crews. The suffering of Inexperienced Crews (D3.45) with the 6ML and resultant 60% failure rate can only be imagined.



These three AFVs have organized themselves into a platoon. As per D14.21, each vehicle is adjacent to at least one other AFV in the platoon and has LOS to that AFV. The only way any of the three could voluntarily leave the platoon would be to break off at the start of that unit's MPh, but would require a NTC to do so. Failure would cause that AFV to spend all available MP in Delay. Any of the vehicles could also leave the platoon by being destroyed, Recalled, or Immobilized.

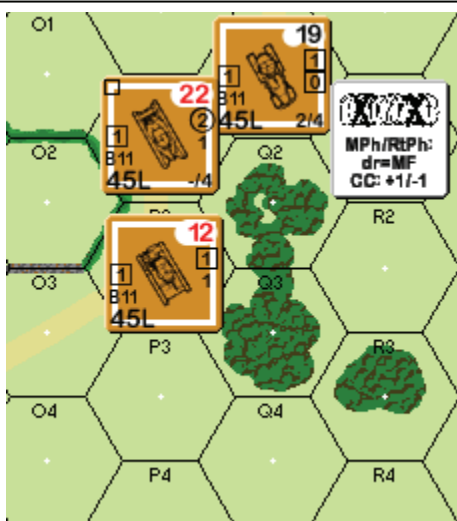
As an example, if the U6 AFV was destroyed during the MPh of the platoon, the V5 and W5 tanks would still qualify as a platoon, and could continue moving normally in platoon. If the V5 vehicle were destroyed during the MPh, U6 and W5 would no longer be adjacent to another member of the platoon, violating D14.21. The two remaining tanks could choose to continue to expend MP, but then end their MPh in their current locations. Otherwise, they would be required to maneuver so that they were adjacent in the next hexes they entered.

Finally, assume the three vehicles are exiting off the bottom section of the map. If each of the AFVs moves two hexes, U6 will exit to U8 and V5 will exit to V7. The W5 AFV would still be onboard in W7. However, per D14.212, Platoon Movement would still be possible as an LOS would exist from W7 to V7. Even if the MPh ended at that point, the W7 AFV could still exit to W8 or V7 using Platoon Movement during the MPh of the next turn.

Obviously, failing a non-Platoon Movement TC and losing an entire MPh is a non-optimal outcome, which is the reason most radioless tanks stay bunched together. However, Platoon Movement is itself far from a perfect solution, and brings with it enough problems to leave most players with a strong distaste for flags long after the scenario has ended. First, as mentioned above, all tanks in a platoon must be adjacent to at least one other platoon member and they must all share the same Stopped/Non-Stopped/Motion status (D14.21). So, when making Motion Attempts (D2.401), only a single member of the platoon needs to have LOS to the triggering enemy unit to send the entire platoon into Motion. However, to reflect the frantic flag waving occurring in these circumstances, a drm equal to the number of AFV in the platoon must be added to the Motion dr (D14.211). Even a lone radioless tank not in a platoon must add a +1 drm to any Motion Attempts, although it is not required to pass a non-Platoon Movement NTC before making the roll.

The fact that all members of a platoon must share the same Motion status creates a few other side effects. If a Stall DR is required, one roll is made for the entire platoon. If Stall occurs, all AFV in the platoon immediately Stop, make one Delay DR, and the Start MP plus the Delay DR is the MP cost for the entire platoon. This principle is extended to Bog and Mechanical Reliability DR as well. One roll is made for the entire platoon with different DRM possibly applying to each vehicle. If Bog, Immobilization, or Mechanical Reliability occurs, Random Selection is used among the vehicles that would normally be affected to see which AFV(s) actually are Bugged or Immobilized. Finally,

Minimum Move (D2.15) and ESB (D2.5) are NA while using Platoon Movement.



In this example, the three vehicles are in a platoon. A previously unknown enemy tank moves into LOS of the Q1 AFV, triggering a Motion Attempt. There is a +3 DRM since it is a three-vehicle platoon, but the roll is a success and the entire platoon goes into Motion. In their MPH, the Motion vehicles attempt to move straight ahead into Q3, Q2, and R1 at a cost of one-half their movement in the woods. This would normally require three Bog Checks (D8.21) but since the vehicles are moving in platoon, only one roll is made. The vehicles going into Q2 and Q3 would have a +3 DRM for entering woods, while R1 would have a +4 DRM (+2 for wire, +1 for not fully tracked, and +1 for Truck-type MP). If, after all modifiers are applied, more than one vehicle is possibly found to have Bugged, Random Selection would be used to determine which AFV actually Bugged.

Now assume that the Motion Attempt failed and it is now the platoon's MPH. The Mechanical Reliability check DR is an 11, and so per Russian Vehicle Note M, Stall occurs. The Stall DR would apply to all three AFVs, even the Q1 armored car which does not have Red MP. Had the Mechanical Reliability check been a 12, the P1 and P2 vehicles would have used Random Selection to determine which AFV Immobilized.

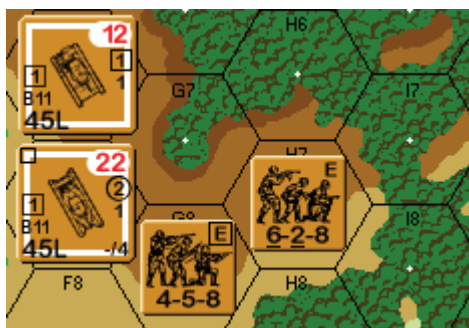
If P2 was Randomly Selected, it would have involuntarily left the platoon (D14.22), leaving P1 and Q1 to continue with Platoon Movement normally. If P1 had Immobilized, P2 and Q1 could continue to expend MP but end in their current locations, or maneuver such that they were adjacent upon entering a new hex to satisfy D14.21.

The above restrictions and limitations do a good job showing the clumsy nature of Platoon Movement, but ASL has one more handicap in store for radioless tanks. Since a platoon requires its members to be adjacent to one another, and this restriction applies in the MPH, the platoon members must all move at the same time. In game terms, platoons are treated as moving in a stack as per A4.2 even when they are in separate locations. This is a very unusual circumstance in ASL, and is handled with Impulse Movement (D14.3). The only other time Impulse Movement is used in the game is during Human Waves (A25.23). Since this type of movement is rare, and because Human Waves and Platoon Movement can be combined, we will look at both forms of Impulse Movement here.

As mentioned above, each unit participating in Platoon Movement or Human Wave is considered to be part of a multiple-location stack and the MPH of the stack is broken down into a series of Impulses. During each Impulse, the stack may perform up to one MF/MP expenditure. Vehicles could move to a new location, change VCA one hexside, or use VBM along one hexside, while infantry could also move to a new location, exit a foxhole, use Infantry Bypass along as many as four hexsides, and so forth. Actions that require no MP/MF, like going CE or BU, or dropping a SW, can be performed normally during each Impulse. The Impulse ends when every participating unit has completed its single MF/MP expenditure or the moving player declares the Impulse to be over.

It is easy to imagine a situation where one unit in the multi-location stack expends more MF/MP than another, and that is the major drawback of Impulse Movement, as the MF/MP cost of an Impulse is equal to the most MF/MP spent by any unit in that Impulse. Note that it is possible for a Non-Stopped vehicle to spend MP doing nothing if other units expend MP during the Impulse. The fact that every unit in the platoon or Human Wave can only go as fast as the slowest member is a severe limiting factor, and worse still, no unit may spend MF/MP unless all other units participating in that Impulse have enough remaining MF/MP to do so. There is a partial exception to this rule for wounded SMC (A25.232), but Impulse Movement will almost always be slower than movement by individuals.

Although Impulse Movement may be slower, it is not any more dangerous than movement normally is in ASL. It is important to remember that each unit in the Impulse is moving simultaneously and so Defensive First Fire and Bounding First Fire treat all the units as a single stack. Therefore, such fire, along with other defensive actions such as Motion Attempts and Vehicular Smoke Dispensers, can only be declared at the end of an Impulse (D14.32) unless a situation requiring a DEFENDER Gun Duel arises (C5.33). The fact that multiple units are moving simultaneously cuts down on opportunities for Subsequent



In another example, assume there is a German unit with a LMG in I7, and the 6-2-8 has just entered H7 from G8. The 4-5-8 has moved from F7. The Impulse costs 1 MF and since both units are moving simultaneously, the I7 German could not First Fire at G8 and Subsequent Fire at H7. The German could, however, fire the LMG at either G8 or H7, lay a Fire Lane, and hit the other hex with a Residual FP attack (A9.222).

Now consider the vehicles in F6 and F7. If they move in platoon such that F7 enters G8 while F6 moves into Bypass of the G7/F7 hexside, the cost of the Impulse will be 10 MP (D2.3). Since a maximum of a single MF/FP expenditure is allowed per Impulse, the tank moving from F7 to G8 also spends 10 MP, and cannot do anything else at all (aside from actions that take zero MP, such as going CE).

infantry units in separate locations could not simultaneously Armored Assault with Platoon Moving tanks unless they were part of a Human Wave. Likewise, two AFVs could not both use Armored Assault with a Human Wave unless they were moving as a platoon.

Once a legal combination has been arranged, all units in the Armored Assault must use Impulse Movement (D14.33). This creates two simultaneous Impulses, one for the vehicles and one for the infantry. The MF and MP cost are calculated separately and it is even possible for one of the two Impulses to have a MF/MP cost of zero. For Defensive First Fire purposes, each attack counts as one allowed attack against all units in both groups. So, if a Platoon Moving tank and an Armored Assaulting infantry unit entered an Open Ground hex for 2 MP and 1 MF respectively and the tank was fired upon by a Gun, the Gun could not engage the infantry with a second shot until they had expended further MF.

Next, just as with standard Armored Assault, whenever a unit breaks off, it must halt its movement until the remaining units finish their MPH—or vice versa. An exception arises, however, in that units using Platoon Movement or Human Wave continue to move simultaneously until every unit of their platoon or Human Wave has broken off from the Armored Assault (D14.331). It is actually easier than one might think to break apart a combined Human Wave and Armored Assault; only the Human Wave units that begin their MPH underneath an AFV and move in a combined stack with it qualify for the Armored Assault bonus. Tempting as it may be, shuffling Human Wave units in and out of a tank's protective cover is not allowed.



This concludes the overview of Platoon Movement. There are many options, from a simple two-tank platoon all the way to a combined Armored Assault with multiple vehicles supporting a Human Wave. Although any nationality can use Platoon Movement, it seems fitting that the Soviets with their low-tech armor and Human Waves are the most likely to find themselves utilizing these rules. After all, Impulse



Movement is as close as the ASL rules come to the Communist ideal: all units involved must move in a strict and regimented fashion, and are treated so equally that they all spend the exact same MF/MP per Impulse. Regardless of your political leanings or which nationality you find yourself playing in ASL, never lose sight of the fact that radios are superior to flags and homing pigeons.

## Tactical Tip

Zeb Doyle



One of the defense mechanisms on some German tanks is the dreaded Nahverteidigungswaffe (aka sN, or Snoogiewoofers). This little beauty can deal some serious 16FP hurt in Close Combat. So in the situation where the German tank is the Attacker, the defense doesn't have to dread the sN because the Defender can dodge the sN by not attacking the AFV:

A11.611 says the sN "can be used...only during the CCPh after the AFV or its Personnel Escort has been attacked in that CCPh (EXC: an AFV can fire a sN before being attacked if it qualifies as the Ambusher)."

There is a footnote associated with this rule (footnote 16, page A58). So, in a lot of situations (a motion Panzer IVJ bypassing a single squad, for example), it's probably better as the Defender to not even attempt to attack the AFV and thereby avoid the return sN attack. Since the sN doesn't get halved for motion and TEM is NA, you know you're going to take a lot of pain if you don't get the super-lucky CCPh roll to kill the tank. Obviously, sometimes you have to try and get lucky, and if the odds are in the Defender's favor it gets interesting, but more often than not the Defender will find himself just running away from the motion-VBM-freeze sN-armed tank that is locking down a single squad.

My two favorite sN stories: running a 7-0 into the same location as a Panther with a malfed CMG and not attacking it, just locking it down. On the other end of the sN, stupidly letting my Tiger get ambushed by a 9-2 and 2x 6-2-8. The 9-2-led attack rolled boxcars for some nice Crew Small Arms fire CR action, and then the sN responded by rolling a 3. Game over.

## Assets: A Crew

Dan Preston



First of all, I'm sorry. That title is my worst pun yet. Second of all, yes, this article is a pat on the back to that

small but underrated unit, the crew. All ASL players love a crew as long as it is doing one of two things: manning a gun or occupying an armed vehicle. But if the gun malfunctions or the vehicle gets knocked out with the crew surviving, some of us treat that little unit simply as victory points or as a liability that gets in the way.

Let's face it; infantry crews are not much to look at. Low in firepower and range, without a smoke exponent, spraying fire, assault fire or underlined morale, the humble crew in a standup firefight looks as out of place as a barbershop quartet. Dismounted vehicle crews are even more meager, with one less morale and a measly firepower factor of 1. Most half squads have a crew beat on range and some of the time on firepower as well. The crew, unlike the half squad, can never recombine with anyone, so a crew it will remain no matter what. Last and least, the other depictions of MMCs in the game show "action poses", whereas the depiction of the crew shows it squatting and fussing with something or other.

But this article was supposed to sing the praises of crews. I started out listing the drawbacks, which are noteworthy. The advantages of crews are many, but these useful units seldom receive their due because of how rarely they are away from their primary tasks. Here, then, are the reasons I love crews.

1. Self-rally Capability. (A10.63) Crews are allowed to Self-rally as if they were leaders. This is designed to allow isolated gun positions the ability to bounce back from being broken without a leader having to hurry over (often under fire) to kick them back into shape. If a defender happens to have a spare infantry crew, this is a great unit to give a MG to defend an isolated pillbox.
2. Elite Status. (A1.123) Infantry crews are considered Elite units. An infantry crew may use any weapon at all (EX: Radio/Field Phone) without non-qualified usage penalties. FTs and DCs are old hat to the crew, as well as any other infantry weapon you can mention. Vehicle crews are not considered Elite, unfortunately. However, they can still serve any Gun without penalty, as long as it is not captured.
3. Morale. (A1.123) Infantry crews have morale equal to that nationality's Elite infantry. This is a marked advantage in scenarios where the rest of your infantry is lacking in quality. They are the backbone of the German defense in *The Pouppeville Exit*, where the majority of the infantry in town consists of Conscripts with an ELR of 2. Those two Flak guns have FP equal to



.50 caliber MGs, manned by 8 morale troops. Without these resources, the attacking paratroopers would clean out the town in a hurry.

4. IFE. (C2.29) Continuing the same line of reasoning from the previous section, weapons that fire with Infantry Firepower Equivalent are generally like machine guns, albeit much more cumbersome and with a diminished rate of fire. However, unlike MGs, these weapons need no leader to direct their fire because they never cower. Our stalwart crews really know their business.
5. Heat of Battle. (A15.1) Crews (including inherent and temporary) are immune to Heat of Battle results. They do not Battle Harden, but they also do not Surrender or go Berserk on a 2 DR, either. They also do not ELR (A19.11). Crews are some cool customers.
6. CC vs. a Vehicle. (A11.5) Look carefully at the Close Combat Table. As rarely as it happens, a crew has a CCV of 4, and a half-squad is only a 3. Players overrunning a gun position or trying to freeze one had better watch out. The defending crew has a pretty good chance at damaging the offending AFV. The same warning applies to armor driving around in an area that has unemployed crews lurking in the underbrush.
7. HIP Status. (A12.34) Anytime a defender has a crewed Gun, barring SSR, that Gun may set up HIP, if it is in Concealment Terrain. Defenders sitting with weapons such as these have plenty of practice in the tactic of the hidden-gun ambush. But here is something else to consider. Assume that the Gun in question is a mediocre player at best, say, a German Flak 30. This weapon is not much to brag about. It only has an IFE of 4, a ROF of 2, and a B# of 11. The AP kill is a puny 6. Remember, however, that our Elite, self-rallying small unit, the infantry crew mans this same gun. This unit is also HIP. If it is late-war, this same team of warriors also has access to Panzerfausts and ATMMs. Okay, I am belaboring the point. The attacker has more to worry about than one small Flak gun.
8. CS#. (D5.6) Do you really want to annoy your opponent regarding Casualty Victory Points? Watch his face when he eliminates one of your AFVs and has to watch two of his hard-earned tick

marks tumble out of the wreck and scramble away to safety. All right, this last one is a stretch, but we ASL players will take any advantage that comes up, psychological or otherwise.

In conclusion, crews are valuable, whether they have a Vehicle, a Gun, or else are out on their own. Crews have unique capabilities that set them apart from normal infantry. Sometimes a crew can win the scenario for you single-handedly, or help out in unexpected ways. Try to cherish your crews, and treat them well. They are well worth it.

## Minimal Games

Dan Preston



ASL scenarios come in all sizes, shapes and flavors. Sometimes we select a large scenario and plan our strategy for weeks. Occasionally we set aside an entire weekend to play a monster battle, or excuse ourselves from club meetings and tournaments for a whole year to play a campaign game.

Even on game day, most of us are in the habit of searching through the stack for an interesting scenario that is, by definition, “tournament size”. That is, we select an action that fits within the time and space requirements of our Saturday time slot. The opponents find something that is both manageable and fun for both players. Then the players find themselves a spot at the table and start pulling counters and boards.

Fate, however, is a ruthless referee. What happens when you and your opponent spend half the morning pulling the pieces for *Dreil Team* and the German player breaks the gun on the Panther on the first shot? Similarly, what if the Russian player in *The Yelnya Bridge* breaks that 76L on the first shot? I am, of course, describing my own experiences.

So, what are the alternatives if the players in question only have a few hours left in the gameday? Should we call it a day and go home and cut the grass? Do we start another “tournament size” scenario that has no chance of being played to completion? Here is another set of circumstances to consider. Suppose you show up on game day but only have a few hours available, or you work that day and show up late at the tournament and really want to get at least one game in on Friday night (that’s me again).

I have a set of scenarios that I like to call my “Plan B” pack. Over the years, I have culled from the published, available resources for fun and interesting scenarios that can be played in a couple of hours. Like a mobile reserve,

these stand by ready to fill in the gaps if time is short but expectations are high.

Here, then, are my choices for that short but sweet list. These scenarios have several things in common. Obviously, they are short, they are low in counter density, the largest is played on one board (or two half boards), the SSRs are minimal, there are no overlays, and each is interesting enough that both players will be satisfied with the ensuing action. In addition, most are pretty balanced according to ROAR. Last and not least, as a measure of long-lasting playability, two of the choices are ranked number two and three with the most reported playings on ROAR, losing out only to that great grandfather of the system, ASL 1, *Fighting Withdrawal*. Along with the name of the scenario, I have listed where it can be found and the ROAR rating for each (current as of September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009). I have also decided to list a brief description of the action for the sake of completeness.

## *Kempf at Melikhovo* (J94) G73 R78

Once again we visit the battlefield at Kursk. I have played and lost this little gem twice, once as either side. The Germans are assaulting the now-famous town on board 3 where the Russians are waiting. With only one antitank gun to repel the Nazi tanks, the Russian player had better hope for some good shooting with that KV-1 that enters the fray. This one usually comes down to what happens with the Panzer III flame tank the Germans get. This vehicle is a great asset for this kind of action, and if it goes on a rampage or gets knocked out early in the game, the fate of the combatants will be quickly decided.

## *Han-Sur-Neid* (U7) G57 A42

A retreat from the well-worn *Anvil of Victory* scenarios, this action concerns a small group of American tanks and a handful of infantry that have managed to cross the Neid River and now have to deal with the inevitable German counterattack. With the river at their backs, there can be little retreat. With a module of 105mm artillery and three Shermans to support them, the Yanks are definitely out on a limb. However, the nine squads and 5 AFVs the Germans have to attack are restricted to random entry on three separate board edges. The German player had better think on his feet if he wants to crush the bridgehead before time runs out.

## *The Dead of Winter* (T6) G80 R57

Operation Typhoon has ground to a halt at the frigid gates of Moscow, and the Soviet counterattack is coming. The

Germans have dug in at the crossroads and the Siberian infantry, along with tanks, are well equipped for the assault. With only one dug-in tank and one doorknocker to repel the coming attack, the German infantry had better be up to the challenge. Otherwise, the hardened Siberian infantry and T-34 tanks will roll right over them. Played on only a half-board with just a few counters, this savage little fur ball is a favorite of mine.

## *Commandos, Not Supermen* (TT5) J9 Aus 13

I will admit that I have not played many Pacific theater scenarios. This one is a nasty little dustup where the Australians are holding the hill and the Japanese want it. With numbers on their side and the ability to keep coming without breaking, the Japanese force can run up the hill into withering fire that would discourage any other nationality. The Australians have fortifications and the high ground, but eventually must fall back or be surrounded and wiped out. This scenario can easily come down to the last turn, with the remnants of the Japanese force duking it out in melee with the last few surviving Australians in that last corner of the high ground.

## *Schloss Bűbingen* (SP29) A18 G21

This curious matchup features two very small groups of American and German infantry beating each other up in that edifice that most of us refer to as the Board 6 chateau. The GIs already have a foothold in the building, and the Germans are trying to push them back out, or else attempting to maintain a presence in the building for a win at game end. The Americans have brought a big friend for support. One of the legendary King Kong 155 mm self-propelled guns is firing direct support for the assault on the building. By the way, the monster can set up in 6X9 and have a very good look at hex 6N4, the halfway point in the assault. I found out too late that it also qualifies for a +2 wall modifier from this location. According to B9.3, units behind a wall or hedge hex side with a road gap may claim the TEM as long as they are not moving. Wherever you put this beast, any Germans getting in its LOS had better be wary. This is a tiny but action-packed scenario.

## *Surrender or Die* (OA16) A27 G26

Okay, one side gets tanks and one side does not. Which side does the average ASL player want to play? I won this one as the side with no tanks. The American Rangers have moved into Cisterna as a recon in force and gotten a big surprise. The Germans have laid a skilful trap with tanks and infantry, and the Yanks have walked right into it. But the American infantry is very hardcore, and the Germans

have to spend that first turn moving up to the attack. If this scenario could go on indefinitely, the Germans would win every time. However, time is very short and the attackers have a lot on their plates. With the Rangers spreading out to hold the victory buildings, and bazookas to keep the panzers away, the German player may well run out of time.

## *Zon With the Wind* (A32) G194 A200

With nearly four hundred playings on ROAR, I think everyone has played or at least heard of this one. Played on only one board, this action concerns the 506<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment's race to grab the bridge at Zon, Holland, before the Germans can blow it up. With a terrific force of paratroop squads and first-rate leadership, the American player can fight through or possibly outflank the pair of deadly 88 mm guns backing up the Zon garrison. But as with nearly all scenarios that feature overwhelming force, there is not enough time for a deliberate assault. Considering the win-loss record of this scenario, coupled with the number of playings, I'd call it dead even.

## *Gavin Take* (T1) A189 G188

Considering the force and leadership the American player wields in this scenario, I would say that the Yanks would eat the German's lunch every time. But the ROAR record listed above would debunk that theory. This is number three on the ROAR hit parade, and has been listed on many favorite lists. I would have to agree. The Germans, although heavily outclassed, still hold the buildings in town with an escape route that also guarantees victory points if they play their cards right. This scenario comes down to how much the Germans fight, and how much they run. It also concerns how much the Americans shoot, and how much they chase. One thing is for sure: if the Germans try to stand toe to toe with the Americans, they will get creamed. Better to retreat and run the Americans out of time.

## *Marders Not Martyrs* (J106) R56 G33

All right, like many others, I have a soft spot for this particular scenario. I would not really call it a short one, but it is "tournament size" on the smallish side, it does not have that many counters, and it is played on less than one board. It's on my list, so there. This scenario jumped off the page the first time I saw it, and it's really old school. It would have fit in perfectly with Cross of Iron. This scenario is the ideal match between numbers vs. quality and position. It kind of reminds me of *Paw of the Tiger*, just not quite so big. ROAR shows this as somewhat favoring the Russians, but I would consider that deceiving, since most of the action comes down to a few key rolls. Win or lose, the

Marders holding the hilltops with their sparse infantry support are going to have an exciting time holding off the more numerous Russians with their KV-1 support. It's fast and fun, just like the others.

## *The Puma Prowls* (T2) R135 G142

## *Strayer's Strays* (T16) A62 G89

## *Traverse Right...Fire!* (U24) G0 R2

These scenarios are the honorable mentions of the list. Even though like the others I have heard that they are all small, fast, and fun, I have never played any of these.

In conclusion, good things come in small packages. Some of my choices are doubtlessly some of yours. It is better to have some scenarios like these lined up in case your bigger choices suddenly go pear shaped. And sometimes, I just want to play several small scenarios instead of one or two big ones. I'm also sure that the readers have their own lists of short fun scenarios to play as backup for the big ones. Hold onto your Plan B scenarios, and show me your choices if we get the chance. I'm always in the market for a few more.

## Three Rules To A Better Cave Game



### JR VanMechelen

Here are three cave rules that, if you play them right, will get you 80% of the way to playing a perfect cave game. The first rule is a very easy one to miss about setup. The second rule is about cave concealment loss. The third concerns LOS from a cave to a lower level. I don't cover the cave rules here thoroughly. This article only draws attention to several rules I think need more careful attention. Read through the rules first, then read this.

### Setting up caves in Depressions

Caves can set up on "hillsides" (Crest Lines, Cliffs, elevated roads) or IN Depressions (gully, sunken roads). The rules for "hillside" caves have a few conditions, but they are simple and because they don't come up that often, they are hard to get wrong. The conditions for Depression caves are easier to miss and are common in every map.

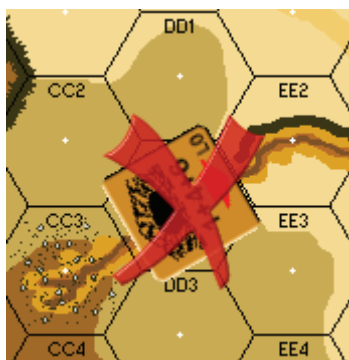
To make it easier to refer to parts of the rule, I've added some numbering:

G11.1 "Each Cave counter set up IN a Depression must have its arrow



1. pointing directly away from a non-Depression hexside (of its hex)
2. whose other common hex has a Base Level (or Crest Level—whichever is higher) > that cave's level,
3. and that arrow must also point across a Depression (including a Crest-Line-Depression; B19.5) hexside
4. to an adjacent Depression hex.”

Here are ways to violate G11.1:



**Figure 1:** 25DD2, not pointing away from non-Depression hexside



**Figure 2:** 25G7, common hex behind base/crest level not higher than cave's level



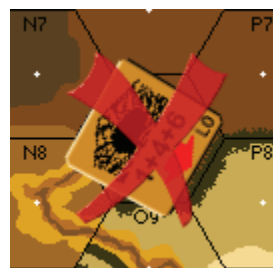
**Figure 3:** 25Z7 not pointing at Depression



**Figure 4:** 25M7 not pointing at adjacent hexside Depression hex

Parts one and three are the ones I see most often missed. All Depression caves must be “at a bend or at an end,” facing away from a non-Depression and towards a Depression.

Also note in G11.1 that if a cave sets up in a Depression hex that is also a “hillside”, it must set up as a Depression cave. The cave in 25DD2 above can't claim to be a “hillside” cave, nor can a cave in 25O8 set up facing 25P8 across the cliff, even though the gully is a level above the cave's level.

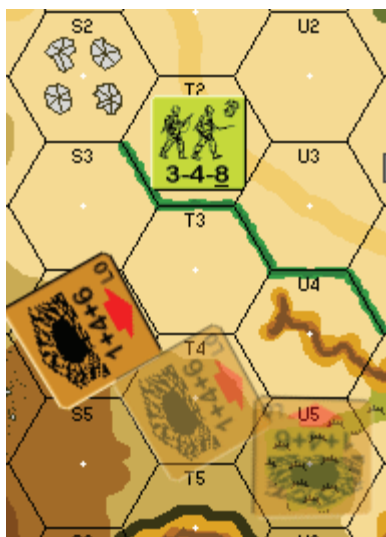


**Figure 5:** 25O8 illegally set up as a “hillside” cave

## Cave Concealment Loss

G11.3 “HIP: Cave counters, as well as their contents, are always considered to be in Concealment Terrain regardless of the other terrain in their hex and always set up hidden.”

Caves are Fortifications [G11.1]. Fortifications lose Concealment in Concealment Terrain if a Good Order unit has LOS within 16 hexes. For some reason, it's easy to read G11.3 as saying caves lose Concealment as per G.2. But G.2 only applies to Fortifications (including caves) set up in jungle, kunai or bamboo. Caves will generally lose concealment as soon as an enemy unit has LOS (because most ranges are  $\leq 16$  hexes), just like Foxholes or Pillboxes. The only real difference is that LOS to the cave has to be through the Covered Arc.

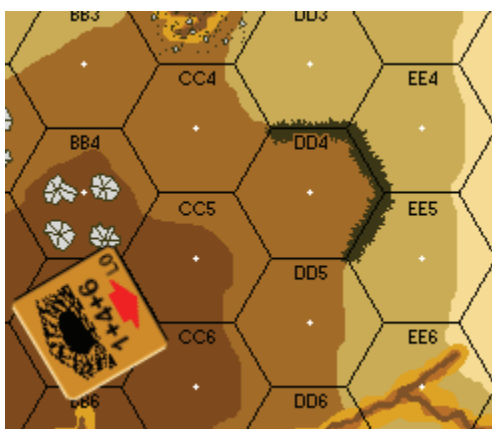


**Figure 6:** Assuming PTO is in effect, a unit in 25T2 immediately reveals the cave in 25S4, but not the one in 25T4 because the unit is not in the cave's Covered Arc, nor the cave in 25U5 because G.2 applies due to bamboo.

## LOS from a cave to a lower level

A unit in a "hillside" cave is at the lower level of the "hillside" [G11.112] (ignoring upper level cliff caves [G11.113]). On most hills the Entrance hex would "plateau" the LOS to lower levels if not for this rule:

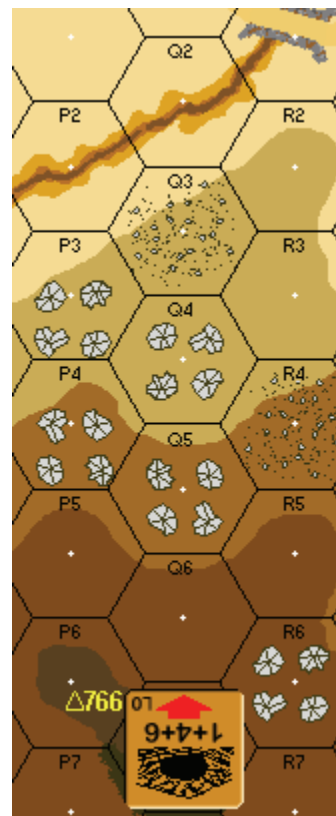
G11.5 "Barring other LOS obstructions, LOS may be traced within the CA of a cave in a non-Depression hex to/from an elevation lower than the cave's if its Entrance Hex contains no terrain (including a Crest Line) whose obstacle height along that LOS is > that cave's level."



**Figure 7:** Cave set up in 25BB5 facing 25CC5

A cave set up in 25BB5 facing 25CC5 has LOS to 25CC4, 25DD4, and 25DD5 even though it's at level three, and 25CC5 would ordinarily "plateau" the LOS. This cave does not have a LOS to 25EE4, because 25DD4 would be a "LOS obstruction" other than the Entrance Hex, and it

would create a blind hex in 25EE4 (and 25FF3 too because the cliff obstruction is at level two).



Similarly, a cave set up in 25Q7 facing 25Q6 would have LOS to the Crest Level of 25Q2, but not INTO the gully because at a range of five hexes it would have to have a five level elevation advantage over the Location IN the gully at level -1, that is it would have to be at level four [A6.3]. This cave also does not have LOS to 25R4 or 25P4 because while the Entrance Hex allows for the LOS, 25R5 and 25P5 are "other LOS obstructions" that "plateau" the LOS and so deny it.

There are lots more cave rules, but most don't cause quite as much confusion as these three. If you can play these three rules right, you're on way to playing a perfect cave game.



Some of the Japanese caves, such as this one, had been carefully reinforced. Marine riflemen were rarely to inspect it.

## 2010 Texas ASL Team Tournament



**Rick Reinesch**

The planning for this year's tournament is wrapping up nicely and this tournament promises to be just as much fun as in years past, so make those plans now to attend the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Texas Team Tournament in Austin, TX, June 24-27, 2010. Last year we had a record 52 players from points all over the country participating. The website (<http://www.Texas-ASL.com>) has been updated with information on tournament activities, the hotel info and the registration fees. We are constantly updating all that information and more leading up to the tournament, so make sure to check in regularly for all the latest. Note that the last day to get our great hotel rate is June 6<sup>th</sup>, so don't delay! And while you are checking out the website, make sure and preregister; you never know what goodies I will come up with for those doing so.

As in previous years, Thursday's games will be informal gaming, with those games only counting toward the Major Johnson award. On Friday morning, we will launch the formal phase of the tournament where we will track wins and losses over the course of the weekend to crown the team and individual winners.

Our tournament runs an open format; players are free to match themselves with anyone, and play any mutually agreeable scenario. As the TD, I seed the team part of the tourney so that every team has an equal chance at the top prize. This year we are going to expand the number of folks on each team from two to three. This should help to mitigate the impact of the loss of one person on a team and at the same time opens up the ability of more folks to walk away with one of the top prizes. So how does this help, you may ask? The way we score is not based on total wins or losses but on the difference between the two. So a team with 10 wins and 4 losses has a score of 6. But a team that goes 6 and 0 also has a score of 6 and would come out ahead of the other team because of a better win percentage for the team. So with teams of 3 at least the loss of one individual on a team is not the end of the team tournament for the others. They still have a very good chance of taking the team prize. Check the website for all the details on how the team tourney works. Moreover, while we call ourselves a team tournament, individual play is still paramount. We offer plenty of individually based prizes, from the individual champion and runner-up, to the Major Johnson award given to the individual playing the most ASL over the weekend, along with any number of mini-tourneys.

And speaking of minis, I'm excited to announce that the *Opening Assault Mini* will once again be taking place on

Thursday! The action this year will again be something unique and special, centered this year on the final titanic struggle for Berlin. This is your chance to experience a small part of this brutal battle in the final days of World War II and see if you can survive that fateful day and the days that followed.

In this mini we are featuring the Critical Hit product *Berlin II – Tyrant's Lair*. This module brings the fury of the Battle for Berlin to the players in a massive historical module that has maps recreating the area around the Führerbunker. We'll be featuring the 14 turn scenario that uses the entire map. And what a map it is, created by *Red Barricades* map developer Charlie Kibler. So you know it'll be a gorgeous map to play on. You will fight for the Hitler-city of the Third Reich, block by bloody block until your personal leader counter is knocking on the door to the Führerbunker, ready to enter and end World War II at long last. The expectation is that we will have 4 players battle all day long. And at the end of the day, we will hold a drawing with one of the participants taking the game home. And if there is enough interest we will set up a second game of 4 to run side by side, with the same take-it-home rules applying. Join in and experience something truly unique in the world of ASL.

For the other Thursday mini, we are pleased to be sponsoring a Houston institution in Austin this year – *Ferocity Fest*. For those that like their PTO brutal and deadly, this is not to be missed. We will be featuring a scenario from the recently released Bounding Fire Productions pack *Blood & Jungle* and possibly a second classic scenario as well, depending on time availability. Players will be paired up, one Axis and one Allied, to remove any issues with scenario balance. Your objective is to do better than the other players of your side, either Allied or Axis. The team with the largest number of points at the end of scenario play will be the winner. It's that simple. We'll be posting the specific scenarios as they are determined.

We will kick off all mini play promptly at 9am Thursday, June 24<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested in participating in either mini, please contact the Tournament Director (me) directly. We'll post participants for the minis online as they come in. You can find my email address in the Club Notes at the end of this newsletter.

But that's not all for the minis. We will also be sponsoring an SK mini on Saturday. We'll have it as a classic pairing bracket using scenarios from SK1 and the recently released SK1 expansion pack, with one person besting all others and walking away with the prize.

For the regular part of the tourney, remember that above all else we are an OPEN tournament; play what you want



against whomever you want, or even as much (or little) as you want.

That being said, there are plenty of prizes to be had. We give out the Major Johnson Award to the player who plays the most ASL over the course of the weekend. We provide awards for the best team over the course of the weekend determined by the best point differential between wins and losses. And then there are awards given to the overall individual champion and runner-up. But even if you aren't in the running for any of those awards, you can still try for the Audie Murphy Award given to the most snakes over the course of the weekend, or there is the Col. Klink for most boxcars.

For the past several years we have provided a drawing on Saturday of the tourney for all of the merchandise our sponsors so graciously provide. I would encourage everyone to head out to our website and check out the listing of these fine folks, and make sure to consider them first when you are making your purchases.

Registration this year is \$36 for all Thursday-Sunday gaming, \$31 for Friday-Sunday; and \$21 for Saturday only. Your entrance fee includes participation in any Mini-Tournaments should you desire to enter. We are at the La Quinta Inn-Round Rock with a fantastic room rate of \$68/night.

You can check everything out by following the ASL Team Tourney link from the Texas ASL home page at <http://www.Texas-ASL.com>.

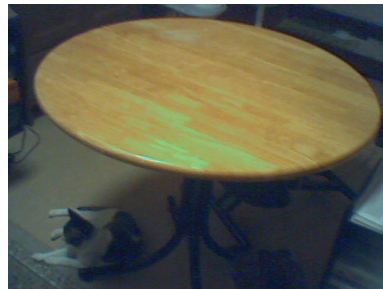
## My Summer Project

George Bates



Thought I'd share the results of my first carpentry job in about 15 years. I built a fold-out work and game table extension that fits onto my living/dining room table to create a 91cm x 125cm surface that is almost 100% bigger than before. When fabulous babes drop by to sample my cooking and fuss over my attention-craving beast I can quickly remove it (lies flat or stands vertical) and whip out the tablecloth and candlesticks to maintain that all-important chick magnet/geek hobby firewall without adding more furniture.

It's not a very beautiful job as I altered the design midway, applied two spotty coats of varnish and neglected to 'measure twice, drill once' on two separate occasions. But with some sanding and a few more screws into the extension slats, she became a work I could take some pride in. Here are some shots of my creation:



It all started with a simple round table from the House of Rutledge catalog, - shown here with optional housecat. Indentations in the surface show the wear from Lee Fehlberg's elbows.



This is the folded extension mounted and clamped to table surface. Note the state-of-the-art Feline Protection System (FPS) to reduce the threat of nocturnal close assault tactics (CAT) attacks for scenarios up to half a campaign map in size (approx. 60cm x 90cm) that have been suspended in mid-play. The FPS is a close copy of the original *Kaetzenverteidigungsschild* (*KtznVSch*) simultaneously developed by a number of German units stationed in Normandy and Holland to protect their milk rations. When a similar threat to the tuna catch arose, Imperial Japanese Army and Navy liaisons both requested plans for the *KtznVSch*, resulting in a Japanese variant known as the *Neko Bogyoban*, later commonly referred to as the "sushi saver" by Allied Occupation troops.



Extension with leaf open. I probably could have come up with a better hinge arrangement if I had searched longer for the hardware, but I was eager to get the thing done. Look for an upgrade in the Mark II model.



Central Stalingrad, anyone? Until now, there has been enough room to swing a cat in my apartment, but nowhere to put down a campaign game. This arrangement can accommodate up to 6 deluxe or 10 conventional boards if the FPS is disabled and dinner guests are not expected. The object floating in the Volga is an original Belcher handmade dice tower.



So, now that I've built it, will they come? My field of dreams awaits both face-to-face and Skype opponents.

"Hey, Ernie, let's play two!"

## Author's Note

*Don't ask me for KtznVSch blueprints - the files at OKW were lost during the final Soviet assaults in the spring of '45. If STAVKA ever obtained them, they must have been considered of little value as cats were allowed to run freely in the Red Army. Russian archives bear out that contrary to Cold War hyperbole, it was never policy to capture cute furry animals for the field kitchens. Upon the withdrawal of GHQ from Japan in 1952, Japanese documents pertaining to the KtznVSch were apparently turned over to the National Police Agency, who may or may not have transferred them to the infant Defense Agency in 1954. To this day, their existence is denied by Defense and Police officials.*

## Rules Tip

**Rick Reinesch**

If you have a stack of concealed units with support weapons that you are required to conduct a random selection upon,



make sure to keep in mind the second paragraph of A.9. You must roll a dr for each counter under the concealment stack. So those concealed SWs have just as much of a chance of being selected as the units in the hex. And if a SW does get selected, that means that the unit possessing that SW is the ultimate (un)lucky recipient. So the stud leader that may be a part of your concealed kill stack stands less of a chance of being the target of that critical hit than the unit toting the HMG. If an unpossessed SW winds up being the high dr during RS, then the selection moves to the next smaller dr. The exception to the selection process for concealed stacks is the random selection process associated with Sniper Activation (A14.23).

## Intensive Fire Trip Report

**Eric Gerstenberg**



Having attended and played in 19 ASL tournaments over the last 13 years, both in The U.S.A. and the U.K, I've experienced a great deal of "cardboard combat". Hence, I'd like to take the time to brief my fellow grognards and curious onlookers on a particular tournament in England called Intensive Fire. It's been in commission since 1995 in Bournemouth, England. I've had many great times there. I'll skip details of the 10 matches I've played there over the past 3 years and proceed to describe how the tournament is structured and how it functions.

If you care to attend Intensive Fire, merely e-mail the Tournament Director, Pete Phillips ([pete@vftt.co.uk](mailto:pete@vftt.co.uk)), and he will sign you up. You pay your tournament fee upon entry into the Kiwi Hotel, the site of the tournament.

Upon arrival and registration you will receive your tournament kit, and be assigned a Crusader ladder standing. Your initial standing assigns you a point total of 3000. Your Crusader ladder standing makes a difference once the Team Tournament challenge begins Saturday morning, I'll talk more about that later. For more information on the Crusader ASL Ladder, go the following link:

<http://www.btinternet.com/~derek.tocher/ladder.htm>

However, you don't have to wait until Saturday to get in some cardboard combat action. If you arrive on Thursday when Intensive Fire begins, you can treat yourself to a friendly game with whomever you choose. You don't have to wager Crusader ladder points, either.

Friendly matches can be played all tournament long in lieu of playing in the mini tournaments or the Team Tournament. The advantage of friendly matches is that there is no time limit to complete the match. The disadvantage is that you'll be limited to playing only other

players who aren't involved in the thick of the Team Tournament fight, in general. So if you want a wider realm of competition, then you would be advised to enter one of the mini tournaments or, of course, the Team Tournament. So what's the difference between these two kinds of events?

Let's start with the mini tournaments. Mini tournament are scheduled for Friday. They begin around 9 AM and can last for 12 hours or so. Typically, a mini tournament consists of two rounds. One played in the morning, and one round played in the afternoon. You have a choice of 3 different scenarios for each round. The winner is the player who wins both rounds. Simple. The prize is a nice plaque-style trophy or a model tank-style trophy. There are many different styles, or themes of mini tournament play, though ETO, PTO, and combat themes are the most common, though there is some variation. For example, Keith Bristol hosted a mini tournament last year which featured winter warfare scenarios. And Ian Daglish usually presides over a mini involving his own playtest creations. This phase of Intensive Fire is loads of fun, no doubt. The win-loss results from the mini tournaments are recorded for the Crusader Ladder and count towards the individual championship standing awarded at the end of the tournament. The mini tournaments should keep you occupied all day long, so arrive hungry to play all day. The *schwerpunkt*, or point of attack for most combatants, comes in the form of the Team Tournament.

The Team Tournament phase is open to all comers willing to spend all day Saturday and Sunday morning willing to fight. Though it can be arduous, it promises loads of action. In order to joint the fight, one must fall in for roll call Saturday morning at 9 AM, sharp. If you miss roll call you'll be counted out. When the formation assembles the tournament director, Pete Phillips, takes a head count and assigns players to teams based on their respective Crusader ladder standings. As mentioned earlier, a player will be assigned to either an elite or a 1st line team. At that point, individual player opponents pair up and choose from 2 or 3 Team Tournament scenarios and start rolling dice. Thus begins a three-round battle. Each player, win or lose, must play all three rounds. There is a morning round of play which ends between 12 and 2 PM. A winner is determined and then the contestants move on to the second round which ends between 5-7 pm Saturday night. The first round is much more time-constrained. Failure to complete this morning battle in the allotted time will result in adjudication by the tournament director to determine the victor. Such adjudications are rare, but necessary to keep things moving. The same process beings at 9 AM Sunday morning with the final round, by which time a team will clearly emerge victorious.

Additionally, by the end of the Team Tournament an overall Tournament Champion will emerge as well. Who is

that? The player with the highest ratio of matches won to matches played. Also considered in this calculus are the respective ladder scores of the opponents defeated by the imminent overall champion. This is arguably the most sought-after prize, and the most difficult prize to obtain. For example, Mark Blackmore of Liverpool took the Overall Championship prize with a record of 7-0. Not surprisingly he managed to defeat a number of heavy hitters along the way to victory. That is the kind of score one would typically expect to take home the title. Well done Mark! For a view of the Intensive Fire Hall of Fame click [here](http://www.btinternet.com/~derek.tocher/Honour.htm).

<http://www.btinternet.com/~derek.tocher/Honour.htm>



*Courtesy: Ian Pollard*

*Mark Blackmore, Intensive Fire 2009 Overall Champion*

By Sunday afternoon, an awards ceremony takes place in the "great hall" of the Kiwi Hotel and the coveted trophies are awarded to the triumphant. At that point the contestants shake hands, grab their kits, and reluctantly rotate back to the real world. Adios, au revoir, auf Wiedersehen, goodbye, and good luck.

Overall, the tournament structure is very similar to most tournaments in the USA, notwithstanding the Team Tournament aspect and the function of the Crusader Ladder. By the same token, that's what makes Intensive Fire uniquely challenging. And more challenging still is the caliber of the players at Intensive Fire. The tournament attracts nearly all of Britain's (as well as many of Europe's) best players year in and year out. However, there are just as many other talented, cordial, and interesting opponents at all levels of experience. You will find what you are looking for at Intensive Fire. And the competition is friendly. In the three years I've attend the tournament, I've never run across any blokes who where poor sports, rules lawyers, drama queens, whining weenies, etc. (Well, to be honest there have been a few vulgar words which where spoken exuberantly from the lips of your humble narrator in the heat of battle at past at I.F events, I shall not lie! For most



in attendance however, keeping a cool head, a stiff upper lip, and a sense of humor seems to be the unwritten rule there. Bravo!

One final word about the logistics and itinerary involved in getting to Bournemouth for Intensive Fire. Though expensive when compared to tournaments in the USA, going to Bournemouth might actually be less expensive than your typical European vacation. To begin with, the flight I've booked there typically runs between \$726-\$850 round trip. A night's stay at the Kiwi Hotel, where the event takes place, runs about \$70-80 a night. Due to the recession and taking advantage of off-season rates, lodging is actually quite affordable. You can get a room at any number of less pricey bed and breakfasts just 2-5 minutes away. I stay at the Bedwley for \$40 a night and get a comfortable room with a toilet and shower. Granted it's a Victorian-style house that's 100 or more years old, but to me that makes it all the more charming. You'd be hard pressed to find that style of accommodation anywhere in the US. It's more than adequate for a night's stay. Furthermore, besides the eating at the Kiwi Hotel, there are loads of pubs, curry shops, and fish and chip shops all over Bournemouth easily within walking distance to satisfy your hunger or quench your thirst. Bournemouth is a holiday town so there is plenty of things to see and plenty of places to drink a pint, as well. Of course most of the blokes at Intensive Fire belly up to the Kiwi bar after the last battle of the day for a night of drinking, jaw jacking and revelry. Really, the camaraderie is just as much fun as the gaming itself, as is the immersion in the ambiance of England. I really dig it.



Courtesy: Ian Pollard

*Intensive Fire 2007 group photo. Eric is the Fanatic, first row, first one on the left.*

So to all of you fellow Americans, and anyone else out there. Go For It! It will be fun. Join me on the foray to Intensive Fire next year !



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## Club Notes

### Biweekly Lunch Gathering

Don't forget to join us every other Friday at 1300 hours down at Schlotsky's on South Lamar and Toomey (just south of Riverside Drive). The club sends out email reminders, or you can call Matt or Sam for information on the next get-together.

### Game Days

The Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas/Ft. Worth groups have remained active, hosting various gatherings for

club members to get together and knock cardboard heads. If you missed any of these you missed a lot of fun. It's like a tournament atmosphere for a day. The Austin group meets on the first Saturday of every month. The DFW group has been meeting on the second, the San Antonio guys on the third Saturday of every month, and the Houston group on the fourth Saturday of every month. To stay informed of upcoming club events, stop by our club website, [www.texas-asl.com](http://www.texas-asl.com) or better yet join our email group. You can post a message at [central-texas-asl@yahoogroups.com](mailto:central-texas-asl@yahoogroups.com) or you can point your favorite browser to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central-texas-asl> and take a look. For those still not connected, give Matt, Rick, or Sam a call for club information.

## The Banzai!! Staff

Founder and Editor Emeritus	Matt Shostak (512) 899-4560 <a href="mailto:mshostakster@gmail.com">mshostakster@gmail.com</a>
Managing Editor and Keeper of the Game Tracker	Sam Tyson (980) 428-4113 <a href="mailto:styson@gmail.com">styson@gmail.com</a>
Editor in Chief and Copy Editor	Rick Reinesch (512) 828-4451 <a href="mailto:ctasl@aol.com">ctasl@aol.com</a>
Contributing Authors	Rick Reinesch, Zeb Doyle, Dan Preston, George Bates, JR VanMechelen, Eric Gerstenberg
Publishing Schedule	<b>Whenever we feel like it!</b>
Club Information	Matt Shostak or Rick Reinesch
Club Web Site	<a href="http://www.texas-asl.com/">www.texas-asl.com/</a>

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Thanks to Rodney Kinney for VASL, Carl Fung for his VASL counter images, and the VASL Map Cabals for their VASL map images. We use a combination of VASL counter and map images for scenario layouts with permission of use for that purpose.

## Next Issue

- More articles about ASL
  - Player Profile
  - Favorite Scenarios
  - Club Meeting Recaps
- And much more!