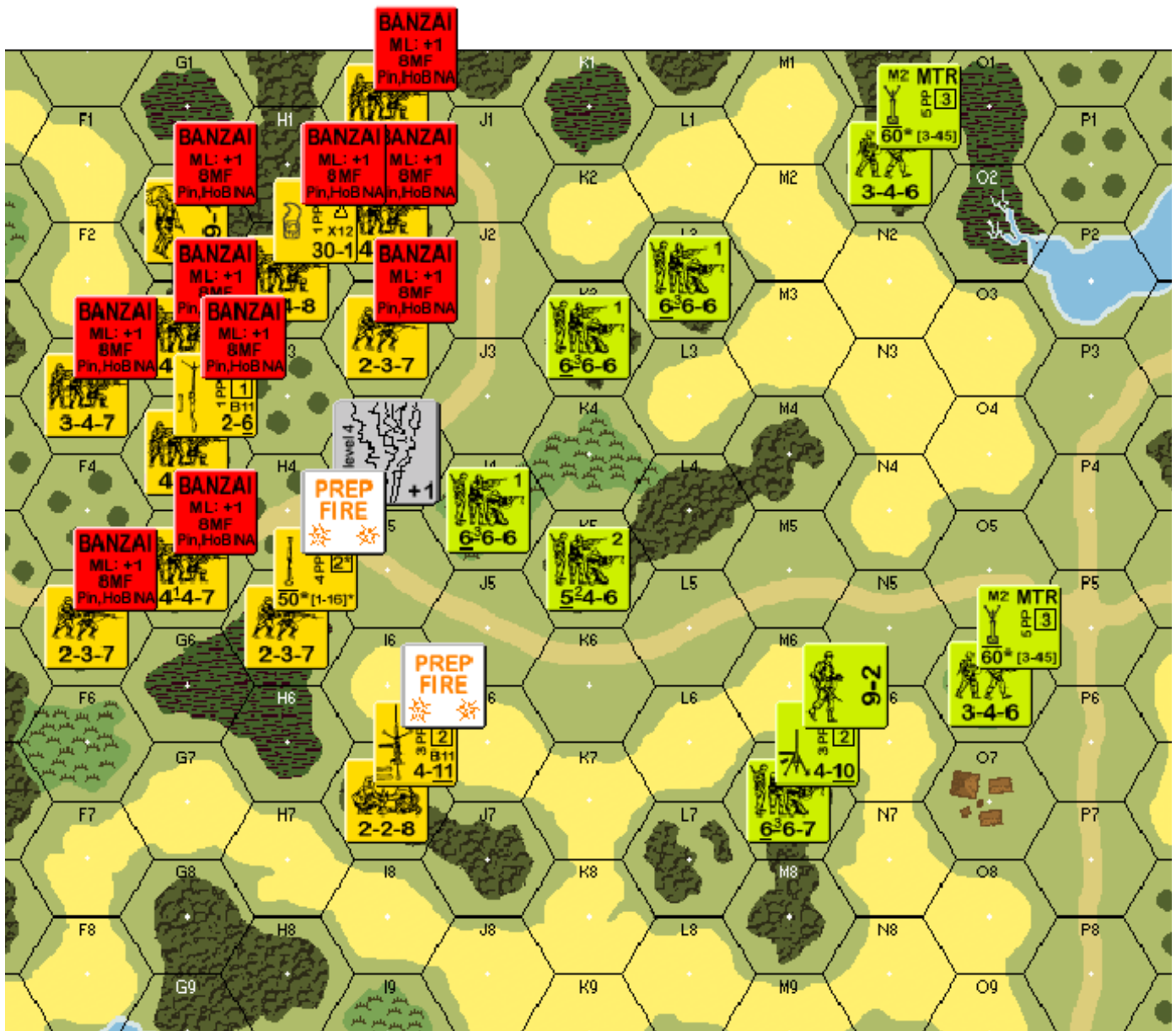


BANZAI!!!



The Newsletter of the Texas ASL Club

August, 2014 Volume 19, Number 1

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EDITOR'S FOXHOLE

Matt Shostak



We are pleased to bring you another newsletter chock full of goodies. Fresh off a resounding success with the 22nd Annual Texas Team Tourney, and looking forward to the upcoming North Texas Shootout, we hope this issue provides some interesting entertainment. Good gaming!

SCENARIO ANALYSIS: BFP95 OBIAN HIGHWAY

Matt Shostak



Attraction: This scenario from BFP's *Crucible of Steel* is a short, sharp fight on board 56 featuring combined arms for both sides, and is playable in a just a few hours. It seems to be finely balanced (42-41 on ROAR as of this writing) and has a minimum of special chrome in the form of unusual SSRs so it should be accessible to most players. It looks like a fine choice for a short tourney round.

German Advantages: Troop quality and quantity, leadership

German Disadvantages: Time

The German infantry here is a pretty tough force, well provided with support weapons, including 2 demo charges and even ATMM capability by SSR, and they have a couple elite 5-4-8 squads to bolster their assault. They also have a solid numerical advantage of 14 squads to 8 at start and are generously provided with 5 leaders while the defenders only get 2. Although they have good armor, I don't list it as an advantage because the Soviets have a powerful reinforcing tank group as well. The Wehrmacht in this scenario is capable of coming on like gangbusters early, but there's not a lot of time to achieve their objective of seizing the 3 big buildings in town.

Russian Advantages: Tank force

Russian Disadvantages: Potentially brittle at start

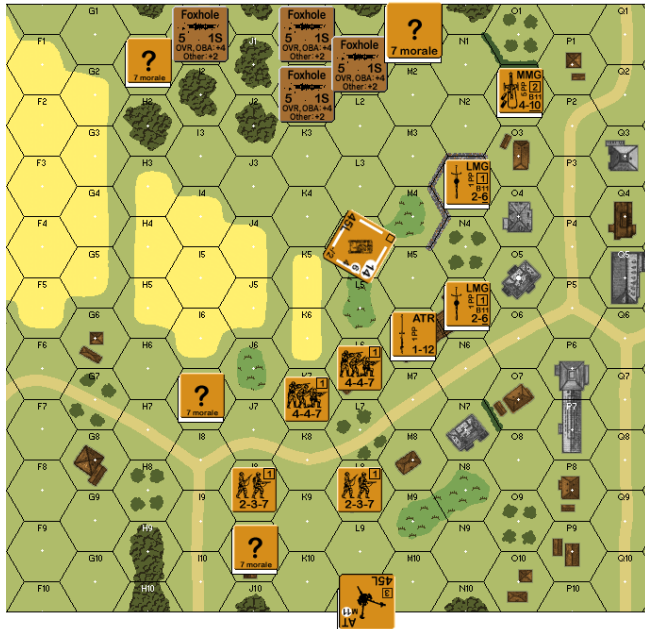
The Russians have a couple of tee-thirty-formidables entering on turn 2 along with a pair of dangerous Valentines and a submachinegun platoon. The T-34s are a major headache for the Germans with a nice balance of armor, hitting power, and speed. The Valentines are much less balanced, with no machineguns and limited HE to fend off infantry, and they are quite slow. But they can go crew exposed to improve their marksmanship and their guns pack a wallop that the Germans will have to respect: the basic kill number of 15 should be a match for most of the panzers' armor. Their at-start group, however, has to avoid catastrophic losses until the tanks arrive to shore up the defense. They'll have to hope their dug-in T-70 and 45L antitank gun can help keep the German tanks from running roughshod over their infantry for a couple of turns.

Russian Defensive Philosophy and Setup

Set up too far back and you cede too much ground to the fascist aggressors; too far forward and your exposed troops might get overwhelmed early. It's a bit of a dilemma, but not an unusual one for the defender in an ASL scenario. The Germans have to respect the 45L guns because with a little bit of luck they could score some early kills on the panzers, forcing them to play from behind for the rest of the game. It's a bit of a crapshoot with those guns, however; the base kill number of 10 is no guarantee against these German tanks, especially through the front facing. Therefore the Soviets should try to play on the German fear of losing too many tanks early, and deploy these weapons where they can simultaneously threaten side shots and protect the Red infantry from panzers getting behind them and messing with their rout paths. Don't forget your APCR.

The right flank has a good field of fire with a lot of open terrain in the N1-H4, N2-H5 corridor. A gun or tank in O1 will be difficult to flank. The left flank has no such shooting gallery, and the Germans might be inclined to orient their attack to take the town lengthwise in a southeasterly angle roughly from the H8 area through the crossroads area around O5. Therefore this area needs to be defended. Soviet

infantry in the buildings from O5 to I7 and J9 will have to conduct a fallback defense, while the dug-in T-70 and 45L antitank gun could support them from positions such as L10, L5, L4, etc.

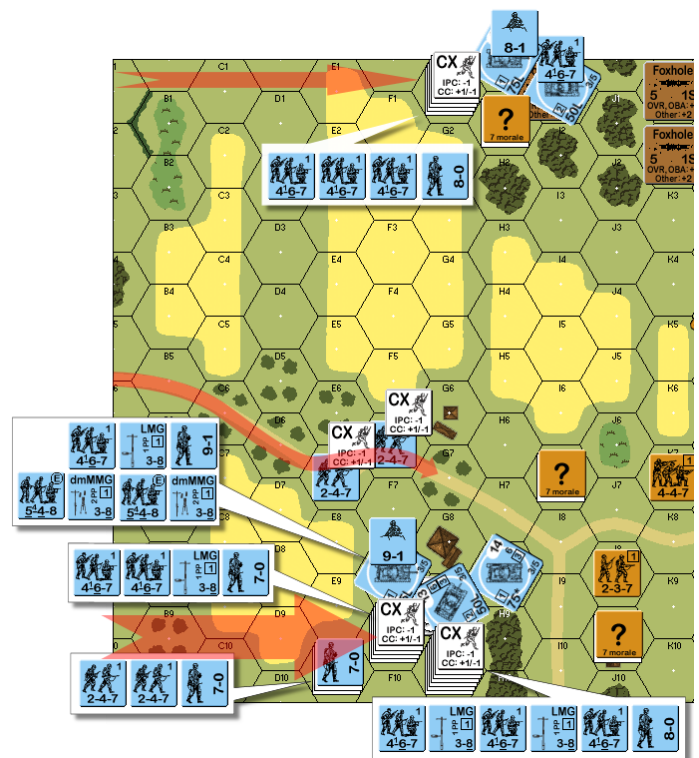


Here we provide an example setup. The infantry is arrayed to defend the northwestern arm of the town, hopefully retreating slowly back to the victory buildings after slowing the Germans down a bit. The MMG in O2 is poised to toss a fire lane out to G6 and if all goes well, eventually relocate across the street to the R4 victory building. Hex O1 is a great spot for a T-34, if the attackers are still trying to get through on that flank, as Lee Jennings ably demonstrated to me in a recent game. The gun in L10 is looking for flank shots, especially if any emboldened panzers try to freeze Russian squads in the area with VBM or get behind them with an eye toward causing rout failures.

Once the tanks arrive the character of the game will change. If any German tanks have already been knocked out, the Russians will have armor superiority and should use it to their advantage. It's not supremacy though; it's an edge that can be lost due to skillful play by your opponent, your own poor choices, or simply bad luck. Keeping tanks together so they can support each other is a good idea. The Valentines have the best gun for penetrating German armor, but they have very little weaponry for fending off infantry, and of course the German tanks are fully capable of drilling them too, especially the Mark IVs with their 75Ls. So keeping the Russian tanks in position to support each other will help mitigate against these threats. The SMG platoon could ride the tanks all the way to the center of town, taking advantage of the crew exposed road bonus, and should look to shore up the defense where needed, probably finding themselves in the R4 building more often than not.

German Attack Plan

These guys have 2 turns before the T-34s and Valentines arrive and their job gets a heckuva lot harder, so they need to make the most of it. If allowed to run wild, the combined tank-infantry force can make mincemeat of the Soviet infantry. They should strive to do just that: bring the tanks up close and personal with the defending infantry, and hose them down with machineguns and cannons at close range. Use VBM to suppress key units so the German infantry can get forward fast and finish them off. Get behind the Russian squads and eliminate them for failure to rout. The problem is those pesky 45L flies in the ointment. If the Germans can avoid the embarrassing and inconvenient loss of several tanks to the dug-in and the antitank gun, they should be able to make quick work of the initial defenders. Because of the short timetable, I think the Germans must be very aggressive in the early stages, and I have had some success with a bold pace. There just isn't enough time to methodically find and suppress the antitank gun to minimize losses and still win the game. Three of the tanks have healthy smoke ammo numbers, so that is also a good option for giving the attacking infantry some cover as they move forward. Smoke dispensers are often an excellent option for generating cover too.



Here we show an example first move, assuming that every unit gets to its initial destination without harm. As the game progresses the Russian tanks will arrive and the fight will move closer to the center of town and the victory buildings. The Germans might very well have an advantage in infantry

but a disadvantage in armor and they may have to dig a bit deeper into their bag of tricks to find creative ways to knock out Russian armor with DCs and street fighting with ATMMs. They'll have to find a way to seize and hold the key buildings in town against a determined and fierce defense. There should be plenty of fun for both players here. Enjoy.

PLAYER PROFILE: DAVID LONGSTREET

Banzai: Tell us a little bit about your gaming background. How long have you been gaming? What was your first game? Are there any particular games that stood out over the years?

David Longstreet: My brother and I used to play war games with plastic army men long before we were introduced to war games proper. Starting about when I was six we developed very simple rules for engagement using a ruler for range and an even/odd die roll for hit or miss. My Father, a career military man, capitalized on our interests and introduced us to Avalon Hill's *Tactics II* when I was about ten years old, so about 1969. I can go down the long list of Avalon Hill releases, but standing out as favorites were *Blitzkrieg* and *Panzerblitz*, which were about as far apart on scale as one could imagine.

Banzai: When and how did you discover ASL?

DL: I had been an avid *Squad Leader* player for years before moving to the wilds of the Pacific Northwest, where my interest died due to lack of opponents. I had invited an old war game friend to visit the Northwest in 1986, and he told me about the recent issuance of ASL by Avalon Hill. I had sort of expected it, as I had attended the 1984 Origins convention in Dallas, Texas, where its development was announced. I can still remember people getting up and walking out on Don Greenwood when he announced that "You can throw all your old counters away" for the new game! When I heard it was released we packed in the car within just a few minutes and headed to Seattle and purchased the rules and *Beyond Valor* that day. We played (or at least attempted to play) our first game that evening. A long winded way of saying 1986. After moving back to Texas I took a long hiatus until finding the Central Texas ASL club right here in Austin.

Banzai: What nationality do you enjoy playing the most?

DL: I have to say I do not have a favorite nationality, but do very much enjoy scenarios that feature unusual

combinations of nationalities not often played. If really pressed I would say Americans, as I do like the unique combination of firepower and fragility.

Banzai: Describe your favorite kind of scenario. What kind of scenario do you find less enjoyable?

DL: As mentioned above, I prefer scenarios that depict the backwaters of WWII with nationalities not often seen in play. I tend to dislike scenarios with heavily fortified defenders, as a good play of such a game tends to require an inordinate amount of time for the defender to make a decent set up...at least for me.

Banzai: What would you say are your ASL strengths and weaknesses?

DL: I wish I really knew! I suppose an answer to that question would have to be fielded by someone who has played me a lot. I think though that my best attribute is in being a reflective player; if my opponent wants to play beer and pretzels, I'm up for it. If they want to play for blood and glory, I'm ready to take them on. My weakness at present is the rules; it has been too long since I have done a programmed restudy of *The Tome*, a situation I am at present attempting to rectify.

Banzai: What is the best part of ASL, and what is the worst?

DL: The best part of ASL for me is also the worst: the absolutely unexpected results that can be seen by events occurring on either extremity of the bell curve of probabilities. Other than that, it is the constant adaptation of plans and decisions based on the situational flux in every game, best when forced on the opponent, worst when forced on me! In the final analysis, though, the best part of playing ASL is sitting down face to face with a live player. I suppose that is why I have yet to avail myself to VASL.

Banzai: What are you most looking forward to with regard to ASL?

DL: Without a doubt we are in the Golden Age of ASL! There are more quality products being released in rapid succession than ever before. I look forward to the release of any and all HASL products (at least the well-designed ones), even though I find I do not have the time to play most of them. I do so love the representation of an actual event with historical maps instead of the standard generic map set. For me, that really brings home what we are simulating when playing ASL. I keep a close eye on BFP

and their releases, and look forward to each and every one. Next to official MMP products, they are the only “must have” products out there.

Banzai: What’s your favorite game piece in ASL and why?

DL: Without a doubt the American 90mm AA gun. I must admit I only have ever played with it once, in KGPII. It was responsible, however, for the greatest run of rate of fire and results I have ever had: some 8 Panthers and a couple of Tigers dead in one fire phase. I can close my eyes and still relive the moment! It was enhanced by the fact that I had suffered so badly at the hands of the Germans before it made its arrival, and was in no way in the running to win the campaign game, but my opponent surrendered after that one glorious Prep Fire phase. Huh? Oh, sorry, I was lost in reverie there for a moment. Normal frequently played pieces? Why, the incredible flexible 6-6-6, of course.

Banzai: You’re playing the Russians in a 1941 scenario, facing a German combined arms attack featuring several AFVs. Would you rather have a KV-2 or a platoon of two BT-7 M37s and two BT-7As? Now turn that around: which combo would you rather not have to face if you were playing the Germans?

DL: If playing the Russians I would take the platoon of tanks over the single KV, as I do not like having my eggs all in one basket. On the other hand, if playing the Germans, I want to face the same platoon, as I hate to approach something like a KV with only a few measly can openers versus such a mighty behemoth.

Banzai: You get to choose your side in a scenario set in the battle for France in 1940. Both sides have combined arms and a decent allotment of tanks. Would you rather command the French side to use their Char B1-bis, Somuas, and Renault tanks, or the Germans, with their PzIs and PzIIs, and a few PzIVs and Pz38ts?

DL: I’d take the French in a second, but only because they don’t get used very often and the novelty of playing them is an attraction. Their tanks are not bad, and being able to use them ahistorically in a combined arms manner is a real bonus.

Banzai: How do you like PTO scenarios?

DL: Love them! I would have to say I have played more white-knuckle games in PTO with more dirty tricks displayed than in any other theater. You have to be on your toes to play most PTO games.

Banzai: What was your most enjoyable ASL moment? How about your worst, funniest, coolest, and/or craziest?

DL: Strangely enough, any game where I lose by a fraction of a hair tends to rank among my most enjoyable ASL experiences. Also, the last game played that goes down to the final CC phase of the last player turn is the one I remember as the most enjoyable. The games that I lose by faulty set up, misreading the scenario victory objectives, or poor play are the worst ASL experiences, as I feel I have failed not only myself but my opponent as well. The coolest experience I have had in some time was losing a close combat of my two full squads and leader facing a single CX half squad; Roy Connelly of Kansas won by rolling a snake-eyes for his half squad and then generating an 8-1 leader in the subsequent leader creation roll. The funniest experience was a game I wasn’t even playing. I was watching Jeff Toreki play a game where he was the defender, and the crux of his defense was two high-power weapon systems emplaced side by side on a hill in the middle of the play area. I had just walked up and was observing the game over Jeff’s shoulder (and in retrospect was perhaps looming in a little too close), when the enemy hove into view and he opened up with said weapons. He rolled boxcars on his first shot with both, which immediately prompted him to give a rather sharp glance over his shoulder at me, to which I could only reply “Yes, yes...I’m leaving!” We both had a laugh, but I knew how I would have felt.

Banzai: What area of your play would you like to improve on most over the next year?

DL: As mentioned before, knowledge of the rules and their intricacies. I have committed myself to rereading a section every month for the next year. No commander can properly marshal and employ his forces without fully knowing their capabilities and weaknesses. Secondly would be adherence to the ASOP...I’m too lax about what order things occur in during any given phase.

Banzai: Is there an area you think is under-represented in ASL?

DL: Scenarios that are representations of roll over attacks that are balanced by the victory conditions. I derive a certain pleasure in having my forces literally wiped out but still winning the game by virtue of the scenario objectives. Please don’t mention that to my cardboard soldiers, though!

Banzai: Dice glass or dice tower?

DL: How could you even ask that question? The answer of course is my personalized hero dice glass that we received as a giveaway at a past Texas Team Tournament. Something about the clink of the dice in the glass is aesthetically pleasing to me. Sometimes at tournament I close my eyes and just listen to the clink of dice filling the room...and know I am where I belong.

Banzai: Axis Minor scenarios: overrated or underrated?

DL: Underrated without a doubt. I love a good pillow fight!

Banzai: Now that *Armies of Oblivion* has been out for a while, have you had a chance to generate some impressions about playing the Axis Minors?

DL: Even though their forces appear limited and rather weak, they demand a certain level of patience, originality, and flexibility to employ properly. It's fun to be forced to be creative with a rather generic and unassuming OB.

Banzai: What advice would you give to players who are just starting out, and what advice would you give to ASL clubs in trying to attract and retain new players?

DL: Do not try to learn the game on your own! And don't try to do it with only one other opponent either. I did that for years and the number of things we misinterpreted was legion, and took years to unlearn. Don't be dismayed by losing your games for the first couple of years, either; every single loss is an opportunity to learn something new. Read the rules, reread the rules, and do not be afraid to challenge someone's interpretation of a rule if you think you are right; discourse and dialogue are the best ways to cement the rules system in your mind. Play the best players you can find, they are the ones that will increase your game play and knowledge the most effectively. As for ASL clubs gaining and retaining new members, that is one that we all struggle with. Welcome new members as well as you possibly can, give them the chance to play games at their convenience. Soon enough they will be willing to cancel those birthday plans with the wife to play, once they are hooked.

Banzai: What were your worst and best runs of luck?

DL: Worst run of luck wasn't really mine; it was my opponent's good luck, really. Playing the Germans in *Red Barricades*, my Russian opponent had saved his best two OBA allotments and then employed them both in one scenario, drawing against all odds every black card in both decks without getting a red card until the OBAs were exhausted. Was the end of a campaign I was sure of

winning! One of the best runs of luck was in a PTO game while playing the Japanese; again, against all odds the American attacker in one Advance Phase moved four stacks of infantry into locations where I had hidden half-squads. In each location I won ambush and in each location I won the ensuing hand-to-hand combat. Game over, and no doubt a once in a lifetime experience.

Banzai: We'll get to your favorite ASL scenarios in another issue, so how about telling us what your other favorite games are?

DL: I'm afraid to say I love ASL so much and my gaming time is so limited that I don't really play any other games anymore. Why drink beer when there is well chilled fine champagne available? I do play around with the *Combat Mission* computer game series, but that is really only because it is the closest thing available to ASL in the computer simulation world. I also play with the sim *Rise of Flight*, as I have a great love for WWI biplanes.

Banzai: What are your other interests outside of gaming?

DL: Reading, mostly escapist historical fiction. Playing around on Facebook has been a recent interest, although the novelty has rapidly begun to wane. Most people are surprised to learn that I hope to retire some day and raise exotic birds, something I did when I was younger and have a great interest in. I hope to be in the position to do it for conservation purposes rather than commercial reasons.

Banzai: Any final comments to wrap up?

DL: You choose the scenario, and I'll choose the side. Set 'em up! Seriously though, I would just like to say how proud I am to be involved, even in so small a manner and ever so much at the periphery, with the CTASL game club. What an incredible bunch of guys!

FAVORITE SCENARIOS

John Hyler



Those who know me are familiar with my predilection for playing big scenarios. Besides the obvious beef and potatoes aspect, the larger scenarios offer more options for play due to the higher number of units in the OB as well as usually to the larger playing area, many times 3 or more boards. This allows for different strategy and tactics to be tried, which in turn increases replay value. Too, larger scenarios greatly lessen the effect of a couple of bad dice

rolls that frequently can torpedo a small scenario. I would play any of the below listed scenarios at any time. Here they are, in no particular order.

Hill 621 [E]: This is the ultimate classic from the original *Squad Leader* that was updated for ASL. Any ASL player who has not played this scenario at least once needs to do so. A gaggle of outnumbered and outgunned Germans are tasked with defending the board 2 hills against an onrushing horde of Soviets bent on applying extreme prejudice. The phrase "desperate times call for desperate measures" is de rigueur for the Germans.

Bloody Red Beach [74]: The Marines invade Guam in July, 1944. They face a hidden Japanese force ensconced in two cave complexes on separate hills. The number of toys that the American player has is impressive: FTs, DCs, a FT tank, air support (with napalm), and NOBA, along with the usual complement of MTRs, MGs, and BAZs. The Japanese player can open his bag of dirty tricks to create a defensive web centered on his caves that will torment the American player throughout the game.

With Flame and Shell [DASL 7]: This is one of the best scenarios in the original *Streets of Fire* module. The Germans, led by three FT tanks, must push through the Soviet defenses in vicious street fighting. Every time that I have played this scenario, it has gone to the last turn, and frequently the last dice roll. It does not get any better than that.

Seregelyes Slug-out [SP73]: Here is a mixed village/country brawl that centers around 5 bridges of varying VP value. The Germans must control more bridge VPs than the Russians control or destroy. In between the attempts by the Russians to destroy bridges with set DCs, OBA on both sides pounds away, outgunned Panthers give way to King Tigers that duke it out with IS-2ms, frequently in a knife-fight battle on the forest road.

Seelow Seesaw [SP92]: Hill 621 redux, this time on the Seelow Heights east of Berlin in 1945. A gaggle of outnumbered and outgunned Germans are tasked...the board 9 hill hexes... Center to the German defense is a fearsome 128L AT gun that with a hit will deposit its target somewhere in west Poland. I still remember both Jeff Toreki and I mutually groaning when he rolled snakes with a FT shot from his T34-85 FT, directly into the pillbox where my 10-2 leader was hunkered down.

One Down, Two to Go [RB1]: Here is one of many brutal street fight scenarios set in Stalingrad in the fight for the Red Barricade and Red October factories.

Siberian Shockwave [VotG12]: More lethal street fighting in Stalingrad, this time the Russians are counterattacking from the banks of the Volga River. I remember this well

from being on the receiving end of yet another "Toreki Moment".

Last Drop [BFP57]: This is a wild melee in the jungle between mostly second-line American infantry and Japanese paratroopers who arrive by air drop. The vagaries of parachuting make this a most enjoyable scenario with good replay value. After the drop, the Japanese must organize themselves and then assault parked aircraft and buildings for VPs.

Klein Stalingrad [BFP93]: The irresistible force meets the immovable object in this Kursk slugfest. The Germans are trying to wrest control of buildings on board DW-4, and have an intimidating force with which to make the attempt. The Russians counter with a defensive belt to blunt the attack. This scenario features something that I would like to see more frequently: force pool options from which selections can be made. In this instance, the Russians have 120 FPPs with which they can purchase a variety of fortifications when designing their defense.

The Second Belt [BFP83]: This is very similar in scope to Klein Stalingrad. Although the Russian force pool is fixed, they still have enough toys to construct a nasty defense for the Germans to tackle.

RULES TIP

It is always worthwhile to take that mortar shot at an AFV. Keep in mind the Indirect Fire modifiers of C1.55, which help mortars against the tin can AFVs of the early war period and against a lot of AFVs in general. And since most mortars have a good ROF, that gives you plenty of chances to roll a critical hit. A critical hit doubles the IFT column for the effects DR, so even a lowly 50mm mortar rolls on the 12 column where a Final DR as high as a 4 or less will kill an AFV outright and a 5 will Immobilize or Shock it, depending on the location of the Hit. And at the very least a hit on a concealed AFV will strip the concealment off (A12.2) giving your heavier anti-armor assets a better chance to hit the AFV in any follow-on attacks.

ME NE FREGO¹: THE ITALIANS IN ASL

Vincent Maresca

[¹ "I don't give a damn" – Blackshirts' motto]



I found two interesting linked forum discussions (one in the US and one in Italy) regarding the Italian order of battle

(OOB) in ASL. The debate revolved around expanding the Italian ASL OOB since: 1) after the release of the Axis Minor forces in Armies of Oblivion, the Italian OOB was now the “worst” fighting force represented in the system; and 2) the existing Italian OOB does not adequately reflect the range of Italian forces that took part in World War II.

Italian ASL players Enrico Catanzaro, M. Lombardi, and Paolo Cariolato argued that the existing ASL Italian counter mix and nationality distinctions (A25.6) does not adequately represent the full range of Italian combat forces and experiences by the Italian Royal Army (Regio Esercito). They cite what they see as “Yankee” bias limiting the Italian OOB to US experiences near the time of the 1943 armistice when Italian forces were happy to surrender to Anglo-American forces but does not take into account Italy’s extensive combat history through the Ethiopian Campaign (1935-36), Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Greek Campaign (1940-41), North Africa (1940-43), Eastern Front (1941-1943), and post-Italian armistice forces that continued serving with the Axis (1943-45).

The unwashed forum masses responded with “well, the Italians did suck” and that the ASL system/nationality distinctions do accurately reflect the Italians during game play. Italian players counter that the ASL system still represents only a thin lens of the Italian experience and questions how an Italian first line 3-4-7 MMC can be worse than rifle-armed conscripts comprising masses of Russian 4-4-7 squads or French 4-5-7 squads made up of one-year reservists who only fought for six weeks? They contend this forces scenario designers to double the Italian OOB so that they can hold up against other ASL nationalities to overcome their shortcomings – namely low firepower, range, and morale.

The following is a summary, abridgement, and in some cases a modification of Catanzaro’s, Lombardi’s, and Cariolato’s suggestions for expanding the Italian OOB for future scenario designers as illustrated in Table 1. In those cases where no units were provided (1943-45), I have provided some recommendations. In addition, the Italian players provided a wide range of interesting suggestions regarding modifications to Italian support weapons, leadership, and squad configurations and breakdowns. There is a particular interest in breaking down the 20-man Italian squad into an 11-man maneuver group (MMC) and the 9-man LMG base of fire group (MMC). This LMG and maneuver element configuration was not unique to the Italians as it was the same for German infantry units represented by the standard 4-6-7 MMC. Therefore, I have not provided this information here but direct the reader to the forum links below if interested in further exploring that part of the discussion.

Table 1 and the following is my own abridgement of the discussion and selective reproduction of suggestions by the

Italian ASL players that I feel is appropriate for incorporating into the ASL system while minimizing the need for any complex SSRs as advocated by the Italian players. Again, I direct the reader to the forum links below if interested in the greater discussion, or what some might call, additional chrome.

Now, in combination with the units presented in Table 1, the following SSRs are recommend for veteran and elite Italian units:

- improve ELR by +1 or + 2
- increase MMC broken morale by +1
- lower HOB DRM from +3 to +1
- CVP should be doubled

In addition to the expanded OOB in Table 1, Italian ASL players can further identify special troops by utilizing the below suggested scenario special rules (SSRs) that can be incorporated into future scenario designs:

Ascari: The *Ascari* were locally recruited indigenous soldiers from Italian East Africa (Eritrea and later Ethiopia). Veteran *Ascari* combined high morale with an aggressive spirit and these units played a key role during the attack. The *Ascari* were considered the best of Italy’s colonial soldiers with a reputation similar to that of the Gurkhas serving with the British. While *Ascari* excelled in combat and guerrilla operations, they were easily demoralized by artillery fire.

Suggested *Ascari* SSR:

- MMC represented by Italian 3-4-7; crews by Italian 2-2-7
- Underlined morale
- Stealthy (A11.17)
- +1 DRM to morale when subject to FFE

Arditi: The *Arditi* originated during WWI as small detachments of hand-picked troops armed with knives, grenades, early version of the sub-machinegun, and flamethrowers for infiltration and trench raiding operations. During WW2, *Arditi* were formed by pooling veteran troops into essentially a commando or assault platoon at the expense of the remaining battalion being stripped of its experienced soldiers for training new recruits. *Arditi* platoons were documented operating in Greece, Libya, and Russia.

Suggested *Arditi* SSR prior to April 1943:

- One quarter (FRD) of the Italian infantry squads may be designated as *Arditi*
- The selected *Arditi* units are Battle Hardened (A15.3)
- *Arditi* are Stealthy (A11.17)
- *Arditi* receive a -1 CC/CCV DRM








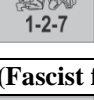

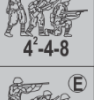
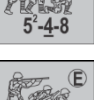

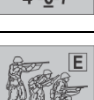
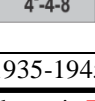
Pre-summer 1943 <i>Regio Esercito</i> (Royal Army)		NOTES
Elite		Represents the few elite formations within the Italian Royal Army such as Alpine (<i>Alpini</i>), paratrooper, or commandos (<i>Arditi</i>).
Veteran		<i>Bersaglieri</i> , motorized infantry, or North Africa veterans
SMG-Equipped		Paratroopers or commandos (<i>Arditi</i>). There is endless debate about the quantity of SMGs in Italian units prior to 1943 so there should not be large numbers of these units in any particular OOB.
1 ST Line		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including Blackshirt units (mid-1941+) <i>Ascari</i> colonial troops
2 ND Line/ Blackshirts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bulk of the infantry in 1940 and early 1941 poorly trained units in 1942-43
Conscripts/Colonial Troops		
Crews	 	This configuration more accurately represents the Italian gun and tank crews who were some of the most courageous Italian fighters. 2-2-8 may also represent one of the nine companies of <i>Guastatori del Genio</i> (assault engineers) and, while lightly armed, would include FT, DC, and LMGs.
Italian Social Republic (ISR) 1943-1945 (Fascist forces that continued to fight for the Axis)		
<i>Legione SS Italiana</i> (29th Waffen Grenadier Division)		SS German-trained. Originally Italian equipped (but included panzerfausts) but later German-equipped during anti-partisan role
<i>Divisione Decima</i> or <i>X Flottiglia MAS</i> or simply <i>X MAS</i> (naval marines)	 	Mix of German and Italian training with predominantly Italian equipment but included German MG-42s and panzerfausts.
<i>1st Divisione bersaglieri "Italia"</i> , <i>2nd Divisione granatieri "Littorio"</i> , <i>3rd divisione di fanteria di marina "San Marco"</i> , and <i>4th Divisione alpina "Monterosa"</i>	 	All four divisions were trained and armed (including panzerschrecks) in Germany.
<i>184th Divisione Paracadutisti Nembo</i> <i>185th Divisione Paracadutisti Folgore</i> (Paratroopers)		Italian trained. Predominantly Italian equipped but did contain some German equipment (panzerfausts).

TABLE 1: Suggested Italian Force Types 1935-1945

Blackshirts: *Blackshirt* units (CCNN) were composed of politically fanatic, nationalist militia volunteers from Mussolini's National Fascist Party. *Blackshirt* units are best characterized as poorly armed paramilitary units but were highly politically motivated with units fighting both fanatically and with a grim determination, particularly when employed in counterinsurgency operations against partisans. *Blackshirt* units took part in most of Italy's major conflicts including the wars against Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War followed by combat in France, Greece, Africa, Russia, Yugoslavia, and Italy during WW2. After the Italian Armistice in 1943, *Blackshirt* units in Axis-controlled northern Italy received various levels of German support with some units being re-armed and trained in Germany.

Suggested *Blackshirt* SSR:

- May Massacre versus partisans (A20.4)
- Will not surrender to partisans during RtPh (A 20.21)
- May have Assault Fire and panzerfaust capability (1944/45)
- Treat German as Allied Troops (1944/45)(A10.7)
- No penalty for German SW usage (1944/45)(A21)

In summary, our Italian ASL comrades have provided us with a better understanding of the Italian forces that participated in WW2 (and a little earlier). They also have expanded, not replaced, the range of options for designers in both force structure and SSRs that add that little something special to their future designs. While some players would enjoy seeing all the Table 1 units in Italian gray (or at least with a gray border), I would not expect to see this any time soon in any official product (although the third party producer Critical Hit did include gray 4-4-8s in their Afrika Korps series). What Catanzaro, Lombardi, and Cariolato do provide is a new, richer pool of Italian forces, a greater understanding of their capabilities, and a more well-balanced appreciation of Italian elite formations for consideration in future ASL designs.

Here are the links to the ASL forum discussions cited in this article:

<http://freeforumzone.leonardo.it/d/3867570/Italiani-in-ASL/discussione.aspx>

and

<http://forums.gamesquad.com/showthread.php?104982-ASL-game-system-and-italian-countermix&highlight=italian+units>

[Ed: For those industrious types, this newsletter includes a sheet of the variant Italian MMC types described in this article for players to create their own counters]

ASL WITH MINIATURES - BEYOND DELUXE ASL

Matt Zajac



It's been written that the initial concept for Squad Leader was as a miniatures game, but Avalon Hill instead produced a board game. Then around 1987, Avalon Hill and GHQ teamed up to present a system using 6mm (aka 1/285th) scale miniatures with Advanced Squad Leader - the DELUXE ASL system. As with many of you, my early wargaming was mixed with building models of the equipment that "came to life" during wargaming, and this AH-GHQ venture hooked me immediately. Over the next 30 years, this aspect of my ASL gaming has brought great enjoyment

but also quite a bit of frustration.

It's taken a lot of experimentation, and technological advances in materials, to develop a 3-dimensional translation of ASL that



From GHQ's catalogue - a FlakPanzer 38(t)M on an ASL DELUXE Board ("Hey, will that flat bridge support us?")

looks great, plays cleanly, and is reasonably inexpensive. In this article I'll explain an approach to translating the board game we love into a fully 3D miniatures game, without changing ASL's rules.

First, a brief bit of interpretive history though. We all know that the DELUXE approach gained little traction in the broad ASL community, and that quite frankly the AH / GHQ venture to using miniatures with ASL rules simply flopped. I would argue that there were three reasons for this. First, translating the vast amount of information on a cardboard ASL counter into a 3-dimension unit stand can be a daunting prospect. The second issue I'll simply call the potential "cumbersomeness" of miniatures game play with the ASL rule system - the distraction of game play due to constantly maintaining units' statuses. Moving units and their information counters on an ASL map board is easy - pick up the stack and move it. But how does one avoid having to move a 3D unit, then go back and move a group of markers/counters/etc that are linked to that units' status, particularly when a unit can have multiple statuses simultaneously (CX, pinned, first fired, etc)? The last issue is one of aesthetics. Using miniatures on a 2 dimensional geomorphic map board never looked quite right, and further

the initial miniatures available - mostly infantry - left a great deal to be desired. My goal is getting a miniatures ASL game to look like other tactical miniatures games but play like the board game. You be the judge after reading the rest of this article.

So let's get to the first challenge - creating usable 3-dimensional units that keep their unit information as accessible as on a cardboard counter. Well, one approach is simply to mount the miniatures on the counter, or a blown up copy of the counter. When GHQ first released its

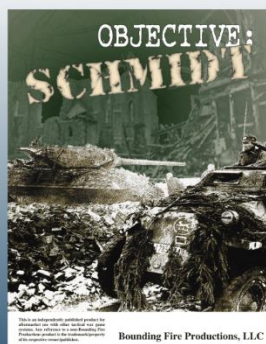


Whose looks ready for combat? GHQ's original German squad in formation versus a based group of their newer individual Soviet infantrymen (both are still available)

DELUXE miniature packs, with the 6mm infantry standing tightly in squad formation, this is perhaps what was envisioned, and images of units created like this are on the internet. But the visual aesthetics of this approach leave much to be desired. Just using the initial GHQ squad formation figures without a counter left the battlefield looking like two opposing forces trying to out-drill one another--more like a parade field competition than two forces using fire and maneuver. One problem was the figure castings available, and the other still remained how to

attach unit data. Enter technology and cheap mass production, as well as cheaper options for getting figures painted. Now, GHQ and other companies produce individual 6mm soldiers, leaders, and support weapons so it is easy to replicate a squad maneuvering, a panzershreck team, or any of the host of support weapons we love in ASL. Painting the figures can be time-consuming, especially if you're a historical accuracy fanatic as I can be, but many reasonably priced companies exist that will paint for you. One not-so-cheap but flawless company is a Ukrainian-based company named Old Guard Painters (OGP). All the infantry figures in these pictures were painted by OGP, while the armor is my work.

As for merging the new figures with unit data, here's a solution. Each infantry unit, leader and support weapon is mounted on a 1/2" x 1/2" metal base. I made and printed unit labels - same data format as the counter - which were glued to pre-cut magnets purchased from LITKO Game Accessories. The magnets are 1/4" larger on one side, and I placed the squad or leader data on one edge and the broken morale on the other edge. Additional data on support weapons required some shorthand notations, and the other edge shows the repair number. "Breaking" a unit or weapon is as simple as sliding the magnet - pretty close to flipping a counter. Possession of a support weapon is shown by placing the support weapon miniature next to its owner, and I use 1" x 3/4" magnet under both to keep them together and allow both to be picked up / moved together. Magnetized unit data allows me to use the miniatures with other miniature rule systems without the ASL data being permanently attached. A cheaper option would be to just stick the paper unit data to the base of a unit (which doesn't need to be metal). And there are other benefits to using metal-based units and magnets, but more on that to follow after addressing vehicles and guns.



Coming Soon from Bounding Fire Productions



Magnetic unit data (separate and attached) - squads, leaders and a Russian MMG

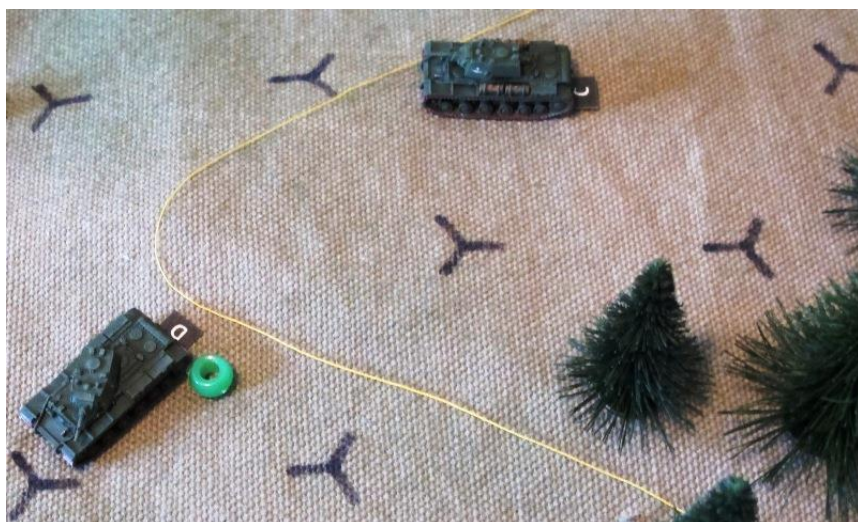
When it came to vehicles and guns, I've made a personal choice based on aesthetics. While I could have mounted all of my vehicles and attached unit tags, I personally prefer to see my vehicles "on the ground" and immersed with the terrain. Here I defaulted to using the DELUXE AFV cards which also keeps most of the counter clutter off of the board and streamlines moving vehicles during the game. A small vehicle ID label is attached to each vehicle so acquisition markers are easily identifiable with their source. I have glued my turrets to my vehicles, so I do use turret counters to show the TCA. Because it is more fragile, my ordnance is mounted on metal bases. Like a support weapon, ordnance data can be added to a magnet, or you can look at the counter if there is a question about special

ammo.

So far so good, but what about concealment? I've used two approaches, and don't really have a favorite. The simplest in terms of game play is to place a magnetized "?" over the squads identification, with any leaders and support weapons with them noted and left off the board until the unit is revealed. "Dummy" units are simply additional squads without unit data so the removal of the "?" magnet reveals empty unit information, and the unit is removed from the table. The magnet allows the unit to be moved without the "?" accidentally slipping off - which we can all relate to the frustration of having had occur during a game. Another approach to concealment, which works well especially for pre-game setup and initially concealing vehicles, is to use

the cloaking box approach, with the actual squads and their weapons placed in the cloaking box and a lettered "?" counter placed and moved on the board until revealed. Both methods do reduce some of the "support weapon guessing" that is inherent with a stack of concealed ASL counters, and thus increase the fog of war.

Now that we have units, what about the second challenge - keeping track of all those status markers in ASL? One can simply ignore it and use the easily identified ASL counters placed next to the miniature. I've done this many times - and just ran two miniature Deluxe games at the 2014 Texas Team Tournament this way for simplicity. However, personally there's nothing more annoying than stopping the flow of a miniatures attack to repeatedly go back and



Russian KVs "C" and "D" skirt a treeline (the green bead denotes Motion)

forth moving a unit then moving its unattached markers. I've taken two approaches to this issue, based on whether the status is a temporary, phase-driven one and which the unit will not move with it, or if the status is a function of the unit itself, and thus likely to move with the unit. One of the design gems of ASL is its use of status markers color-coded to each phase. Prep Fire, Bounding Fire, Opportunity Fire - all are orange. The only blue marker is for being DM, and etc. This is intuitive to most long-time ASL players, and it translates well into reducing clutter on a miniatures table. For most phase-based statuses I use small colored beads to denote a status. These are cheaply obtained at any local hobby shop, and I found the smallest available in orange, yellow, green, black, purple, and red. Where a partial status can occur (as in First versus Final Fire) I have a single bead for the initial status then two glued-together beads for the final status. So the statuses marked with beads are: Prep Fire / Bounding Fire (1 orange), Opportunity Fire (orange/yellow), Intensive Fire (2 orange), Vehicle Motion or Infantry CX (1 green), Pin (1 red), TI (2 red), First Fire (1 purple), Final Fire (2 purple), Bog (1 black), Immobilized (2 black). In the picture above with the two KVs, "D" remained in Motion and has a green bead next to it (yes, I know green is not an ASL color....). For the most part, all beads are picked up by the end of the turn, and more importantly, none of them require moving with a unit.

For those statuses that move when a unit moves, the same magnet system used to attach unit information is used.



A Concealed German squad awaits the approach of two Russian SMG squads - the magnetized "?" sits over the unit data - and doesn't move if the unit is moved.

Again, a slightly larger magnet is used and spray-painted with the status color, then attached to the bottom of the unit. Blue denotes a DM unit. Being magnets, as the unit is moved to rout it doesn't require picking up anything else.

Lacking any other solution, I've kept using some counters - Residual Fire and Acquisition mainly - and - simply because they look cool on the board - the CC / H-t-H markers!



The Cloaking Box method - Russian squads approach Concealed Germans



This Cloaking Box and units show what the Russians may find (the ASL Cloaking Table is too small). The ID of the homemade cloaking counter is face-down. Alternately, a counter tray with lettered compartments works well.



Two German Squads, their LMG, and a directing 8-1 Leader are making the Russians pay dearly to advance on their farmhouse position. Their Prep Fire (orange beads) has broken and DM'd a Russian squad and MMG in the wood line (blue magnet bases). A still-concealed Russian unit is trying to flank on the right, while units remain embroiled in Melee on the left. Can the Russian leader in the back save the day?

Finally, let's talk about terrain. Over the years I've tried almost every option out there: pre-made hex-printed mats of differing sizes, GHQ's styrofoam-like hex based Terrain Maker system, and even playing with ASL rules on non-hex based tables (really a non-starter). Recently I created four DELUXE boards using 3" micro-plywood hexes from LITKO Game Accessories, but these were a labor of love for the 2014 Texas Team Tournament, and not really a practical, affordable, or most importantly re-combinable terrain approach. So what criteria have I come up with when it comes to terrain and miniatures ASL? Well, I think

we all agree that affordability is important. The size of the playing area available is crucial too - most of us don't have a gymnasium floor available to set up large games. Then there is portability and replayability. While many of the interchangeable hex terrain tile options provide beautiful playing areas, moving them can be quite a logistical event and a hex created for one scenario may not be usable in another (or more frustratingly, you find yourself making new terrain hexes before each game). While everyone will have their preferences, here's an affordable, transportable and most importantly replayable / changable approach. It starts with an inexpensive trip to the local fabric store for a suitable base. I like the heavier, fine-weave canvass-type materials as they provide some texture which keeps miniatures from sliding when on a slope. After lightly spraying with a few natural colors, use the 3" hex template available from LITKO and a permanent marker to mark out the hexes on your material. Note this is a 3" template - not the 4" size of the GHQ Terrain Maker system nor the 2.2" size of the DELUXE mapboard. I've found thru trial and error that 3" hexes are a great balance between having enough space for up to three 1/2" x 1/2" squads and leaders/support weapons in a single hex and the playing area itself becoming too large. Hills are created by placing material beneath the canvas, in this case I used 1/2" styrofoam, and for ease of identifying contour lines I put a thin yellow thread around the hills. The picture below is the terrain for J106 *Marders Not Martyrs*, which uses board v, rows I-GG set up on a 4x6 table. The base cloth is big enough to fit two full boards connected lengthwise, although I'd have to increase my table size dramatically for that! Realistically, I've found that single-board scenarios are a reasonable limit when playing ASL with miniatures.



Coming Soon from Bouding Fire Productions

As for the other items of terrain, here's a brief description of what you see. The roads are simply 1" masking tape that has had green flocking added to the edge and a sand mix to create the dirt roadway, both applied to the sticky side of the tape. The weight of the sand keeps the roads flush and from moving. Woods are groups of individual trees from BUSCH N/Z scale, each with a green-painted washer glued to the bottom for weight. Since each tree is individual, moving a tree to make room for a unit is no big deal. The orchards are also individual trees, and I've used fall colors to make them stand out a bit more. Brush is bits of Woodland Scenic foam scattered in the hex. The wheat field is simply felt marked with the 3" LITKO hex template, although I'm experimenting with more 3-dimensional materials (guess the field has been harvested...). Buildings are from a variety of manufacturers and it bears mentioning that the infantry movement basis of the ASL rules helps in miniature play. Since infantry units can't end their movement outside of a building in the hex, any infantry unit remaining in a hex with a building is assumed to be in the building - no need to place the figures on, under or against the building. Minimizing multiple story buildings makes for a cleaner looking game, but for the occasional church steeple or first floor it's a simple matter of placing a level counter on the unit. Likewise when required to choose between Wall Advantage and the Building, the counter can be placed on the unit. (Eventually I'm going to create the

DELUXE Streets of Fire maps in 3D - with open-sided buildings that you can put units into but still see and manipulate - but that's another project). Lastly, the fine yellow thread marks the contours of the two hills on the board, and the green squares are simply hex reference markers I placed to ease reference to the map board. Not shown on the board, but an easy solution to hedges that I recently discovered, are NOCH HO/TT/N scale hedges which come in flexible strips and are easy to cut to size. While all this can take some time to set up accurately, clearing the table is a breeze and almost every component (except the wheat field) can be used again in another map configuration.

So what's the downside of 3D terrain? There's always a downside, right? Well, here's the one issue I've never overcome, or really had a work-around for. It is simply that ASL relies on the hex centerpoint for LOS. I guess one could add centerpoints to each hex on the mat, but there is still the question of what terrain actually impedes or blocks LOS. The woods and brush are the primary concern, as there is not a "hard" edge to their depictions on the terrain board. Here, and partly because I believe that scenario designers take into account the actual LOSs on the boards they choose - or at least it comes out during playtesting - the only effective way to replicate ASL board LOS is to check it on the actual board if it becomes that critical. Hence board v sitting next to my terrain table in the picture



above.

Well, this has become a bit longer-winded than intended, thankfully *Banzai!!* is digital and length is less of a concern. Hopefully I've provided some ideas - and maybe the desire - for playing ASL with miniatures in your area. I'm aware that my approach is only one of several out there, and I'd love to hear counterpoints and other methods in use. To continue the discussion, or if anyone wants digital copies of the unit ID tags I've created, email me at zajacmwz@aol.com.

Links to Manufacturers Referenced in the Article

GHQ Miniatures (Military) - <http://www.ghqmodels.com/pages/military/>

LITKO Game Accessories - <http://www.litko.net/>

Old Guard Painters - <http://ogp.zhilko.dk/>

BUSCH and NOCH products can be found at multiple places online



An SU-100 of the 207th SP ART BDE supports two IS-2ms of the 30th GDS HVY TK REG.

RULES TIP

Don't forget that a PF can also be used against Infantry in a building/pillbox/rubble or using a wall. As a one-shot weapon, a PF does not leave resid (C8.31) and may not directly affect more than one MMC when fired at multiple Infantry targets in a Location unless the Random Selection DR indicates that several units have been affected. However, once a hit has been gained against a multi-target Location and prior to any Random Selection, the firer can select an affected unit if that unit is Known and manning a Gun/SW. (C13.31)

BRINGING DELUXE ALIVE - ASL WITH MINIATURES AT THE 2014 TEXAS TEAM TOURNAMENT



Matt Zajac

I've always loved World War 2 miniature games. Something about seeing cardboard pieces come to life as 3D tanks, guns and soldiers fighting across 3D terrain has kept my interest since I started gaming some 30 years ago. However, for better or worse, I've also got a deep love for the historical details and tome-like rules options that ASL offers. Over the years I've tried to integrate the two, and while this article won't get into that sometimes frustrating yet rewarding process, I will share some experiences from two ASL with Miniatures games that I prepared and ran at the 2014 Texas Team Tourney.



Mike Rose (right) prepares to launch his American attack against David Longstreet's concealed defenders.

The first game was a not only a miniatures game but a double-blind game. I chose *MM17db Busting the Bocage* from the 2012 March Madness scenario pack, produced by the extremely capable design team in Kansas City. The scenario pits a defending German "reinforced company-sized force, supported by heavy mortars and AT guns" against an attacking American force of "two companies of infantry, supported by armor". Those descriptions are literally what you know of your opponent's order of battle. The double-blind concept drastically enhances the fog of war, and there's no more "checking off" your opponent's critical weapons when you discover them - because now there could be any number of anything facing you. Each side has its own mission statement as well - and while there is some overlap, that's not a guarantee. The scenario victor

is the one who achieves the most points in their mission in 5.5 turns. I also chose *Busting the Bocage* because I wanted to build the Normandy hedgerow boards from the DELUXE module Hedgerow Hell in 3D, and this scenario used two of



JR Tracy's Poles massacred my supply convoy. The exploded ammunition truck is burning just short of exiting, two other trucks are immobilized, and a DR of 3 destroyed the PzII in reaction CC. A memorable game!

them: boards "f" and "h". Visualizing bocage terrain is often challenging, and I thought seeing the terrain in 3D would increase appreciation for it. Two games were played over the weekend, each lasting the better part of a day. Mike Rose's Americans narrowly defeated David Longstreet's defending Germans, while Jeff Toreki's German force held off Lee Jennings' Americans. The singular comment, apart from the appreciation of the terrain and the miniatures, was how much the double-blind order of battle presentation caused each player to carefully consider their options before acting. If you're running a tournament or hosting a game day, think about running a double-blind scenario - the players will appreciate it.

The second ASL DELUXE with Miniatures scenario I ran was a new one from the soon-to-be-published DELUXE Pack by Dave Ramsey and Steve Swann. I saw discussion of this project on the GameSquad ASL forum, and this pack seemed to fill a gap in existing DELUXE game options. Namely, it contains boards and scenarios set in either PTO terrain or the more open terrain typical of Eastern Europe. Dave was willing to send me a pre-publication copy of an Eastern Europe

scenario for me to build the boards and create the miniatures' forces. Like *Busting the Bocage*, this scenario was also played on two boards but set in the early days of the war. *DWI Spoiled Afternoon* sees the Polish Black Brigade counterattacking across the German 4th Light Division's supply lines. The German force consists of two junior leaders, eight half-squads and crews with two light machine guns, four trucks including an ammunition truck, two PzIIs, and two PSW221s against a counterattacking Polish force of two leaders, seven half-squads and crews, a 46* mortar, and the option of either an ATR or an LMG. Two TKS tankettes - one being the rare TKS(L) with a 20L gun - support the Polish infantry. The Germans win by exiting 4 or more of their 8 vehicles off the far board edge in 4.5 turns, and their force initially begins in convoy formation. There were two playings of *Spoiled Afternoon* as well, each lasting less than five hours including setup. In the first game, JR Tracy's Polish force destroyed my ammunition truck in its last hex before exiting the board for a Polish win. In the second game, Jim Ferrell's Germans defeated Rick Reinesch's Poles. While Rick's Polish ATR gun quickly racked up two AFV kills, Jim's infantry cleared the way for his trucks and they were able to safely exit. If this scenario is an indication of the uniqueness of the rest of the new DELUXE Pack, then the ASL community is in for a treat. It has been far too long since DELUXE has seen energy put into it, and perhaps the PTO and open terrain presented by the new boards will generate renewed interest in DELUXE scenario design and play, with or without



Jim Ferrell (right) considers Rick Reinesch's (left) setup before Jim's German convoy enters the board in *DWI Spoiled Afternoon* (German convoy enters from the board edge at the top of the photo)

miniatures.

The miniatures and terrain options available today allow an ASL player to bring any terrain and any force mix into the 3D realm. Building the terrain and preparing 3D units takes time and resources, but personally that enhances my historical understanding of the belligerents' capabilities and the conditions faced. I've written a lengthy article on how I approached translating ASL into 3D for those interested in investigating this option for your own ASL experience - look for it in the pages of *Banzai!!*. Remember that *Squad Leader* was initially designed as a miniatures game, and I've enjoyed bringing my interpretation of those designers' vision to life.



Boards "f" and "h" in 3D for the scenario MM17db *Busting the Bocage*

Special thanks to Jay Harms and Mark Carter for their playtesting of the ASL with Miniatures games. Their recommendations greatly helped smooth the use of miniatures and 3D terrain with the ASL rules. Also, thanks to Dave Ramsey and Steve Swann - without whom I would not have had a second DELUXE with Miniatures game available at the Texas Team Tournament. Thanks to Mike Rose, David Longstreet, JR Tracy, Jeff Toreki, Jim Ferrell, and Rick Reinesch for taking the plunge and trying ASL with Miniatures. Last, thanks to Jeff Toreki for the use of the final photo showing the full terrain of MM17db Busting the Bocage.

GET BACK TO WHERE YOU ONCE BELONGED: A RETURN TO ASL

Randy Strader



My ASL story begins like many others: sometime in the early 80s entering purposefully into a game store with a pocket full of cash and an itch to buy as many *D&D* and *Traveler* modules as possible. Glancing at another shelf, my gaze happened to settle on a grim looking German soldier clutching a pair of binoculars. "What's that?" I wondered.

Some thirty years later, I was having dinner with colleagues

from work when the topic of games came up. But this conversation was not our usual, as the games discussed were board games and not video games. Rekindling that same feeling from the 80s, I had a copy of *Up Front* in my hands via eBay within a week, and was playing it on Vassal within a month. It was a test run, of sorts, to see if I had the time and patience to get back into ASL. As it happened, my Vassal *Up Front* opponent was ready and willing

to coach me, and after a few months of *Up Front*, I was staring into the computer screen at an ASL board, vainly attempting to manipulate the game controls and remember the contents of a recently reread chapter A. The scenario was RB6 *Turned Away*. It did not go well, and in the weeks afterwards I struggled to get command of the new ASL landscape and find things to help me learn. With this article, I'll provide a terrain map of sorts to the type of play aids I found helpful when getting back into the game.

Part of the problem with the first scenario was that, in looking back, I hadn't played the game correctly when it was first released. Having played *Squad Leader* for a couple years prior to ASL's release, my frequent opponent and I

made certain assumptions about Chapter A's contents in order to get to other neat stuff contained in the rules. It's fair to say we were better versed in the ASL rules for cavalry charges, Stukas, and gliders than the minutia of the Defensive Fire Phase. We played a mash-up of SL/ASL, and it did not provide a solid foundation for re-learning the game. When I chose to get back into the game, I did so with a couple of firm convictions: play ASL correctly this time, and play those areas of ASL where many years ago considerable expense had been incurred but value was not necessarily obtained (read: the PTO and desert modules).

Like most returning players, the first big obstacle was the rulebook itself. Possessing the Avalon Hill version of the rules with a couple of page inserts, I needed some prodding to purchase the 2nd edition rules from MMP. I had a real concern that the rules had been "forked" by MMP and the new rules were substantively different from the old. Nonetheless, I made the plunge and was delighted to find that the font, format, and play aids were largely the same as the old rules. Of course, the font is larger, but an old ASLer like me would find the 2nd Edition rules a comforting link to the past. Which isn't to say that the rules have gotten any easier – they haven't – or any less complex. Sitting down to read them requires some patience and discipline. Often, when learning a new topic, reading multiple explanations of similar information from different authors can help offer insights unobtainable from one text and cement one's understanding of complex material.

The world has come a long way since the 1980s. And the Internet has an abundance of rabbit holes to go down after typing "Advanced Squad Leader" into Google. Fortunately for me, I'd already acquainted myself with Boardgamegeek (www.boardgamegeek.com) for *Up Front*. There are a set of tutorials produced by Jay Richardson which are posted on BGG. They are also linked on the AdvancedSquadLeader.net website (http://www.advancedsquadleader.net/index.php?title=Beginners_Guide)

If you are looking to get back into the game, my advice is to start here. It matters little that these are written as tutorials for ASL Starter Kit, as the tutorials address two of the "big three" topics that make Chapter A so difficult to understand: Defensive Fire and Rout (the third being Concealment). In one sitting, these tutorials lifted the veil of frustration that bedeviled me in the 80s and resurfaced during *Turned Away*: I couldn't defend my building from masses of units charging across the street. But with Defensive First Fire, Subsequent First Fire, and Final Protective Fire properly explained, it becomes easier to grok the art of defense.

Speaking of defense, after learning to play ASL correctly, one often wants to play it well. And so the next step of getting back usually involves some searching for tips and

strategy. To this, I found another avenue of exploration when I discovered that all back issues of the *General* were online and could be read in PDF format. Like many old ASLers I've spoken to, my ASL collection included a handful of *General* issues as well as a few ASL Annuals to complement the modules. Back in the pre-internet days, getting additional issues involved examining the "Back Issues" text box closely for the ASL abbreviation, writing a check, and mailing it to Avalon Hill. One did so without the foreknowledge of what the ASL content was. Nonetheless, given the vast amount of text – albeit at a font size almost unreadable to the naked human eye – the articles contained therein were treated by me and my friends as near-sacred texts.

On review of the *Generals* online, I had a different response. As the hobby was in its infancy, the articles amounted mainly to tactics drawn largely from AH playtesting. In fact, the individual articles in the "ASL Clinics" series usually were half-devoted to a historical introduction to the topic at hand, whether mortars or massed armored assault. In other words, the sample size from which to adduce tactics was relatively small, and the articles themselves are of little use to the returning ASLer playing the game as it is played today. Part of this has to do with scenario design, which I will treat below, but overall the time spent reading through the *General* for tactical nuggets is better spent elsewhere. One exception to that, however, is the "First Impressions" series by Robert Medrow (*the General*, volumes 22:6; 23:2; 24:2). That series solved the mystery of what Chapter M in the rulebook was meant to be as he mentions explicitly that the series would evolve to become that part of the rulebook. Also, the series' content is related principally to statistical analysis, which as an artifact of mathematics stands objectively against the changing nature of ASL tactics throughout the years.

Thus, for returning players, I would offer the following guidance on strategy: resist the temptation to go on a spending spree picking up old *Generals* and *ASL Annuals* on eBay. For one thing, the *Annuals* are very expensive. For another, much of their content has been republished by MMP in subsequent publications with far more attractive text and pictures. Here the *Out of the Attic* periodicals come to mind, with *Out of the Attic 2* still available for purchase. *ASL Journals 9* and *10* both have beginner articles, with the former being an excellent primer for playing PTO scenarios and the latter having one of the best articles I've encountered upon my return: "The Beginner Blues, Part I," by Robert Wolkey. In sum, while the nostalgic ASLer might want to use the Internet to vacuum up all the Avalon Hill content available on ASL, a more practical approach is to commit to MMP's stewardship and stick with offerings of a more recent vintage.

And trust me, to speak of nostalgia is to know nostalgia. When I unpacked my old ASL boxes, just seeing the words “Gavin’s Gamble,” “The Fugitives,” “The Mad Minute,” ...well, it conjured up the same feelings as seeing “White Plume Mountain” or “The Keep on the Borderlands.” (Don’t pretend you don’t know what those are!) Which is to say, it instantly placed me at a gaming table twenty-five years ago enjoying these classics. But, as I began to discuss potential scenarios to play with other players, most simply scoffed at these titles. Why, I wondered, would they do so? First of all, a check of ROAR (<http://www.jrvdev.com/ROAR/VER1/default.asp>) or the ASL Scenario Archive (<http://www.aslscenarioarchive.com/index.php>) – which are websites devoted to logging scenario plays—will yield some telling stats: these scenarios have been played to death. Personally, I enjoy replaying scenarios irrespective of the game, as I find it interesting to try out different tactics under similar circumstances. But, other players kept hinting at the opinion that many of the old scenarios were very “unbalanced.”

Now, back in the day when I was a teenager playing ASL, the question of balance rarely came up. For one thing, the victory conditions were often tossed and we played the scenario as a death match until one or the other side had no unbroken units on the board. But that’s obviously not practical any more, and VC with good balance keeps both sides engaged. Scenario design has increasingly viewed optimal balance as its prime objective. It’s easy to notice that scenarios are shorter with readily defined VC. Apparently, scenario design has evolved to reflect the changing nature of game play. One thing that struck me upon return was the speed of the contemporary game. Where Prep Fire with incremental, ultra-safe movement was common in the 80s, aggressive movement, fast probing with half-squads, and cutting off rout paths is much more common today. So the scenarios have changed to reflect that changed style of play, and this in turn helps to explain why fellow grognards are averse to the older 10-turn slugfests.

Another area where excessive nostalgia impeded my return was the belief that ASL material not bearing the imprimatur of AH or its designers was somehow inferior. As such, when I would periodically scan the Internet for ASL content prior to my return, I had doubts about the value of the material produced by third-party publishers (TPPs). But, in comparing the tactical advice contained in AH’s and MMP’s periodicals, almost every tip or strategy in those publications is also available in back issues of *Banzai* (http://texas-asl.com/banzai/banzai_index.htm) *View from the Trenches* (<http://www.vftt.co.uk/vfttpdfs.asp>), or *Le Franc Tireur* (<http://www.lefranc-tireur.org/spip.php?rubrique1>), just to mention a few. And – as a tip of the cap to my fellow Texas

ASLers – all of the back issues of *Banzai!!* are available on the Texas ASL website for free. Also, when attending an ASL tournament, one can’t help but noticing that the folks associated with these publications look, speak, and play *exactly like the AH and MMP* guys do. Indeed, the beauty of *Le Franc Tireur* issue 12 or the detail contained in Bounding Fire Productions’ *Blood and Jungle* meets or exceeds the production value of any AH module.

In summary, let me offer a few pieces of advice to the returning ASLer in addition to those offered above:

- To maximize purchasing power, buy the rulebook, *Beyond Valor* (3rd edition), and *Rising Sun* (if one has an interest in PTO). By my count, that’s 17 boards (the new cardstock variety, lighter and with consistent graphics), one campaign map, 56 scenarios plus a campaign game from an old *ASL Annual*. That’s an incredible amount of game play.
- Buy them from *the Gamers Armory* (<http://www.gamersarmory.com/catalog/>) or *WargameDepot* (<http://wargamedepot.com/catalog/>). The former stocks most of the TTPs; the latter packs ASL materials ultra-securely for shipping.
- For the nostalgic ASLer, download the additional scenarios available on MMP’s website (<http://www.multimanpublishing.com/Support/ASL/ASLSK/ASLOfficialDownloads/tabid/109/Default.aspx>)
- Attend a tournament! Here I was skeptical, as I didn’t want to get steamrolled while learning the game in a competitive environment. But I found my opponents to be exceedingly forgiving of my blunders and the tournament to be an excellent means to learn the rules by playing a lot of ASL.
- Get on VASL (<http://www.advancedsquadleader.net/index.php?title=VASL>). I haven’t written much about this, but it is a heck of a lot easier to run through the ASL Tutorial available in the rulebook solo in VASL than on one’s kitchen table. And, when ready, play other people and use Skype to talk to them while playing
- Use Boardgamegeek (http://boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/ASL_Modules#toc6) and Desperation Morale (<http://www.desperationmorale.com>) to check inventory and obtain info prior to purchasing items. One example is the excellent list of boards on BGG: <http://boardgamegeek.com/thread/126366/asl-mapboard-publication-list>
- Use the ASL forums on GameSquad to check and ask questions about rules (<http://forums.gamesquad.com/forumdisplay.php?30-Advanced-Squad-Leader>). Of particular use is

reading the After Action Reports to compare your setup of a scenario with what others did after you have finished playing it

- Listen to the 2 Half-Squads (<http://www.the2halfsquads.com/p/quick-access.html>) when commuting. Continuing the idea of multimodal learning (i.e., reading the ASL tutorials mentioned above as an aid to reading the rulebook), these guys will often read and discuss the rules. So audio supplements visual learning. Of special note is Ep. 32 featuring an interview of original SL designer John Hill.
- Finally, it goes without saying that one should read the rulebook. And if you want to improve your gameplay and be competitive, read the rules on the “Big Three” topics again: Defensive Fire (A8); Routing (A10.5 – 10.533); and Concealment (A12)

Finally, let me take a moment to thank three specific ASL gentlemen: Aaron Sibley, who patiently coached me during my (mis)adventures during ASL scenarios played on VASL; Brian Roundhill, a fellow Texas ASL club member who drew me into the club from my concealed position posting questions on Boardgamegeek; and Rick Reinesch, who encouraged me to attend the Texas Team Tournament.

Resources

PDF downloads of articles I found most helpful:

An ASLSK Tutorial by Jay Richardson [requires Boardgamegeek registration]

(<http://boardgamegeek.com/file/download/45sr1wnc60/ASLSKTutorial.v1.0.pdf>)

Geometry of ASL by David Hailey, Banzai!! Vol 5 no 2 (http://texas-asl.com/banzai/banzai5_2.pdf)

A Closer Look at Concealment by Christian Koppmeyer (http://www.vftt.co.uk/vfttpdf/vftt55_56.pdf)

Bring on the Night by JR VanMechelen [requires Boardgamegeek registration]

(http://boardgamegeek.com/file/download/n2vqpbxjye/Bring_on_the_Night_v2.pdf)

Basic PTO Example of Play by Tom Repetti

(<http://home.comcast.net/~tomrepetti/xop/PTOXOP.PDF>)

Jungle Warfare in ASL by Mark McGilchrist (http://www.vims.edu/~jeff/asl/dig7_5.htm)

Vernacular Chapter F by Matt Romey (http://texas-asl.com/download/vernacular_chapter_f.pdf)

22ND ANNUAL TEXAS TEAM TOURNAMENT RESULTS



Rick Reinesch

Here are the results and rankings from the 22nd Annual Texas Team Tournament. Where players had the same score, ranking was based off of the opponents’ W/L percentage first, and then their W/L percentage second. So players with the same score who competed against stronger opponents would be ranked higher.

Here’s where folks ended in the individual standings. Congratulations to Jay Harms for winning the top individual award this year.

Player	Score	Wins	Losses
Jay Harms	6	6	0
Mike Rose	4	4	0
Matt Shostak*	3	4	1
Jim Ferrell	3	4	1
Eric Gerstenberg	2	3	1
Ryan Kent	2	4	2
JR Tracy	2	3	1
Doyle Motes	2	3	1
Paul Messina	2	2	0
David Reinking	1	3	2
Sam Tyson	1	3	2
David Perham	1	4	3
Roy Connelly	1	2	1
Lee Jennings	1	2	1
Jeff Toreki	0	1	1
Dan Preston	0	1	1
Arlen Vanek	0	2	2
Brian Roundhill	0	2	2
Matt Zajac	0	2	2
Matt Schwoebel	0	2	2
Scott Bell	0	1	1
Albert Salinas	0	0	0

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Player	Score	Wins	Losses
Allen King	0	0	0
Bill Dorre	0	0	0
Bill Zopff	0	0	0
Chris Buehler	0	0	0
Chris Casten	0	0	0
Dan Best	0	0	0
Gary Krockover	0	0	0
Jack OQuin	0	0	0
Joe Steadman	0	0	0
John Farris	0	0	0
John Hyler	0	0	0
Mark Carter	0	0	0
Mike Denson	0	0	0
Race Carter	0	0	0
Shawn Shifflett	0	0	0
Kevin Kenneally	-1	0	1
Jeff Taylor	-1	1	2
Randy Strader	-1	1	2
Hank Withaar	-1	1	2
Ed Beekman	-1	1	2
James Pasquale	-2	0	2
David Longstreet	-2	1	3
Rick Reinesch	-2	0	2
Chris Kubick	-2	1	3
Will Willow	-2	2	4
Bud Garding	-3	1	4
David Hailey	-4	0	4
Ed Hack	-4	0	4
Paul Hornbeck	-5	0	5

* Matt was the individual runner up as a result of playing in the championship round.

Here's how the Major Johnson standings finished. Will Willow took home the MJ in a tight race into Sunday. Great job, Will!

Player	MJ Total
Will Willow	17476.4
Jay Harms	14864
Ryan Kent	12748
David Perham	11583
Matt Shostak	11420.5
Bud Garding	11320.75
Jim Ferrell	10225.25
Brian Roundhill	10080
David Hailey	8463
JR Tracy	8223
Paul Hornbeck	7504
Arlen Vanek	7182
Sam Tyson	6648
Matt Schwoebel	6640.8
Jeff Taylor	6566.25
Chris Kubick	6135
Roy Connelly	5595
Ed Beekman	4912
Matt Zajac	4760
Doyle Motes	4680
Mike Rose	4657.5
Ed Hack	3568
David Reinking	3442.5
Scott Bell	3395
Jeff Toreki	3037.5
Hank Withaar	2844
Eric Gerstenberg	2535.2
David Longstreet	2364
Dan Preston	2202
Lee Jennings	1651.5
Randy Strader	1307.4
Bill Zopff	764
James Pasquale	552

Player	MJ Total
Paul Messina	552
Rick Reinesch	495.5
Kevin Kenneally	96

Here is how the teams fared. Congratulations to Jay, Jeff, and David:

Team	Score	Wins	Losses
Jay Harms, Jeff Taylor, David Perham,	6	11	5
Jim Ferrell, Ryan Kent, Chris Casten,	5	8	3
Eric Gerstenberg, Mike Denson, Lee Jennings,	3	5	2
Brian Roundhill, Dan Best, Paul Messina,	2	4	2
Mike Rose, Matt Schwoebel, James Pasquale,	2	6	4
Matt Shostak, Dan Preston, Chris Kubick,	1	6	5
Jeff Toreki, Roy Connelly, Bill Zopff,	1	3	2
Matt Zajac, David Reinking, Scott Bell,	1	6	5
Ed Beekman, Doyle Motes, Will Willow,	-1	6	7
JR Tracy, Ed Hack, Shawn Shifflett,	-2	3	5
Sam Tyson, Bud Garding, Randy Strader,	-3	5	8
Hank Withaar, David Longstreet, Arlen Vanek,	-3	4	7
David Hailey, Paul Hornbeck, Kevin Kenneally,	-10	0	10

TACTICAL TIP

Jeff Toreki

Facing late-war Germans in buildings with their abundance of light antitank weapons, but needing to suppress their strongpoints with combined arms, consider driving right into their locations instead of using vehicular bypass movement to impose target selection limits (a.k.a. *the freeze*). Although your AFVs might fall in the cellar, they get the benefit of the building TEM against any panzerfaust shots and thus might have a slightly better chance of surviving. If enough movement points are available, they can conduct an overrun also.



22ND ANNUAL TEXAS TEAM TOURNAMENT WRAP-UP



Rick Reinesch

Another year, another great Texas Team Tournament. This year we celebrated our 22nd anniversary of ASL camaraderie in Austin, Texas. We welcomed 51 pre-registrants and walk-ons from all over the southern part of the US and from locations as far away as California and New York. We were able to welcome several new faces this year and several returning locals, which is always great. Long distance recognition went to JR Tracy who flew in from New York. We also had David Perham and Hank Withaar represent the SoCal group. Always enjoy having the gents from California join us. A number of the new attendees were getting back into the game after being away from it for a while and we had several folks come in to play some SK. The tournament is a great way to get up to speed as the immersion of play over the weekend helps to reinforce rules learned/remembered. Randy Strader and James Pasquale were just a couple of the new participants we hope to see back again next year. For those folks returning, we were happy to welcome back Bill Zopff from San Antonio and Paul Hornbeck from Oklahoma after being away for several years. Hopefully it won't be several more years before they make another appearance.

We held the tourney in the Tech Room of the Wingate Conference Center again this year. This is our third year at this hotel which works out especially well for us as they cater to conferences all the time, so coordination goes very smoothly from my standpoint. The venue provides us with plenty of elbow room to play, they allow us to bring in our own drinks (which we provide in variety and abundance) and the connectivity in the room allows us to show an endless loop of WWII-related DVDs, which makes for a great ambiance while playing. I've already signed the contracts for us to be back there again next year.

In the title match for the individual crown of the Texas Team Tournament, Jay Harms bested Matt Shostak in *Rage Against the Machine [J157]* to take home the 10-3 Award as overall champion along with the engraved dice cup and very cool BattleSchool dice that went with it. In the loss,

Matt takes the 9-2 Runner Up award for the third year in a row.

The Team Tourney continued the use of a three-man team format. This makes the possible absence of one person on a team less of an issue and allows for all teams to stay in the hunt throughout the weekend. This format has also made for some very tight races for the team crown. Again this year the team results were determined by the final games on Sunday with the winning team of Jay Harms, Jeff Taylor, and David Perham finishing on top.

As usual we held one mini and a couple of featured



playings on Thursday. One featured play was the full scenario from CH's *Omaha East/West*. We had this bad boy laid out in all its 12 feet of glory and serious counter usage. We had 5 guys playing all four days over the weekend: John Hyler, Bill Dorre, Albert Salinas, Jack O'Quinn and Alan King. And while they managed to get 6 turns into it before quitting

on Sunday, each one of the guys playing said the experience was well worth while. The experience of play resulted in John Hyler wanting to design some changes to the historical rules to streamline some of the chrome to increase the fun factor. We hope to feature that in a future issue of Banzai!! The other feature play was Matt Zajac's 3D boards and miniatures, which Matt has covered elsewhere in this newsletter. The biggest problem I have now is figuring out what to come up with for next year!

Our Thursday mini featured the time-honored Houston institution, **Ferocity Fest**. This is always a fun but brutal and deadly mini as evidenced by its name, and this year the scenario being highlighted was *The Slaughterhouse [J33]*. When all the points had been counted up, Matt Shostak and David Perham took home the WWII replica German hand grenades as the winning Axis and Allied Commanders,

respectively. **The Gamer's Armory** gift certificates were awarded for second place finishers.

On Saturday we featured a Starter Kit mini-tournament for those folks new to the game or getting back into it, and offered them a chance to take home a great prize. This year it was Paul Messina defending his crown for the fourth year in a row, narrowly besting the other contenders looking to knock him off. As always it was very encouraging to see the number of folks getting involved with SK, and we certainly encourage their participation over the weekend.

We present a number of dice awards for play over the weekend. The winner of the Audie Murphy award for the most snakes over the course of the tourney went to Bud Garding. The winner (if he wants to be called that) of the most boxcars over the course of the weekend and taking the Col. Klink award was Will Willow. We also present a nice plaque to the winner of the most Close Combat points collected over the weekend, and the winner of that was Sam Tyson.

The Major Johnson award was hard-fought again this year; with Will Willow playing the most ASL over the course of the weekend and taking home the cup and the Russian winter cap that accompanied it. So the next time you see Will, ask him to show you his Maj. Johnson. The Major Johnson can be won in many ways, and over the past few years it has been the balanced approach of a large number of moderate-sized scenarios that has prevailed. In the past it was the big scenarios that would do it. But win or lose you are always in the hunt just by playing (a lot).

We had a great list of sponsors for this year, without whose assistance we could not offer such a fantastic drawing of prizes. I would especially like to recognize Alex Key's Games & Hobbies, Bounding Fire Productions, GMT Games, Wargame Depot, EastSide Gamers, Ken Smith Art, Le Franc Tireur, Osprey Publishing, and Wargame Depot, as major sponsors for this year. Here is the full list:

- Alex Key's Games & Hobbies
- BattleSchool
- Bounding Fire Productions
- Break Contact
- Ken Smith Art
- Dispatches from the Bunker
- East Side Gamers
- Friendly Fire
- GMT Games
- Le Franc Tireur
- Lone Canuck Publishing
- MultiMan Publishing
- Osprey Books
- SoCal ASL group
- The Gamers Armory
- Wargame Depot

Please make sure to frequent these folks with your product orders and let them know that you appreciate their support of the Texas Team Tournament.

I would also like to recognize a number of people that always stepped up to the plate to and help out make the tournament an enjoyable experience for all. They all did a fantastic job and I can't thank them enough:

Alan King, Jeff Toreki, and Jay Harms for the use of their ice coolers

Ed Beekman for the use of his video library during the tourney

John Hyler for helping set up the tournament room

Matt Zajac for bringing in his 3D boards and miniatures

And especially my terrific wife Rhonda who ran a number of errands for me during the tourney. To say she is supportive of me doing this would be an understatement!

Plans are already in process for next year. For all of the old and new faces, I hope to see you again next year. For those that have never been to our tournament, I encourage you to give us a try. The 23rd Annual Texas Team Tournament will be held June 25th-28th, 2015 at the Wingate Conference Center in Round Rock, Texas. The website has already been updated with all of the information for next year and we've even got our first pre-registrants already, so it is never too early to get your hat into the ring. Don't be left out of the fun!

SCENARIO ANALYSIS: BFP40 ADVANCE TO KAKAS

Matt Shostak



Attraction: Featuring elite Japanese on the attack from the bush into town, against some inexperienced but well armed Dutch, this fine scenario from BFP's *Blood and Jungle* gives players a chance to try something a little bit off the beaten path. The Japanese are supported by several tanks, which is not too common, and the Dutch have two unusual vehicles of their own: a Braat APC and a PLA Wagen. In this action the Japanese actually have to march to battle; hence the dismantled weaponry at start and the game length at eight turns. This is a welcome change of pace from the usual tourney fare where short scenarios start with forces right on top of each other; here both players (but especially the Japanese player) have to contend with that extra dimension. Early indications on balance are positive, with ROAR showing a 5-5 score at the time of this writing.

Japanese Advantages: Troop quality and quantity, leadership, armor

Japanese Disadvantages: Time, widely dispersed victory objectives

This is a formidable attacking force. They are elite, stealthy, well led, and provided with several good support weapons including four knee mortars to help provide smoke cover where needed. They also have five Type 95 HA-GO tanks to help, which opens up the combined arms toolbox. Although 8 turns might seem like plenty of time at first glance, the victory objectives are a long distance away and spread nearly evenly across the width of the battlefield. It will likely take three turns just to reach them if all goes well, and there probably won't be time for the conquerors of buildings on one far flank to help their countrymen on the other side to reduce that last stronghold.

Dutch Advantages: Hidden units, stone buildings, bore sighting

Dutch Disadvantages: Troop quality

The Dutch forces will often be ensconced in stone buildings enjoying their superior +3 TEM while firing on Japanese infantry forced to cross open ground. They're also allowed hidden placement for two squad equivalents and any leaders and support weapons stacked with them, so they can try to create some clever traps for the Japanese or perhaps leave a hidden unit in or near a victory building until game end in the hopes of denying control or even retaking an ungarrisoned building to steal victory back from the jaws of defeat. These troops are not of the highest quality, though. Most are green, and they're not even allowed to deploy into half squads during setup. Their low ELR will hurt the most since many squads that break will simply disrupt in place and therefore effectively be out of the game. The Dutch player will have to be very cagey to make the best use of these forces.

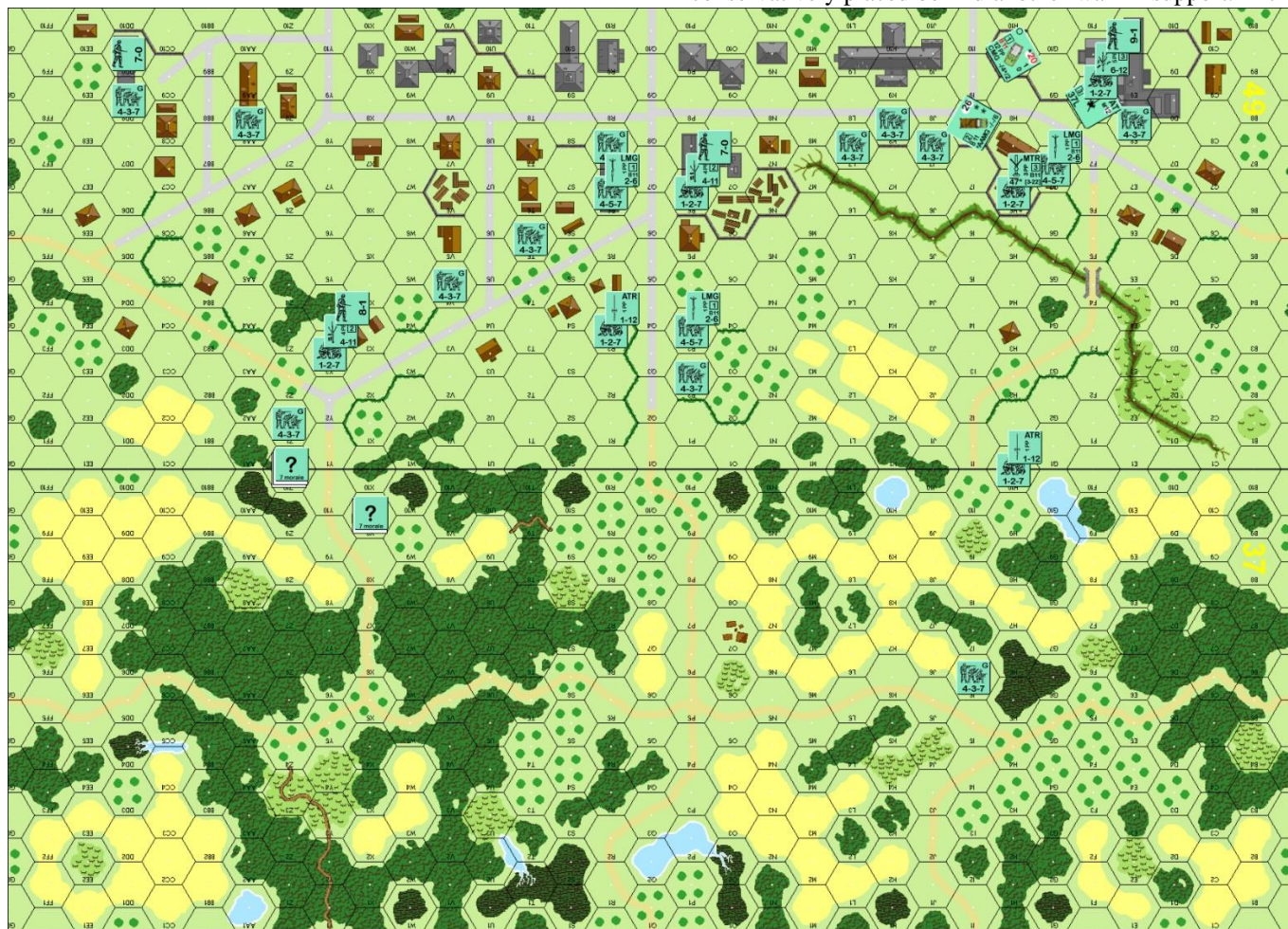
Dutch Defensive Philosophy and Setup

The first task when preparing a defense in a scenario like this is to try to envision how the scenario will play out in general terms, such as the pace of the attack and the avenues of advance. The victory objectives for the Japanese are mostly at the edge of the board, nearly two full board widths away from their entry areas. Furthermore, their initial march through the wilderness of board 37 will be slowed by the bush; jungle, swamp, bamboo, and kunai are costly to move through unless they travel down a few natural avenues that could become choke points: the eastern approach through the 37I1-H4-K6-J9-I10 area; the middle way via the road 37Q1-Q10; or the western route down the path at 37Y1-Z3 and through the 37X6-Y10 area. There's also a far western approach right at the board edge that could be used effectively although it has no roads. The

Japanese armor, especially, will have to stick to these attack lines unless they want to risk bog checks. Remember that even hexes accessible to swamp hexes are bog terrain unless there is a road, so don't let your IJA opponent get away with any freewheeling with his tanks without taking the required bog checks. Although eight turns might seem like a lot of time, the dense terrain almost dictates that the attackers cannot afford to plan for an attack that overloads one flank in the hope of overwhelming one side of the victory area and then sweeping through to the other side. There probably won't be time for that, so the Japanese will more likely spread their attack out across the width of this battlefield. Moreover they'll want to use the speedy approaches we've just mentioned, and will also be sorely tempted to stack several squads with leaders in order to move forward as quickly as possible. But this is risky; the attacking player will also fear a trap lurking somewhere, perhaps a bore-sighted location where a large stack of the Emperor's soldiers might meet their demise.

With all that in mind, let's look at an example setup for the Dutch defenders. Here the defenders are using their hidden placement capability to set some traps. First is the

unfortunate squad in the kunai at 37I6, hoping to cause casualties and delay with a powerful 8-2 shot at adjacent targets in I5, hopefully moving through there without much caution. Next is the hidden ATR team at 37H10 covering that obvious chokepoint. Whittling Japanese armor strength down before the battle gets to the town could pay dividends. Neither of these two units have much hope of safely routing back to more secure lines; they are likely to die in place. On the west side a hidden 8-1 directs an MMG team, boresighted on 37Y9. This team has some hope of slowing the attackers down and still maybe repositioning to the rear after getting off a shot or two. The last hidden unit is the gun in 49F8. It covers the eastern approach over the bridge quite well and in fact has the F4 bridge boresighted, hoping to clog that area with wrecks. This gun also has a long line of sight down the east-west road G8-Y8. The mortar team in the lumberyard at 49H6 has the 37J10 jungle boresighted, and along with the nearby platoon of riflemen and the truck is covering the open fields south of the gully and west of the F4 road. The truck is behind a wall to take advantage of its +2 TEM, which might keep it in the fight just a little bit longer, while the Braat APC is conservatively placed behind another wall in support. In the

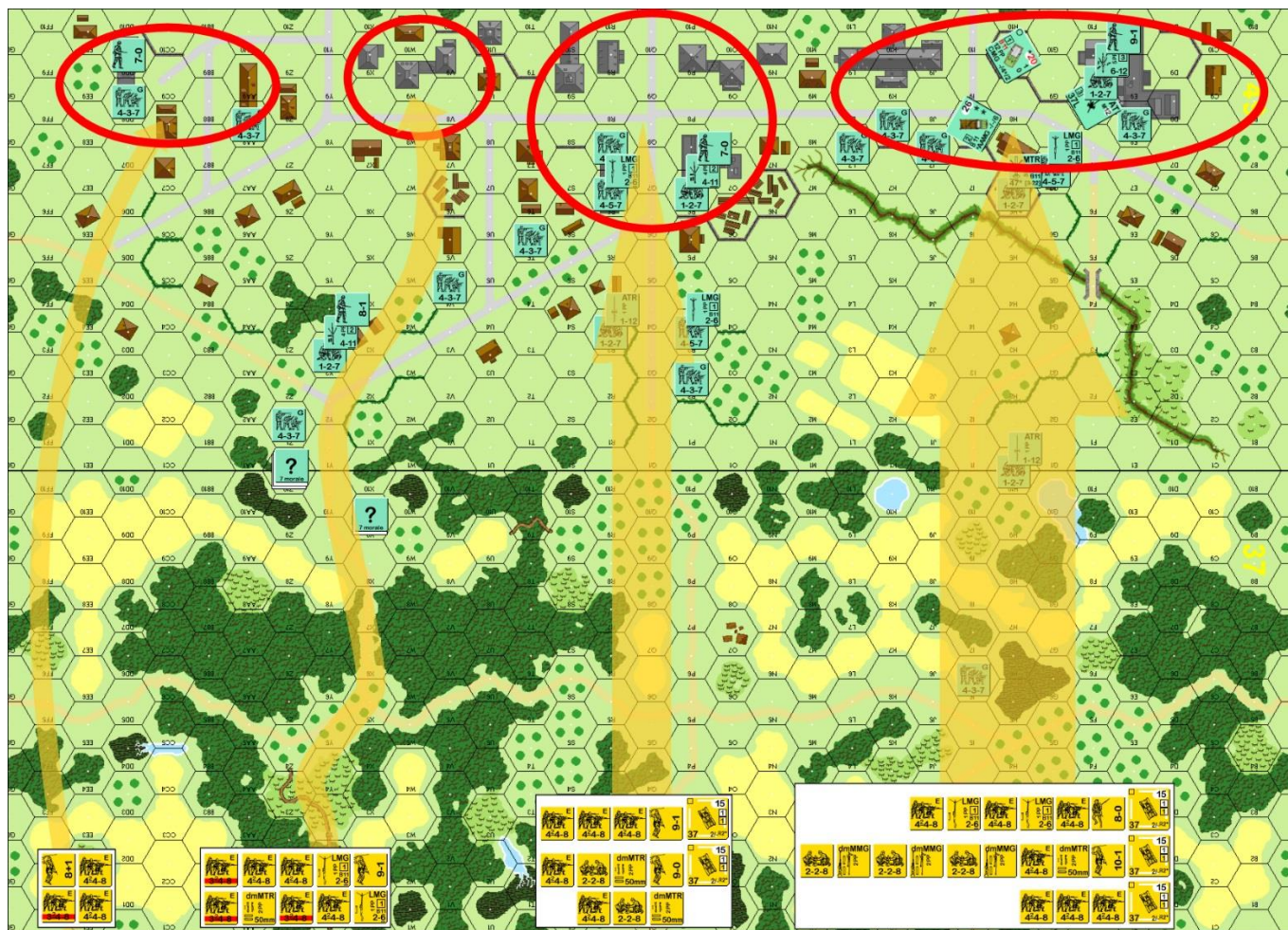


center, the 7-0 leads an MMG team in P6 that can throw a fire lane down the road down to Z1. The rest of the infantry in this center and west area intend to put up a show before hustling back to the victory buildings for the final stages.

Japanese Attack Plan

Who wouldn't want to command this powerful force? These troops are highly motivated, well trained, and well led. The armor support adds a lot of punch. They easily outclass their opponents here, but they have a lot to do. The terrain and widely spaced victory objectives, however, almost dictate a broad-front approach. The idea is to push forward as fast as possible down each of the faster avenues, weighing the risk of any Dutch ambushers lying in wait in forward positions. The tanks will advance in two platoons, separated so that an unlucky appearance by antitank weaponry will not be able to knock them all out in short order. Once the attack reaches the outskirts of the village on board 49 they can begin to assemble their weapons and attack in earnest. The tanks can be used to get behind defending infantry to make routing difficult, or drive into the locations of defenders to prevent them from firing out of their locations (with even less risk than usual since the

defenders are saddled with +1 PAATC due to being Allied Minor). They can also simply park at point-blank range and start shelling the defenders with their cannons. Those 37mm guns may not look like much, but they still dish out 4+0 attacks on the IFT when they hit, which is nothing to sneeze at, especially for troops that will so easily suffer ELR failures. They can still be killed rather easily by the antitank gun, the antitank rifles, and even the machine guns, but they're also expendable; one might even say if the Japanese still have most of their tanks in good shape by game end they're not doing it right or have gotten extraordinarily lucky. With four knee mortars, the Japanese should be able to drop some smoke cover somewhere to help with their soldiers get up close and personal. There are also plenty of leaders available, which should allow for multiple banzai opportunities. Don't forget that the elite squads have a smoke exponent of 2, and can even toss white phosphorous grenades which can be a nasty surprise to defenders in buildings if a six shows up on the colored die of the required morale check. This is one of those rare PTO scenarios taking place early enough that No Quarter is not automatically in effect, so keep in mind the possibility of taking prisoners; it may prove useful with building



control later on. Furthermore, prisoners may be interrogated immediately upon capture and perhaps sing like canaries and give up secrets about the defense. This is technically an optional rule so take care to make sure both players are on the same page regarding its use before play begins. There should be plenty of opportunities to encircle defenders, enforce rout failures and captures, and kill them in close combat—the standard items in the Japanese infantry toolbox.

The graphic shows how an attack might open. Three tanks, the machine gun platoon, the 10-1, the 8-0, six squads, two LMGs and a mortar take the easternmost approach through the 37I1-H4-K6-J9-I10 area, with the ultimate goal of securing the biggest victory building at 49D8 and its near neighbors. Two tanks, a 9-1, 9-0, five squads, two LMGs, and a couple of mortar teams head down the central road through the 37Q10 gap aiming for the victory buildings in the center near the 49Q8 crossroad. Down the jungle path on the west side toward the 37X5-Y10 area and beyond goes the other 9-1 with half a dozen squads, two LMGs and the last mortar, while the 8+1 takes the remaining platoon of 4 squads down the far western flank at the board edge, heading of course for buildings 49DD8 and 49AA8.

Conclusion

Each side has plenty to ruminate over in this action, which looks fun and balanced. The units and rules involved are not very exotic or difficult for a PTO scenario so it should be accessible even to relative newcomers to the PTO. It might be better for the more experienced player to take the defense, given that their low ELR means that they have to choose their shots and moves quite carefully.

NORTH TEXAS SHOOTOUT

Ed Beekman



Coming up this year on November 7 through 9 is the 5th Annual North Texas Shoot Out ASL Tournament in Fort Worth Texas. The tournament is a single elimination event. Players are seeded based on their win-loss record from the first day's open gaming. The winner receives the Champion trophy while the Runner Up is also recognized with a trophy.

Those eliminated in the first round are entered in the Master Sergeant mini tournament where players are put into Axis and Allied teams, play against the other team but compete against their teammates for the Axis and Allied Master Sergeant trophies. It is a 2-round mini that starts with a Western Front scenario and concludes with an Eastern Front scenario. The Axis and Allied players with the most

points win the trophies. Points are awarded for winning, CVPs earned and suffered and bonus points may be available as listed on the scorecard.

For added fun there is Texas Hold 'Em Poker game on Friday and Saturday. After each ASL game played on these days the loser is given 2 cards. He selects one and gives the other to the winner. At the beginning of the day three cards are posted with an additional card after the next two rounds. At the end of the day the players with the highest and lowest poker hands win a prize.

Of course there is a prize table. I would like to recognize last year's sponsors: Lone Canuck, Eastside Gamers, Dispatches from the Bunker and Gamer's Armory. Theirs and other donated prizes are awarded Saturday evening in the All-Around ASL Player Prize Give-Away. Prizes are awarded ranked by the diversity of the ASL that each contestant has played. The more nationalities, terrain types, equipment and rules played with and against results in an earlier pick from the table.

This year we are offering something new, Face to Face VASL. Pushing cardboard remains the default but plans have been made to have a pair of laptops available pre-loaded with all the scenarios from the scenario packet. If both players agree they can play electronically; possibly an ASL first.

Visit our Website for additional details: www.ntasl.com

Contact the Tournament Director with questions at thunderbird.asl.td@gmail.com.

Hotel room rates to be announced shortly.

Pre-registration: \$25 gets you entry to the tournament, a scenario packet, and ASL t-shirt.

DON'T JUST TALK ABOUT THE SCENARIOS YOU'VE PLAYED, ROAR ABOUT THEM

Banzai Staff

If you play a scenario, please report the result to the Remote Online Automated Record (ROAR). This is a database for recording games that can be a valuable resource for balance and activity related to a specific scenario. You can find a link to the ROAR website on the Texas ASL page at <http://texas-asl.com/> or go directly to the ROAR website at <http://www.jrvdev.com/ROAR/>. And for you local Texas ASL players, don't forget to also submit your games to the Texas ASL Game Tracker that can be accessed from the

Texas ASL website. Not only is it a great way of tracking your games, it gives you the capability to analyze the stats of your playings any number of very cool ways.



Texas ASL
DOS EQUIS
Scenarios Especial
Texas Team Tournament
20th Anniversary Scenario Pack
June 21 - 24th, 2012, Austin, Texas
Second Edition

TTT 20th Anniversary Scenario Pack

The second edition of the Texas Team Tournament 20th Anniversary Scenario pack is currently out of stock. We are in discussions with Scott Blanton at The Gamer's Armory to get out a third edition printing. We want to make sure everyone can get a chance to obtain a copy of some of the best efforts of a few of our local (and not so local) players. The only difference between the first, second, and third editions will be the inclusion of all known errata. You can check out any errata (and sticky errata) at the Texas ASL (<http://www.texas-asl.com>) website. Look for the pack to hopefully soon be available for \$15 from the good folks at The Gamer's Armory (<http://www.gamersarmory.com>).

CLUB NOTES

Biweekly Lunch Gathering

Don't forget to join us every other Friday at 1200 hours down at Kneaded Pleasures on Far West (just west of Mopac). The club sends out email reminders, or you can call Matt or Rick 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 or better yet join our email group. You can post a message at 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.

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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!

