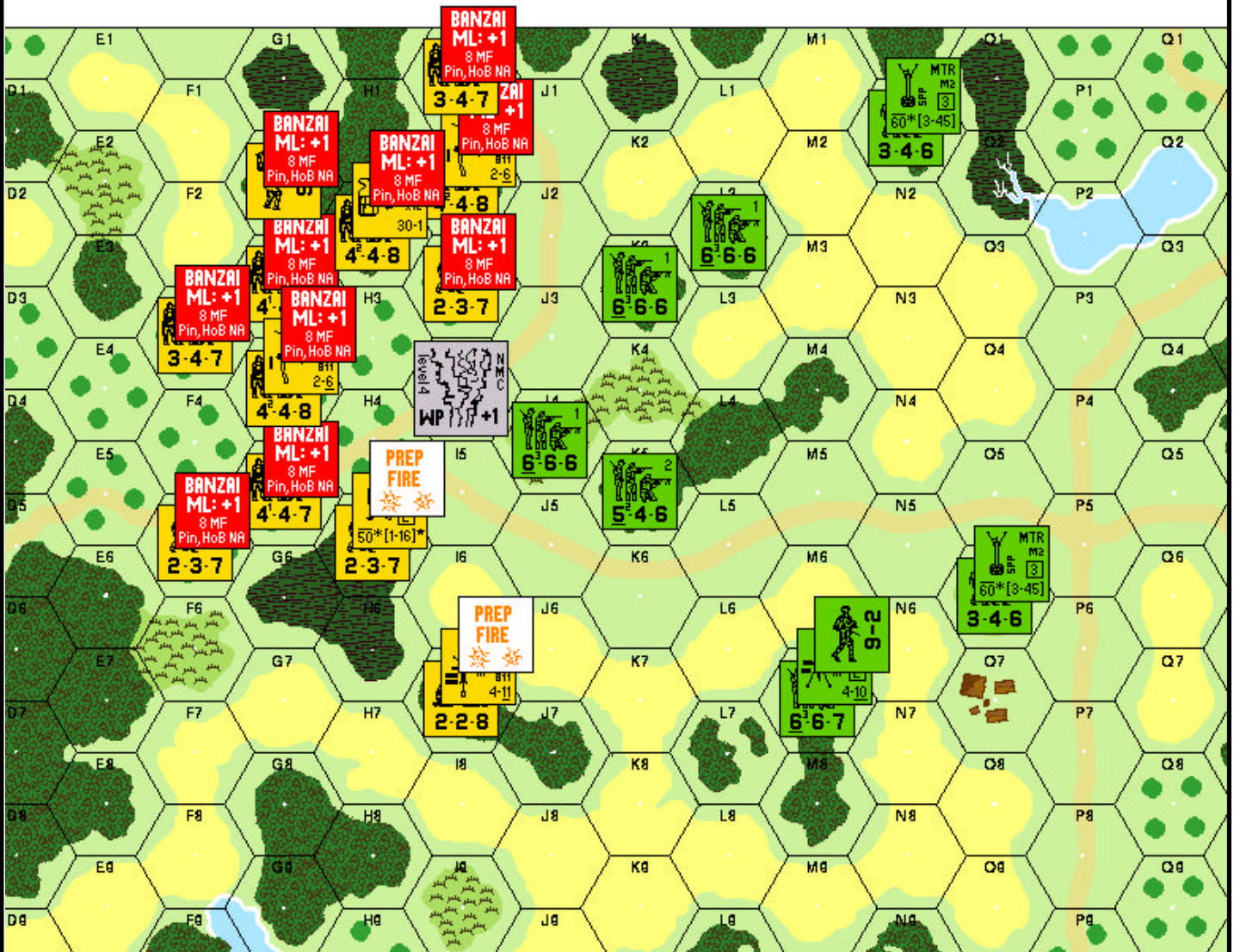


# Banzai!!!



The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

January, 2000      Volume 5, Number 1

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# Banzai!!

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## Editor's Corner



**Matt Shostak**

The results of the Internet ASL community's *Best of the Year* vote for 1999 are in, and Austin ASL was very well represented in the top spots. *Hell on Wheels* was especially well received, scoring highest among non-MMP magazines. Three of its scenarios, *Merzenhausen Zoo*, *The Guns of Naro*, and *In the Bag* made the top 20 scenarios list. As if that weren't enough, 4 of the top 21 articles originated within our club, including two from *Hell on Wheels*. Many members of this club worked hard on *Hell on Wheels* and we should all feel proud of its excellent showing. All those hours of playtesting, proofreading, and nitpicking the scenarios really paid off and gave something good to the ASL community at large.

Many club members also put in a lot of effort on Chas Smith's next project, the *Herman Goring Battle Pack*. Chas made a deal to work exclusively with MMP, and the second ASL Journal, released this January, contains several scenarios from *Herman Goring*, and a few from *Hell on Wheels* as well. Collaboration between Chas and MMP is a great thing for ASL as far as I'm concerned. Our Captain Smith has a talent for designing scenarios and seems to enjoy doing so, including the meticulous historical study that goes with it. Being in the military he has access to some great resources. I hope our club will continue to support Chas' work by playtesting his creations hard and giving him great feedback. He's already busily involved in his next project and has several scenarios ready for playtesting. Don't hesitate to contact me if you'd like to get in on the fun; I certainly won't hesitate to coax and cajole you all to give it a shot!



Jagdpanther on display at Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

## Tactical Analysis

### RB 1 - One Down, Two to Go



**Mike Seningen**

Red Barricades is one of the best modules (if not the best) in all of ASL. Unfortunately, even the most devoted players often do not have the time to commit to a campaign that could last for months. Another problem with the campaign is balance. While it may more accurately simulate the fog of war and the brutality of the Stalingrad conflict, the ASL battle can often end up lopsided. For those who want to get a taste of Stalingrad, but can only commit a few sessions at most, *RBI One Down, Two to Go* is an absolute must. With recent ROAR (remote online automated record) results showing a 19-16 Russian edge, a highly contested, balanced slugfest can be expected.

I've played *One Down, Two to Go* twice in the past year, both times as the Russians. I was fortunate to walk away with victories, but each time I played, I felt there was a precariously thin line that I was walking to the winner's circle. I'd like to present some of the scenario highlights as well as suggestions for both sides. I'll also offer a Russian setup placing the prime pieces to illustrate some of the essentials of the defense. If I see one playing based on my article, I will consider it a great success.

According to the historical background this is the second thrust into the Barricade factory. The first attack was pummeled by dug-in tanks and Katyusha rocketry. The scenario starts out with the Germans having a 2-hexrow toehold on the north end of the map. SSR 2 represents the aftermath of the rocketry, as the covering terrain of the first 4 hexes must roll to see if they start as blazes. Russians are heavily dug-in only tens of meters away. At first light the Germans struck hard and successfully pushed their way between the Russian 138th and 308th Rifle divisions. The Tractor Factory had fallen; the Red Barricades Ordnance Factory and Red October Steel Mill were next in their sights....

Often in a scenario analysis, one side's advantages are the other's disadvantages and vice-versa. I will try to illustrate how each of these scenario traits affects that particular side and should influence that side's battle plan.

#### The Germans

**Advantages:** Stukas, Initiative, Victory Conditions

The Germans need only take 20 stone locations. There are 24 on hexrows 5 and 6 alone, only 4 hexes away from the initial German setup, and all non-HIP Russians who attempt to defend in those hexes must take a post-setup NMC. As relatively easy as this may seem, I think it can lead the unwary German into a spread-out death trap. The Russian wants you to attack that massive front line so he can bring most of his defense to bear. The Russian knows he can't defend the initial hexes well with infantry so you can be sure he's done something to make life hell for any front rushing Germans. That is where the other two German Advantages should be used to their fullest. The Germans can take 20 stone locations anywhere in the playing area. They should look at the Russian defense and determine where it is the weakest and hit it with everything they have. The Russian should be very wary of just such an attack; unfortunately he is hampered by the fear of giving away those hexrow 5 and 6 locations and also the fear that the attack could hit anywhere. The Russian reinforcements are unreliable, and must cover a lot of ground to fill any gaps. This means the Russians will likely set up spread out and hope to react to any strong thrust with the advantage of moving within their interior lines. That is where the Stukas come into play. While they too can be unreliable, when they are available just the fear of crushing any stack that moves, or the automatic pin of a point attack, will severely restrict Russian movement. The Russians will have to react to counter any German thrust, but these actions are very hazardous and often unsuccessful with the Stukas prowling the back lines.

**Disadvantages:** Terrain, Limited Heavy Weapons, Lack of Numbers

The Germans who set up onboard are restricted to only two hexrows. Some of these hexes will be burning, the rest mostly debris. Much of the

rally terrain will be set ablaze by the pre-game rolls or subsequent fire spreading. Most rally points that are not burning are in enemy LOS, and usually do not offer Rally Terrain benefits. The mid-game is likely to find a poor German attack rewarded with piles of DM Germans huddled in fields of debris and shellholes. TEM differential is often 2, or even 3: Infanterie Division 389 is hiding amongst +1 TEM debris, while the Russians are feeling smug in their fortified +4 stone buildings. The Germans also lack what in the campaign games is a German must, the MG kill stack. With only 1 MMG, and a dm HMG to spread among 32 squads, the Germans cannot expect much help from their often-lethal MG kill stacks. Speaking of their 32 squads, you would think their numbers would be more than sufficient. Early on the Germans do exhibit at least parity, 27 Turn 1 capable Germans, to 26 onboard setup Russians. It is the 22 more Russian reinforcing MMCs that can be thrown into gaps created by the initial German thrust that tilt the numbers game to the defenders.

#### German Setup:

It really doesn't make much sense to explore in depth the German setup. The entire mantra of the Germans in *One Down, Two to Go* should be to Exploit, Exploit, and to Exploit. The German player should carefully analyze the Russian setup and should attempt to concentrate his efforts to probe for and exploit its weaknesses. Since some of the Russian forces will be HIP and all will be concealed, the onboard forces should be used to recon to determine where the maximum thrust should occur. As battlefield knowledge is obtained, use your retained off-board units and your reinforcements to your maximum advantage. That having been said, let's look at what you can expect from the Russians.

#### The Russians

**Advantages:** Terrain, Unit Count, Cupola, Fortifications, Stealthy, HtH

The Russians have a decided edge in terrain. The Germans start in a sea of debris, blazing buildings, and shellholes while the Russians are dug-in behind a strong line of stone walls, stone buildings, minefields, and fortified locations. Movement for the Germans will be difficult as well. The debris offers little cover but really slows the attack. Rubble and blazing hexes will make navigating the flanks difficult. Add a few well-placed mines to cover the gaps, and it just hardly seems fair. Anchoring the defense is a pair of Guns and a nearly indestructible armored cupola. Placed in rubble, the armored cupola sets up HIP, hull down, and given the TEM and small target status is damn near unhittable. That assumes you have something to hit it with. Barring OBA or a very lucky (and probably wasted) Stuka attack, the only non-CC attack that has a chance of harming the cupola is from the Pz IVF2. The German tank reinforcements arrive on a dr less than the turn number. On average you will not see these until Turn 4! Some well-placed mines and some infantry support will ensure that the cupola will be around for a while. While the Germans navigate these obstacles, they face an equal amount of men resisting their approach. Call up nearly an equal amount in reserve to timely fill any breaches in the line, and it looks like even tougher going for the Krauts. Lest we forget, we can thank RB SSR 18 for letting most of these Russians be Stealthy, just waiting for the Germans to get close and personal. Lastly Hand-To-Hand CC is allowed in RB, which can be a Russian friend as the CC often ends with the annihilation of both sides, if the German was lucky to avoid being ambushed! Do the Germans even have a chance?

**Disadvantages:** Pregame NMC, Spread out Defense, Interdiction

As awesome as the advantages for the Russians sound, they have a few flaws that if properly exploited by a cunning German should yield positive results. Remember all those 24 stone locations right on the front row? Well any Russian infantry not HIP in a hex numbered  $\leq 7$  must take a NMC just before Turn 1. That means on average 40% of the Russian front line troops are going to start the game broken or pinned. The very locations you have been tasked to defend are a liability to your defense. Careful consideration must be taken to ensure you can hold those positions without great danger to an early game collapse. You must be on your toes and your 26 squads must protect a front essentially 29 hexes wide, while your opponent can mass his troops in one or more tightly focused *schwerpunkts* after you set up. These two handicaps are magnified greatly by the potential for interdicted movement from those deadly Stukas. While Stukas are somewhat random, a wise Russian has to fear they will swoop from the skies with a vengeance early and often. A veteran of Stalingrad already knows, and a novice will soon see, how difficult movement can be in Stalingrad. Debris and rubble litter the

battlefield, hampering movement. What little open ground that is available will have a Stuka, OBA, or MG position waiting to pounce. Add to this that 40+% of the Russian reinforcements are 3MF conscripts, and it can seem like forever for those reserves to fill a gap.

Just as difficult as the thought of assaulting the Russian position may seem, the Russians must be deathly afraid of one or more concentrated thrusts breaching the thin lines, before his troops can be consolidated and the reinforcements arrive, probably just in the nick of time, to save the day.

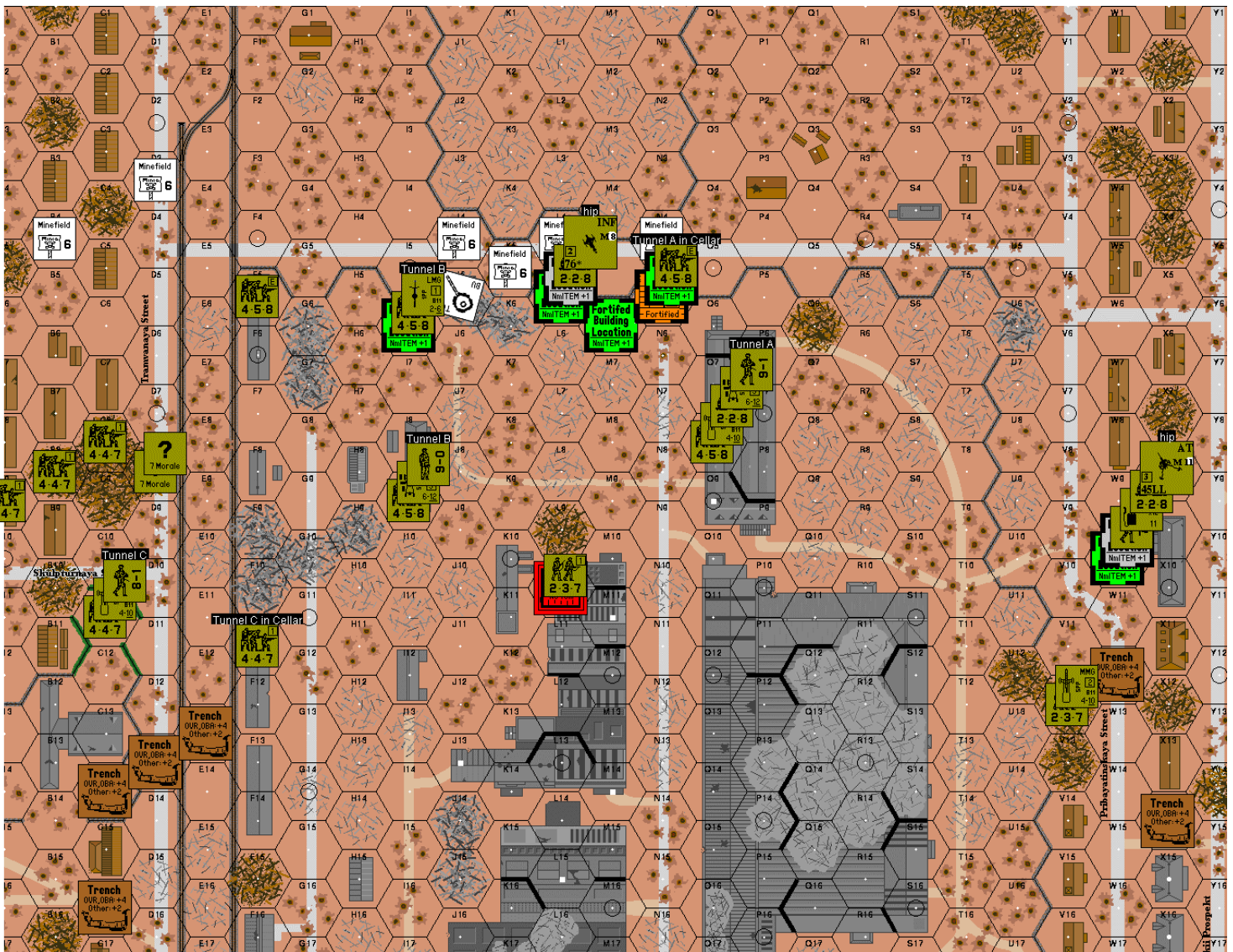
#### Russian Setup:

With as many units as the Russians have, the setup possibilities may seem unlimited. In this article I will present what I consider a backbone for a stiff defense. I propose setup locations for key elements in the Russian OB. I will attempt to support the reasoning behind the setup and for some units, compare and contrast setup choices.

I have broken the defense into three sectors. I will work from East to West, or right to left on your radio dial.

The defense of the Eastern Sector is probably the weakest, but the Germans would have to cross a fair number of hexes with very little cover. An Eastern Sector attack will take a bit of time, and a concentrated attack here could be parried more easily. In addition, there are a lot less stone locations on this section of the playing area. The brunt of the defense for this sector is the 7-0 with the field phone. His setup in W9L1 gives him a pretty good field of view, and can support the debris field in front of building O6 as well. With 5 black and only 2 red chits, the Russian should get enough missions to hamper any efforts here. The HIP AT gun in the same location may be risky if the German starts hunting for the radio operator. Nonetheless, the good field of view and the relatively low TEM of units crossing this area make this a very attractive position. The AT gun should be strongly considered as an anti-infantry device. It has a 3 ROF, and with some acquisition, it has a good chance for some critical hits. Ironically, the fear of the 45LL may persuade the German player from using armor in this sector if he knows where the 45LL is. In reality the 45LL to kill chance against the Germans AFVs is a 5, and the AFVs are unlikely to show themselves, on average, until turn 4. Why hold back a potentially effective weapon against infantry for half the game in hopes of some lucky armor TKs? The MMG in V12 is there to keep the Germans honest crossing *Tranvanaya Street*. With the dense area of wooden buildings and rubble, a few pre-game blazes can really hamper the Germans if they choose to attack on this side. I place 2 of my 6 trenches on this side: one to allow the MMG access to the W9 building, and the second in X14, to allow reinforcements cover from the board edge to the front lines. I have strongly considered moving the radio operator to one of the factory rooftops. A careful German will home in on the movement of the OBA counters and will start to recon by fire, and the measly +1 TEM will not protect the radio operator for long. Imagine what a Stuka attack would do at 0 rooftop TEM. Another reason is that a fairly strong contingent of troops has been placed in the Central Sector. Furthermore, the Western Sector has such restricted LOS, that getting and maintaining effective OBA can be a considerable challenge. I believe both the LOS, and relatively low TEM of the Eastern Sector make the OBA there the best choice. In addition, I also like having a leader on the east sector just in case, but I would only reveal him in dire situations.

The Central Sector is the heart of the defense and protects the closest and densest region of stone locations. Remembering SSR3, any non-HIP units I set up in hexes  $\leq 7$  have to take a NMC. I will only set up a few squads in key locations, and make sure they have paths of escape should they break. I have placed the mines to catch a hasty dash for the N5 building on Turn 1 when I am weakest. As the attack develops, Germans in the middle will have to deal with the mines, covered by infantry and heavy weapons in the front line buildings. These Russians will hide at ground level or in the cellar locations. The walls lining the street directly in front of building N5 protect the infantry in the N5 building very well. Only Germans directly behind the wall can attack ground level units in N5, and only adjacent Germans can attack those in the cellar locations behind the wall. The Germans will have to maneuver without the benefits of suppressive fire when they assault building N5. The mines make assaulting across the street extremely hazardous. Those Germans lucky enough to survive are likely to find themselves thrown back into the mine-covered streets as the Russians enjoy the benefits of a fully fortified ground floor in building N5. Remember, entrance into a fortified location occupied by an unpinned enemy squad or its equivalent is prohibited.



The INF piece in L5L1 is there to work over the Germans beyond the stone wall in the debris field. It has an excellent field of view, covering all of the Central Sector, part of the Eastern Sector, and can lend some support to the defense of the rail-embankment. The Russian should be concerned that the gun will take a considerable amount of heat. Some players may prefer to set up the gun on the ground floor. I believe the extra field of vision is a net positive for the Russian. The INF crew will just have to weather the storm in its fortified location. In close support, I place the Armored Cupola in J5. This is one of the best places on the board for it. Supported with mines, and a fresh supply of infantry from Tunnel B, the cupola will be a tough nut to crack. In Factory O6, I place the 9-1, MMG, and HMG. They sit on the entrance to Tunnel A, which will give them an unmolested path to the N5 building on Turn 1. I man the HMG with a crew initially, since it is expected he will be traveling to the N5 Building. There he will either man the HMG, or transfer it and become a back-up crew for the INF piece. Depending on how the German attacks, the 9-1 and comrades will either repel a Central attack or provide enfilade fire into the flanks of an attack on the Western or West-Central front. On the other side of Tunnel A I place an elite squad in the Cellar, in hopes that his 8 morale will hold up to the NMC. (Due to limitations of viewing the units and Tunnel label I was unable to picture this squad in the Cellar location.) Should the N5 squad break he can rout back through the cellar to the 9-1 leader. This may be risky though, as now the Q8 hex is not fully concealed and is easier to sight and may make a juicy Stuka target during the Russian Player Turn 1. On the western side of the Central Sector I trade in my 8-0 for a 9-0 Commissar and start him in J9 at the south end of Tunnel B. He will be used to rally any troops in the corner east of the rail embankment. The second HMG

resides in the same hex. It can be quickly deployed to I6 if the attack is developing there, or held back to protect the stone locations south of building F5. I place only a token squad in building F5. There are two main reasons for that. First is the entire building is in the NMC zone. Second I think the defense of this building is suicidal. Units that break will quickly become trapped and may not make it back to the Commissar. There are 8 victory locations in that corner area. You hate to give them up without a fight. Nevertheless, I would consider how the German attacks and use infantry from the F8-J8 area as counterattacking elements if the German commits too few troops to holding building F5. The lone HS on the roof is there to strip concealment. He will skulk back and forth as necessary. I consider him to be expendable, but the stripping of concealment will be a big thorn in the German's side.

The Western Sector is probably the toughest area to defend. I place a couple of mines at the front to slow down the Germans and make them waste some MF moving through the rubble locations. I set up a line of infantry along the a9-c8 hex grain in the hope that they can gain concealment and then can skulk back and forth to slow the Germans down until help arrives. The dummy stack in D8 is to remind the Russian that any units setup there are in jeopardy of receiving turn 1 prep fire, and at the very least should be concealed. The 8-1 waits in C11 with the last medium hoping that he is not needed until after reinforcements start filling ranks. He sits on top of one entrance of Tunnel C, a useful tunnel that will allow units to be ferried back and forth under the rail embankment. It will not be long before the Germans control the D and E hexrows, prohibiting movement above ground. Russians should be strongly concerned about an attack along the western edge and the rail

embankment. Preparing for this, place the bulk of the trenches so as to support your reinforcements. Units will be able to move quickly from building to building, maintain concealment, and should have some protection from the Stukas. The D13-E13 trenches further aid in cross-sector movement. Some players may be tempted to employ the trenches farther forward as defensive terrain. However, in the few key places the trenches could alternatively be placed, the German may ultimately benefit more than the Russian. One such place is F7. While it appears to be a good place to allow the rout of any broken building F5 troops, it also gives the Germans an avenue to F8, and the plethora of VC in that area. I would prefer to have the Germans bottled up in the F5 area, wondering how to cross the open ground of F7, or the lowly shellholes of G8-H7-H5.

I do not swear that this setup is bulletproof. This is one of the reasons I love this scenario. Even with a defense that I feel is pretty solid, it is just as likely to be very brittle. The Russians have to be ready to parry any strong thrust in any area of the map and hold on, trading bodies, and sometimes stone locations, for time. If the reinforcements are arriving in droves and the Germans are still striving to collect stone locations, the Russians can begin to feel more comfortable. However, as thin as these lines are and as difficult as it is to move from one sector to the other, a good German player will exploit any opening he manages to create.

Pull out the counters, dust off your RB map and consider the setup. Then imagine what you would do as the Germans to exploit it. Pick the side you think has the best chance, and enjoy one of my favorite scenarios.

## After Action Report

### J8 - Blockbusting in Bokruisk



**Matt Shostak**

Chas Smith and I were hungry for some "official" ASL after having playtested *Hell on Wheels* for so many months, so we chose this scenario from the ASL Journal #1. It's an interesting tactical situation played out on half of board 1 abutted against half of board 3. A small German force sets up on board 1 supported by a Marder, a StuG IIIG, and a couple of AT Guns. Their setup is restricted somewhat, forcing them to spread their troops out. They do, however, get a few wire counters to help channel the Russian attack. The Russians have two groups of infantry, one setting up on board 3, and the other entering play on turn 2 at the far end of board 3. The Russians get a 9-2 with their onboard forces, along with a HMG, FT, DC, an ISU-152, a couple of SU-85s, and a 76\* INF Gun with a truck. Their truck-borne reinforcements are escorted by two KV-1S tanks, and also bring a couple of MMGs along. To win, the Russians must control four of five multi-hex stone buildings on board 1 at game end. The victory buildings are in the same basic pattern as the five pips on a die, so I'll refer to them here as the front left, front right, center, back left, and back right buildings.

Since Chas was coming to my place I got the defense and set up the Germans. I originally thought of putting the wire in front of the front two buildings, or to the side of one of them, but instead chose to seal off a flank and put them on my right side in the road, in hexes G2-H1-I1. In retrospect, it was a bad spot. Better would have been to go with my original instinct to shield the front buildings somehow, or maybe put them in the woods to the right front, making it difficult for the Russian infantry to find cover as they came through. The setup forces the Germans to spread out, so I had some units in each building. I kept the HMG in the center building at level 2 directed by the 9-1, while the MMG went in the back left building also at level two. The 76L AT went in the front left building, right in front. I didn't think I would get a chance to outsmart Chas with the guns, so I just put them in the victory buildings so I would get some shots. The 50L went in the center building up front. The Marder was on the far left, in a reverse slope position. It was behind some woods, but it could cover the road in front of the center building. The StuG IIIG went between the back two buildings. It was also in a reverse slope position. It couldn't be seen by any Russians until the endgame.

Chas put his 76\* Gun on the near hill, and he had his troops arrayed in a line roughly in the center of the board. The gun promptly smoked in one of my hexes and his troops pushed forward, always careful to avoid shots

from my HMG and MMG positions. I only managed to break one squad as it moved through the open on Chas' far left just beyond the tree line. The Russians made good use of Smoke from that gun and the SU-85s and pushed forward. I revealed the 76L and took some shots to no effect. Soon Russians were threatening both front buildings. They had them pretty much wrapped up by turn two. All I could do was hope to keep some guys alive for as long as possible. During this early part of the game, my dice were cold. Every German who had to take a check, it seemed, broke and ELR'd. A couple of events did help, however. In one, both Russian squads in the right front building pinned on a check of some kind, which allowed a squad of Germans with an LMG and an 8-0 to escape to the rear. In the other, a 2:1 advantage in CC didn't help Chas as a Melee ensued for a couple of turns in the front left building, costing him some time. Chas was careful not to expose his reinforcements in the trucks to any long-range machinegun fire from my troops at level 2. At this point it looked pretty bad for the Germans. The Russians had only suffered one broken squad, and if they didn't officially control both front buildings, they did so in practice. I was down on my luck, but Sam Tyson, who had stopped by to look at *Hell on Wheels*, reminded me of the can of New and Improved Whoop Ass he had given me last weekend. I promptly opened it up and made a big show of pouring it on the Russian troops, then did it again a few minutes later. That, I believe, was the turning point.

One of his SU-85s parked on my left side 3 hexes away from my HS with PSK. I think I fooled Chas a bit with this placement, because I had put a dummy stack in the woods in front of the Marder, and kept skulking them back under the Marder. I was hoping Chas would think the PSK was there, since it was a likely spot. Meanwhile, the real PSK had crept forward to support the left front building. In defensive fire my shot, needing a 5, missed, but I got the SU-85 in the ensuing Prep Fire Phase needing a 7. Meanwhile, my troops simply tried to consolidate their line in the last three buildings.

In the mid-game one of the trucks went down to a shot from the MMG, and Chas lost a squad and MMG in the process. He started to press the final three buildings. He drove his tanks up to threaten the center building, and gathered his infantry in jump-off positions. The Marder pegged the 2nd SU-85 as it crossed the road in front of the center building. Next a KV-1S drove right into the building, in order to freeze the squad in that location. His infantry advanced out into the street behind the tank. The other KV tried to clear a path through the wire and bogged on the second one. I withdrew my Germans still further, including skulking away from the KV in the building, since it was still in motion and couldn't hold my guys in Melee. The next turn Chas really turned up the heat. The KV plunged further into the building to freeze another squad. I didn't want to fire a panzerfaust, because I didn't want to give his infantry any smoke cover. His ISU-152, which underwent low ammo on its first and only shot of the game, drove into another hex of the center building to freeze the crew of the by-now-destroyed 50L. His last KV unbogged and pulled a VBM freeze on the 8-0 and squad in a small building guarding my right flank. His infantry followed this up with a well-timed human wave, which swept them into the center building. All of my guys at ground level were locked up, and only my 9-1, HMG, and squad at level two in the back left corner of the building were still free. Only one squad broke during the human wave. Chas then sent in his 9-2 and two squads to really get some power in the building, but on a simple residual attack in the street, both squads broke, and the 9-2 had to go in alone (and without the HMG). In the ensuing rout phase, one of my squads that was a victim of the human wave was forced to surrender in the right stairwell of the center building. Amazingly, the crew in the other stairwell hex rolled snakes in CC (he got to roll first because of the presence of the ISU-152) and withdrew upstairs to help protect the 9-1 and HMG squad. That was helpful, because on the last turn Chas would have to take two of the last three buildings, and now none of them were looking easy. Then again, none of them were looking impossible either.

In my turn my StuG smoked the hex with the ISU-152 out of respect for that behemoth gun, low ammo notwithstanding. This had the added effect of somewhat shielding the crew in the stairwell from fire coming from the Russian squad that had advanced into the street to pick up the abandoned HMG. My Marder maneuvered to the left side of the left front building, facing back toward my own lines, to try to bring the last road that must be crossed under fire from its BMG and low ammo MA (with only AP available by now). My squads all simply skulked.

The last turn saw more Russian aggressiveness. The 9-2 led a Prep Fire attack that broke my MMG squad in the left rear building at level two. All I had left there was the 8-1 downstairs and the PSK half-squad in the stairwell at ground level. This building was now vulnerable, as was the center building, with all my troops under upper level encirclement. Then the tanks started their move. The KV-1S in the center building came down the street and my 8-0 couldn't find a panzerfaust. The tank bypassed the stairwell hex at the front of the right rear building and went CE to invoke target selection limits on all my troops in the stairwell, which included a leader and broken squad at ground level, and squads with LMGs at 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> levels. With no other choice, the squads fired a 36+2 at the crew of the tank and stunned them. Then the KV-1S on the far right came down the street, obviously intending to pull the same maneuver on the PSK and half squad in the back left building. Aha! I had an LOS from the Marder! It was a side shot! I took it, forgetting that my own smoke was in the way, but luck was with me as I rolled a 3, which is what I needed to hit, and knocked out the tank. The ISU-152 tried to unbog to get out of the building, but immobilized. That was fortunate. A Russian half squad with a German prisoner half squad then pelted down the same path. I wanted to hold my fire from my other units, so the StuG opened up point blank. Snake eyes! Random selection took the Russian unit, but the German prisoners perished also on the morale check. Infantry crept up the stairs to threaten the last holdouts in the center building. More Russian infantry tried to dash across the street to threaten the back left building, and now my own smoke was hampering the LOS from my 9-1 and HMG squad. One Russian squad got as far as the wooden building in front of the victory building on the back left, but it broke there to a lucky shot (snake eyes I think). During this sequence, I can't remember exactly when, I managed to roll snake eyes twice at Russian units trying to rush the last buildings, ending their cardboard lives for this scenario, and even battle hardening and creating a hero of my own on an FPF shot! With no units left to contest the last two buildings, the Russians conceded. After rolling 4 timely snake-eyes on the last turn or so, I credited my supreme skill for the victory. It was a great game by Chas. He really pushed to the limit, and knew how to get the most out of his units. When it looked tough for his guys, he gave them a chance to win, even if the dice didn't cooperate.

## Player Profile: Eric Gerstenberg

My earliest wargaming experience took place not on a paper or cardboard map, but in real terrain. That's right you posers, in sand and soil! You see, my buddies invented our own sort of war game. These battles took place in the creek bed of the woods across the street. We would build bunkers, trenches and other fortifications. Then we would place plastic army men, tanks, and artillery pieces (made out of sticks) in the earth works. Then we would shoot at each other's "O.B." with B.B. guns, (or fire crackers and bottle rockets if we had them – yes, we were miscreants but I've grown up a bit since then). The last side with army men standing would be the victor. This took place on and off until I was of high school age (imagine that). Oh what fun we had. As I got older I diversified my gaming pursuits.



I discovered war games at the age of 12. My buddy Rowan subscribed to SPI. He would get new games every month. All were military in nature, and they represented every era of warfare. We would mess around with them just for the fun of it. He did purchase one game that was of particular interest to me. It was *Squad Leader*. I found it to be light years ahead of all the games we played previously. It was ahead both in terms of style and format. However there were just too many darned rules. At that age, sand lot football, playing with our B.B. guns, and looking for trouble where more pressing concerns. So I abandoned board gaming for a few years. By the age of 15 I fell back into cardboard combat. The games I actually played quite a bit were *Ogre*, *Panzer Blitz*, *Panzer Leader*, and *The Russian Front*. It was not until my senior year in high school that I tackled *Squad Leader*.

Kevin Wiltze and I played a dozen or so scenarios from the old S.L. system. Eventually Kevin moved out of town. Thereafter I played solo all of the Avalon Hill published scenarios of S.L. through *G.I. Anvil of Victory*. After that I continued to do DYO ditties, solo, over the course of

several years. I soon became burned out, and laid off of S.L. From that period on the only game playing I took part in was quarter/dollar poker, *Risk* and *Axis and Allies*.

It turns out that 1996 was the watershed year for my cardboard combat comeback (Say that ten times fast). It all started one day when I went by Kings Hobby Shop. As I was looking through the game shelves, I noticed a newsletter published by one Matt Shostak. In the letter, Shostak had written some AARs, tactical tips, and provided some contact information. That week I spoke to one of my WW2 reenactor buddies, Greg Swantek. I told him about the newsletter I had seen at Kings Hobby. (During the conversation I mentioned I had misplaced the newsletter I got at Kings. He said he had a bunch of extra ones, so sold me a copy for \$5.00!) Anyway, Swantek told me that Shostak was an avid player, and he would probably take on a new guy like myself. The next weekend I contacted Matt, and the rest is history. I've been a steady player for the last four years.

At this point I would like to discuss my current player profile. Let's start with the highlights of the last four years; so let the Strut and Pose Phase (SPPh) begin! The first is having jumped to 1204 club ladder points one month. Another is spending 12 weeks in the number 5 position on the CenTex club ladder. They might not want to admit it, but even the top dogs of our ladder have met defeat at my hands: Matt Shostak twice, Mike Senening twice, and Jeff Toreki once. I have earned the "Rookie of the Year" title at the 1997 Central Texas ASL tournament. I was also awarded the coveted "Oscar Wilde" award at the '98 tournament. One thing I have going for me is that I play a lot. In fact I have completed 83 ladder games. That's the third most games played in the club. Hence I do have a good tactical feel for the game, and I obviously like to play, so if you're looking for an opponent I'm your man. In most scenarios I can hold my own. Win or lose. I am also a stickler for playing every scenario to its conclusion, regardless of the gravity of the situation.

Now for the Skulk and Retreat Phase (SRPh). The low points during the last 4 years are going 0-3 at the '99 tournament. I also went on a 0-6 losing streak in mid 1999. Weak points? I am not as well versed in the details of the rules as I could be. This can be a drawback, as ASL is a game of details. But hey, I'm getting better. I find myself looking rules up more and more between games. I am becoming less of a "weekend warrior," and doing the homework it takes to win. Another weakness I have is I tend to get less focused when I am ahead early in a match. When this happens I'm prone to take the situation for granted when I should not.

In terms of style of play, I used to be much stronger on the defense. As of the last 6 months however, I find myself attacking more. At this point, my attack is respectably strong. This is due to my grasp of the VBM freeze maneuver. (Many thanks to Matt and Chas for their articles in the *Hell on Wheels* pack). In the pure infantry type of scenarios I have always done well, regardless of whom I'm up against. My favorite scenarios are, like most, the late war ETO "heavy metal" slugfests. PTO scenarios that depict U.S. Marines assaulting heavily prepared Japanese defenses are also fun.

Do I have any advice for new guys? Plenty, too much to submit now, save a few words. First, if you are playing a more experienced opponent, challenge him to an all-infantry ETO battle. This does hedge things in your favor, if perhaps only slightly. Another way to gain an edge is to pick out a scenario a day or two in advance. This will give you time to study all the relevant rules. I can't stress this enough. And if you plan to play an ETO armored scenario, read the articles in Chas Smith's *Hell on Wheels* pack. Those are *Zen and the Art of Using Armor* and *Armored Tactical Examples (Both are now featured in MMP's ASL Journal #2 – eds.)*. Pay particular attention to chapter C and D of your handy rulebook as well. Understanding how to use and defend against VBM is absolutely crucial to your game. It's also one of the more complex tactical aspects of the game to grasp, at least in the beginning. And that's the way it is. Why? Because Captain Destructo said so!

*(Eric is one of the most colorful players in our club. He leads the league in nicknames: Captain Destructo, Thirstenberg, Burstinflames, and the Beer Master. We are pleased to bring you this profile, but we should mention that this in no way reflects the opinions of the Banzai staff or Central Texas ASL. – eds. ©)*

## Favorite Scenarios: Jeff Toreki

My favorite scenario is usually the one I happen to be currently playing. Of all of the ASL scenarios I've played to date, I have only been disappointed and not had fun once or twice. While most the time I prefer to play new (to me) scenarios, I'm usually willing to play almost any ASL scenario multiple times. When opponents are suggesting possibilities for scenarios that I've already played, I'm not too picky. My usual response is "ok, I've already played it, but if you want to do this one, sounds good to me." However, there are a few that will get a "HELL YEAH!! I'll get the pieces out!" These are listed below:



### Acts of Defiance

I'm a big fan of street fighting city slugfests, and this one brings quite a bit to the table. The major thing that sets this one apart from most scenarios is that both sides get the opportunity to attack and defend simultaneously. Both sides also have potent firepower, plenty enough to get the job done if handled effectively. All of the playings of this one that I've seen or participated in have come down to the last half turn at worst and the last CC dice roll a few of those times. The OBs of both sides also contribute to making this one fun to play, as both sides get to use some seldom seen units (in ASL and probably in the actual war as well). These include Goliaths and a Brummbaer for the Germans and well-armed T-44s for the Russians.

### Draconian Measures

This one was just added to my list of favorites. For one thing, it is the most recent scenario I've played, and for another, it just an absolute blast. The unique combinations of optional secret German VCs and variable Russian reinforcements keep the tension high and provide almost infinite replayability for this one. Every time I play a scenario from *Streets of Fire* (5 so far) I have to ask myself why I haven't played them all yet. This has to be the most outstanding "official" ASL non-HASL module to date, in terms of bang for your buck, scenario-wise. This one is truly an example of smash-mouth ASL at its finest.

### Hill 253.5

I got to play this one at the Austin tourney last year and all I can say is that if you haven't yet, play it! It is just wicked nasty for both sides. In a playing area the size of one board, both sides have OBA, FTs, DCs, and air support. The Germans have a distinct edge in infantry and armor firepower, but this is offset by the Russian's ample supply of mines, wire, and ATGs. Usually I prefer scenarios with multiple-option VC, but the straightforward "King of the Hill" VC of this one are most apt. The all-or-nothing attitude both sides must take in fighting for the hill do an excellent job of reflecting the savage intensity of the Kursk fighting. In our game, a Stuka managed to engage two Sturmoviks in a dogfight for the last three turns or so of the game, and even shot one of them down!

### The Slaughter at Krutik

This scenario offers a very interesting situation with multiple options for attacker and defender alike. One of the things that drew me to this one was the interesting juxtaposition of forces: the Russians field a very plain vanilla, but very powerful, force of T-34s and first line infantry, and have several possible avenues for the attack. The Germans (actually Spanish Blue Division units) field a mixed bag of forces that can be effective, but is very challenging to coordinate effectively. They have a few MkIIIs that can be very powerful against the Russian infantry but are almost impotent against the seven Russian T-34s, a deadly 88 FlaK gun that must start limbered but can hole anything it sees, and a 150\* INF gun that is brutal vs. infantry but not very effective against armor. I played this vs. one of the Oregon guys at WWF a couple of years ago, and it was one of the most nail-biting, hair-pulling scenarios I've ever been involved in.

### Tabaccificio Fiocche

This is a great scenario that may unfortunately get passed over simply because no one can pronounce the name! Also, when looking at the scenario card, both forces are fairly unexciting looking. I know I passed it over several times for both of these reasons, but once you lay out the maps and analyze the situation at hand, it becomes very interesting. The US force is extremely powerful, but has some very difficult terrain to

maneuver through to reach the objective. The terrain is difficult mostly because the US force consists of 6-morale infantry and Sherman tanks that must cross several areas of open ground to reach cover and both the infantry and tanks are vulnerable to the weapons arrayed against them. The difficulty of the German position lies in the fact that, while they have at their disposal the weapons to effectively stop the Americans, the map area is large enough that they do not have enough to cover all of it effectively.

### To the Last Man

This scenario was originally slated for release with the *Streets of Fire* module, but was the last one cut before release, and was later released in *The General*, if I'm not mistaken. This one probably does not get as much play as it should because of an apparent imbalance based on the ROAR record. I believe part of this imbalance may be due to the fact that people often forget or choose not to exchange fortified locations for tunnels. In this scenario, I think tunnels are essential for providing the surrounded Germans escape routes from encircled buildings. Even so, I'd probably give the Germans the balance and let the more experienced player handle them, if there is one. There is a detailed analysis of this scenario in the *General*, Vol. 29 No. 2, so I won't go into too much detail about the play or strategy, other than that I don't necessarily agree with everything said regarding defensive setup in the article. What I will say is that this scenario is absolutely freaking awesome-while it may not be perfectly balanced, you will have a hard time finding a scenario that can measure up to the fun of playing this one. By the way, this one makes a great three-player game.

### The Ring

I was yearning to play this one the second I saw it in the first *Action Pack*. The only thing that kept me from it so long was its large number of units and turns. However, once I got a chance to start playing it, I realized how much I enjoyed it. There are so many options available to the Russians on the attack, and so many approaches the Germans must worry about defending that make this one very interesting for both sides. I just remember that while playing as the Germans, I got a very small inkling as to what it might have been like to be overrun from all directions by overwhelming Russian attacks. A very "Hill 621-like" feel, but from all four directions. Note: Hill 621 is not on this list of favorites because I've never played the updated ASL version. Anyone? Bueller? Another thing that made this one fun as the German was getting to play with two Wespes and a Hummel, something you don't see in your average workaday ASL scenario. By the way, a critical hit from a Hummel's 150mm gun on a berserker charging through open ground in an adjacent hex is NOT a pretty sight.

## Club Notes

### Club Meeting Recaps

January 22, 2000

South Austin (AP) - Top ranked Austin ASLer Matt Shostak suffered a major defeat today at the hands of underdog Brian Roundhill, in an exciting Texas League match that went down to the final dice roll. Brian's first win in league competition took place at the expense of the league's top poser, bringing his ranking back under 1700 pts. Brian's Montenegrin partisans had just enough punch left at the end of the game to win the final close combat against Matt's Italian troops. The final struggle for possession of an artillery piece in the new scenario *Men of the Mountains* featured a demo charge obliterating an Italian tankette, and a 4+2 partisan shot into the crucial melee, which broke one of two partisan squads but also broke the lone Italian squad. The final CC pitted a 9-1 and CX 337 against an Italian 7-0, a 4:1 (even) shot.

In other Texas League matches, Kirk Woller got some payback against Carl Kusch as his Germans held off Carl's Americans in *Festung St. Edouard*, while Jay Harm's Germans seized *Bread Factory # 3* from Tom Gillis' Russians.

### Biweekly Lunch Gathering!

Don't forget to join us every other Friday at 1300 hours down at Pok-E-Jo's on Fifth Street. The club usually sends out email reminders, or you can call Matt for information on the next get-together.

# Club Ladder

## Our Humble Club Ladder (through Jan. 25, 2000)

Player	Points	Record	(Inactive players not listed)
-----	-----	-----	
Matt Shostak	1674	84-23	
Jeff Toreki	1668	43-19	
Chas Smith	1640	56-13	
Mike Seningen	1463	59-23	
David Hailey	1209	24-24	
Jay Harms	1144	9-4	
Tom Lavan	1125	6-4	
Walter Eardley	1116	7-6	
Bob Purnell	1093	18-13	
Doyle Motes	1092	4-2	
Andy Milder	1086	19-33	
Steve Desrosiers	1085	3-1	
Ryan Nelson	1069	2-0	
Eric Gerstenberg	1057	33-50	
Stephane Graciet	1037	1-0	
Steve Eckhart	1024	5-8	
Sam Tyson	1023	6-15	
Greg Swantek	1018	7-8	
Jeff Taylor	997	1-2	
Ed Mott	994	1-5	
Jeff Toney	990	1-2	
Mike Sosa	979	1-4	
Brian Roundhill	976	1-5	
Neal Ague	971	1-2	
Kirk Woller	968	38-59	
Duane Blocker	967	0-1	
Dirk Renshaw	966	0-1	
Carl Kusch	965	10-19	
Matt Scheffrahn	959	0-2	
Russell Mueller	946	0-3	
Glen Gray	943	1-3	
RJ Mate	937	1-3	
James Rex	928	0-2	
Matt Schwoebel	927	4-7	
Chuck Lemons	924	0-3	
Jack O'Quin	920	9-19	
Bret Smith	907	2-8	
Tom Gillis	892	4-9	
Aaron Schwoebel	889	5-18	
Dave Morgenthaler	889	0-4	
Jim Knatcher	849	0-8	
Mike Austin	791	1-10	

## This Happened to Me



### Sam Tyson

Jeff Toreki and I went to Winter Offensive again this year, and we did two ASL related events that were very enjoyable. We arrived in Maryland on Wednesday, and after settling in I called the MMP phone number. I talked to Curt Schilling, and asked if Jeff and I could attend that night's playtest session at Brian Youse's house. The Youse-House gang meets every week, and we were quickly given directions. When we arrived, Curt handed me spanking new copies of Journal 2, and we were asked to playtest a scenario from Edson's Ridge. There were 14 people testing that night, and it was a lively place. Brian has a huge basement, and seeing it filled with ASL stuff and playtesters just warmed my heart.

The next day, Jeff and I picked up Stefan Fiedler from his hotel, and headed north to Aberdeen. Stefan had arrived from Stockholm on Wednesday, and since I had met him when I went to Sweden, I offered to chauffeur him around Maryland. We drove to Aberdeen and toured the Ordnance Museum, which has one of the world's leading collections of military ordnance, ranging from small arms to 240 large armored vehicles, tanks and artillery pieces, some of the last survivors of their type. It is a very educational site, and well worth the time spent.

### Recent Ladder Results

(Send ladder reports to Matt Shostak at mbs@zycor.lgc.com)

Victor	Side	Victim	Side	Scenario
K Woller	Part	Purnell	Germ	Tough Luck
Purnell	Germ	K Woller	Russ	One Eye to the West
Mate	Rep.	Gillis	Nat.	Italian Brothers
Seningen	Russ	Eckhart	Germ	One Down, Two to Go
Harms	Brit	Gillis	Germ	Dorset Wood in the Rain
Gillis	Germ	Mate	Russ	The Czerniakow Bridgehead
Desrosiers	Germ	Purnell	Amer	A Perfect Match
Shostak	Germ	K Woller	Russ	No Farther
Toreki	Russ	Tyson	Germ	Battle for the Square
Seningen	Germ	Tyson	Russ	One Eye to the West
Toreki	Russ	Kusch	Germ	Timoshenko's Attack
Hailey	Russ	Lavan	Germ	Urban Guerillas
Seningen	Russ	Roundhill	Germ	Swamp Cats
Shostak	Russ	Seningen	Germ	Hill 253.5
Shostak	Germ	Eckhart	Russ	Trap at Targul Frumos
Gerstenberg	Part	Lemons	Germ	Rite of Passage
Harms	Amer	Eardley	Jap.	Bloody Red Beach
Toreki	Brit	A Schwoebel	Germ	PB CG I
Seningen	FrFr	Milder	Germ	Supply Detail
Milder	Russ	Seningen	Germ	The Puma Prowls
O'Quin	Germ	Kusch	Fren	Bridge of 7 Planets
Gillis	Brit	Eardley	Germ	Frankforce
Toreki	Amer	A Schwoebel	Germ	Broich Bash
Eckhart	Jap.	B Smith	Chin	Totsugeki
Eardley	Brit	Eckhart	Jap.	A Stiff Fight
Shostak	Ital	Gerstenberg	Brit	A High Price to Pay
Eckhart	Germ	Sosa	Russ	The Red Wave
Shostak	Germ	B Smith	Brit	Sunday of the Dead
Toreki	Germ	A Schwoebel	Russ	The Ring
Toreki	Germ	K Woller	Amer	Peiper's Last Gasp
K Woller	Germ	Gerstenberg	Amer	Hornet of Cloville
Gerstenberg	Amer	Milder	Germ	Broich Bash
Seningen	Amer	Gerstenberg	Germ	Abandon Ship!
Shostak	Belg	Eckhart	Germ*	Art Nouveau
Toreki	Germ	Seningen	Russ	Beyond the Pakfronts
Eckhart	Amer	Rex	Jap.	Tasimboko Raid
Gillis	Germ	Harms	Brit	Clearing Qualberg
Eardley	Germ	Gillis	Amer	Deadeye Smoyer
Motes	Brit	Toney	Germ	Cold Crocodiles
Nelson	Finn	Mate	Russ	Fighting Withdrawal
Nelson	Amer	Mate	Germ	Defiance on Hill 30
Gerstenberg	Germ	K Woller	Russ	Ghost of Napoleon
Sosa	Amer	Taylor	Germ	An Arm and a Leg
Shostak	Amer	Hailey	Germ	The Gingerbread Men
Kusch	Amer	K Woller	Germ*	Tiger 222
Eardley	Germ	Gillis	Brit	Bring Up the Boys
Harms	Germ	Gillis	Russ	A Stroke of Luck
Kusch	Amer	K Woller	Germ*	Peiper's Last Gasp
Eardley	Russ	Harms	Germ	Blood and Guts
B Smith	Germ	Gillis	Amer	Panthers in the Mist
Roundhill	Part	Shostak	Ital	Men of the Mountains
Woller	Germ	Kusch	Amer	Festung St. Edouard
Harms	Germ	Gillis	Russ	Bread Factory Number 3
Purnell	Russ*	K Woller	Germ	Ghost of Napoleon



## Next Issue

- Tactical Analysis and After Action Reports for ...
- A player profile of Andy Milder
- Eric Gerstenberg's favorite scenarios
- Club Meeting Recaps
- Club Ladder

And much more!



K-5 "LEOPOLD" 280 mm or 11 inch railroad gun



German Tank Destroyer "JADGTIGER"

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