

Banzai!!

The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

Issue #3

February 1996

This newsletter is FREE. Don't let anyone charge you for it.

From the Editor's Desk

Matt Shostak

I am thrilled to be putting out a third issue of our club newsletter. Its success as a vehicle for our club is already proven, with the addition of Eric Gerstenberg to our ranks. I hope others who may pick this up at the hobby store will follow his example and check us out. If you are interested in our club, please call me (280-8414) or Mike (892-7169).

The club is going strong, as can be seen by the ladder standings and the number of games played. This will be a regular feature of the newsletter in the future. I hope you also enjoy my interview with Dade Cariaga, noted Internet ASL personality and a driving force behind ASL in the Portland, Oregon, area.

We need articles to keep this newsletter going. Although I have a small backlog to draw from, it will run out soon. So if you want to see something in these pages, write it up and get it to me (in electronic form if at all possible).

Club Notes

Kirk Woller has had another great idea, which I hope to implement in this newsletter. We've all been in situations where we've had rules questions come up during games that we just couldn't resolve, try as we might. Usually, it is resolved in a friendly manner and then forgotten. Sometimes immediately after playing a game I can't remember the specifics of the particular question. And when I can remember, it doesn't seem worth a postage stamp to send a single question to Avalon Hill for resolution. This is where the club, and specifically this newsletter, comes in. If you have a question during a game that you just can't figure out, send it to me. I will try to keep a list and post the answers in this newsletter. If the questions warrant it, I will forward them to Avalon Hill for a response, and post their answers.

Be looking for an advertisement for our club in the Opponents Wanted section of the General. This was another great idea of Kirk's.

For information about our club, and the next club meeting, please call Matt (280-8414) or Mike (892-7169).

Ladder Standings

There has already been a flurry of activity on our own club ladder. Join the fun. You may notice that despite starting with a base of 1000 points, those who have not completed a ladder game will not be ranked higher than those who have. This is to encourage everyone to get on the ball and get some games in.

Player	Points	Record
Shostak	1130	5-1
Esparza	1037	1-0
Gerstenberg	1010	1-1
Purnell	1004	1-1
Seningen	939	0-2
Kirk Woller	916	1-4
Austin	1000	
Hailey	1000	
Hively	1000	
Lavan	1000	
Milam	1000	
Nicholson	1000	
O'Quin	1000	
Sosa	1000	
Swantek	1000	
Tom Woller	1000	
Valdez	1000	

Recent Results

Shostak (Russ) def Kirk Woller (Finn) in Fighting Withdrawal
 Gerstenberg (Germ) def Shostak (Amer) in Silence That Gun
 Kirk Woller (Germ) def Purnell (Amer) in The T-Patchers
 Purnell (Germ) def Kirk Woller (Amer) in Lost Opportunities
 Shostak (Germ) def Seningen (Brit) in Franzen's Roadblock
 Esparza (Russ) def Kirk Woller (Germ) in To the Last Man
 Shostak (Germ) def Kirk Woller (Russ) in Panzers Marsch!
 Shostak (Germ) def Seningen (Brit) in Franzen's Roadblock
 Shostak (Germ) def Gerstenberg (Brit) in Phyrriic Victory

BASE POINTS:

These are the points that are gained/lost depending on who wins/loses a scenario. If the lower rated person wins a game, then the lower rated person gains the points in the "Lower Wins" column while the higher rated person loses those points. "Bonus Points" are added/subtracted from the base points to get the total points gained/lost.

DRAWS RESULT IN NO POINTS GAINED/LOST

Point Differential	Lower Wins	Higher Wins
0-50	25	25
51-100	30	20
101-250	35	15
251-500	40	10
501-	45	5

BONUS POINTS:

These are variable points added to the winning players base and subtracted from the losing players base. To find the bonus point total:

$(1000 - (P_{win} - P_{lose})) * 0.01$ Where P_{win} = point ranking of winner P_{lose} = point ranking of loser Bonus points are FRU.

Incentive for Playing: Each player is awarded 2 points per game completed, regardless of who won, as an incentive for participation in Ladder games.

A Terrible Thing to Waste

Matt Shostak

Over the last several months Kirk Woller and I have played a lot of ASL. We've also talked a lot about ASL as well. One of our most frequent topics of conversation is the amount of difficulty there is for new players to learn this game, the greatest of all games. I believe that it is an important subject for all of us. If we can not only interest new players, but also hold their interest and help them learn, we are doing everyone involved a great service. In order to do this we must identify the stumbling blocks and find solutions to help overcome them.

One problem that has already been identified is "gotchas" in the rules. A gotcha is something that is in the rules, and that experienced players generally know about, but doesn't come up often enough in game situations for it to be an obvious topic of conversation between a beginner and an expert. Some of the little two-sentence "tactical tips" that are popular in the various fanzines are gotchas; they are not necessarily cases of tactical brilliance but more often just a pointer to a legal capability of a unit that is allowed by an often overlooked rule. A good example of this is the fact that a unit can declare opportunity fire if it wishes to fire a backblast weapon without the desperation penalty on the To Hit roll. Kirk told me that he never heard of this until he saw it listed as a tactical tip in the first issue of Backblast. And why should he? Most beginners are too busy simply trying to digest the overall methodology of the system to spend time looking for little hints and quirks and exceptions in the rules. What can we do about this to help newer players along? I ask all of you to think of these little helpful hints that you know. If it comes up during a game, write it down. Send it to me. It will appear in a regular column in this newsletter if there is enough input.

New players can also feel intimidated when playing experienced guys. We should try to make the experience as rewarding for them as possible. Sure, they are going to lose a lot at first, but take the time to teach them about the game, don't just hand them their heads when you play them without saying a word. You don't have to play the game for them. Nobody would want that. But in every game situations will arise where the beginner may not be aware of the capabilities of his units. Simply point out the options and let him decide. When you make a particular move, ask your opponent, while it is still fresh in your minds, if he knows why you did it. Explain the reasons for your move. The character of all the guys in our local group is excellent. I'm sure most of the grognards already do this to a certain extent. I am asking you all to keep it in the forefront of your thinking when playing someone who is much less experienced than you. Beginners must do their share too. You have the responsibility to try to learn, just as much as the grognards should try to teach.

One strategy that has worked for me in learning new rules has been a mentoring approach. It started when I really wanted to learn the basics of the PTO. Jack O'Quin had the same idea, and although we were both about the same experience level, we decided that we would play several PTO scenarios against each other and systematically try to learn the rules. We had a lot of fun, we had some exciting games, and we were not afraid to look things up in the rule-book and get them right. And guess what? We learned the PTO. We then took the same approach to the night rules and again it worked rather well. Now I am in the process of being Kirk's mentor, if you will. We try to choose scenarios carefully so as to emphasize something Kirk wants to learn. It seems to be working, as he is getting more and more comfortable with certain rules sections. I suggest you guys try this if you can. You grognards, pick a likely candidate from among our newer players, and take an interest in his progress. Take the initiative in setting up games and in suggesting ways to learn the system. You beginners, don't be afraid of the grognards. They're not as good as you think anyway. But they have a lot to teach. Seize the initiative. Have a plan for learning, find a grognard willing to help you, and make it happen!

I can't emphasize enough that we get out of ASL what we put into it. If we never do anything to develop new players, who do we have to blame but ourselves when our favorite opponent moves out of town and we have no one to do battle with anymore?

A Conversation with Dade Cariaga

Matt Shostak

Dade Cariaga

age: 33 (but soon to be 34)

marital status: soon-to-be-single, no kids

profession: technical writer for a small CAD company

other hobbies: bicycling

home: Portland, OR "Love those Portland Trailblazers!"

Dade, it seems that these things always have to start with your resume. Could you fill me in on that? How long have you been playing, what tournaments you have won, what articles have you written, what scenarios you have designed, etc.?

Well, let's see I started playing ASL, reluctantly, about 10 years ago. I was an SL loyalist, and was suspicious of the claim that ASL pulled it all together. In the end, my college buddy and I took the plunge and turned into gaming machines. At the end of our senior year in school, we tried to calculate the amount of time we had spent playing ASL. The result we determined was somewhere between 4 to 6 weeks of solid ASL time over two years! That's 4 to 6 weeks of 24-hour days.

My tournament experience is somewhat limited. I took second place (losing to Mike McGrath) at the Northwest Regional ASL tournament in Richland, Washington in 1992. I've won the last two ASL tournaments at the Northwest Adventure Gamefest in Portland, and I won last years Enfilade '95 tournament in Everett, WA (beating Rob Wolkey). Other than that, the only tournament I attended was the WWF in Salt Lake City last summer. I went 4-4 there, but had more fun at that tourney than at any other I've attended.

I've never tried to design a scenario, but I have a lot of admiration for those who do. Trying to come up with a balanced game is definitely a challenge, and the designer is often subjected to abuse; which I find unfortunate. I did, however, write an article in **Backblast** #2 on ASL Scenario 71, Jungle Citadel, and I've written another about caves/cave complexes that may never see the light of day now that MultiMan Publishing has been acquired by Monarch Avalon.

You are a mover and shaker of the Portland ASL Club. Since this forum is primarily about our club, I was hoping you could fill us in on the Portland scene, so we could possibly gain some insight or ideas. How many members are in your club, and how many play regularly, as opposed to being members in name only?

Two of my fellow members, Carey Cardon and Andre Danielson, had each suggested at different times that we form a club of some kind. For some reason, I'm the focal point for the guys in our area. So, Carey and I got together and found a good location to meet, then started calling our ASL buddies around town. Everyone was enthusiastic, especially since Carey and I were doing all the footwork.

We're a new organization, having only met twice thus far. (Our next meeting is this Saturday!) We're still not decided on a name for the group, but the corn grows tall here in Oregon: possible names include "The Fanatic Ten-Threes" and "The Disrupted Six-Ones." Like I said, corny. But what the hell?

So far, we have 8 regular attendees, with the possibility of gaining one or two members in the near future. Also, attendance has been good so far. Like I say, we're just getting started, but things are moving along nicely. The challenge will be to keep interest high enough for the club to remain viable.

Along those lines, I'm "borrowing" your newsletter idea for our group. As a matter of fact, I'm planning to use the excellent "Balkanization" article published in your last newsletter as a sort of guest editorial in our debut issue. The problem right now is getting the other members of the group to contribute enough material to put something out.

How often does the club meet?

We meet as a group once every two months for an entire Saturday. This seems to be a nice semi-regular interval that doesn't interfere with family/job requirements too much and allows us all to schedule for it. Of course, we meet as individuals quite often. I usually average one to two games per week.

Where do you meet? Have you had any luck getting a meeting place besides someone's house?

Carey and I called around and found that there are a number of possibilities for gaming sites. Our first meeting was at a local game store, Adams Family Games. This store has a large gaming area, with tables, where people regularly meet to play various games (but mostly Magic: the Gathering). This site worked fairly well, but was rather noisy due to the constant foot traffic throughout the day.

Then, we called Tigard City Hall (Tigard is a small Portland bedroom community) and found out that we could use the Courthouse. This was an ideal setting: plenty of chairs and tables, and no outside disruptions. You may want to call around your community to see if the City government provides similar services.

How many tournaments does your club run, and when are they?

We haven't progressed that far yet. Our club is in its infancy; if it survives to adolescence we can start thinking about doing something like that.

Does your club have a newsletter? A ladder?

Like I say, I was so enamored with your newsletter that it inspired me to make a similar effort up here. But the short answer is: no, at the moment there is no newsletter. I hope to change that in the next month or so.

As far as a ladder goes, we don't have anything quite that structured. We're in the middle of a round-robin tournament right now, that should be decided this Saturday. (Unfortunately, I'm already out of the running.) We haven't figured out a good way to have cumulative ranking; any suggestions would be appreciated.

How many of your members travel to tournaments?

Well, Carey and I both attended WWF; and Andre Danielson and Stewart King have both been known to travel to tournaments (but not recently). Others have expressed an interest in doing so. I guess the answer is 3 or 4 with the possibility of more in the future.

How do you go about recruiting new members? How successful has that been?

A large part of the reason I like the newsletter idea is for its potential to attract new members. We can print it out and leave some copies at the local game stores. Also, believe it or not, the ASLML has done a LOT for finding new members.

I met up with Stewart King, Dave Hauth, and Stuart Craig through the net. Information Superhighway, indeed!

Do you have any advice for people trying to start a new club?

Don't be afraid to give it a try. I found that, aside from Carey, most of the guys paid lip service to the idea of a club, but were reluctant to do any of the grunt work required to set it in motion. If you just get in there and get things going, most times the others will respond in kind. Getting started is the hardest part.

*I really enjoyed your article "Constructing the Perfect Jungle Citadel" in **Backblast** magazine. What prompted you to write that article?*

Thanks. That was my first article, and I was pretty tentative about it. I guess the reason I wrote it is because when I first looked at Jungle Citadel (got the boards out, read through the SSRs, etc.) I just couldn't see how the Japanese were expected to win. I think there is a lot of subtlety involved in playing the Japanese in such a way that they can win. And then, after developing a set up, I had some success with it and thought "What the hell?"

The other reason to write the article, of course, was to support the hobby. I wrote during that particularly black era when it looked like Monarch-Avalon was going to let ASL go down. I figured that the 'zines were the real future of the hobby, and I wanted to help in the effort.

What kind of feedback have you gotten on it?

Mostly, the feedback has been positive. Well, actually all of it has been positive in the sense that everyone thought it was well-written. There has been some (justified, in my opinion) criticism about certain particulars of the setup I espoused. In particular, Brian Youse and Chuck Goetz didn't like where I placed the AA Gun and the 70* howitzer. I agree that the AA Gun placement could probably be better, but I still stand by the howitzer's location. C'est l'guerre.

Do you have any other articles in the works?

Like I said, I did write up a cave article for BB#3, which is now defunct. I don't know if that article will ever see print now. Other than that, I'm playing around with ideas for our newsletter, including some "Player Profiles" for all the club members. These things are difficult to write with any accuracy. I try to look for recurring tactics and at how well a player attacks/defends and then write up some corny description that gives the reader a feel for what to expect when playing the subject.

What advice would you give to an ASL player who is thinking of writing such an article for one of the established publications?

Just write it. Sit down, think about what you want to say, come up with an outline, and fill in the blanks. Don't worry if you don't feel like you're enough of an expert, just get it down. If your first draft seems rough, don't worry: a good (ASLknowledgable) editor will help you out. Get one of your gaming buddies to go through it for you. Brian Youse, Perry Cocke, and Chuck Goetz were all invaluable in providing feedback to me on how to improve the article.

Given that most authors would prefer to see their work published in an established 'zine or annual, what niche do you see club newsletters such as this one filling? Do you think there is a place for substantive articles in such a forum?

I think these kinds of publications are excellent for keeping enthusiasm within the club high, and also for attracting new members. As far as substance goes, I can safely say that Matt's "Balkanization" article will be the most substantial piece in our newsletter. And, sure! I think "heavy" pieces can work well in newsletters. After all, being published in a newsletter doesn't preclude the piece from showing up in an official 'zine later on. (We all know how true THAT is!)

Do you still have that vision ala retirement community for ASL players?

Sounds great! Start pumping up that 401 K plan, man! We can make it happen.