

Banzai!!

The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

Issue #7
June 1996

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

From the Editor's Desk

Matt Shostak

The purpose of this newsletter is to serve as a vehicle for the promotion of ASL in the Central Texas area. There is no regular publishing schedule; rather, it comes out whenever there is enough material (and energy on the part of the editor), to warrant it. *Please, please, please* write up something for this newsletter. Help keep it going. After action reports are great for this. They are not hard to write. If you've just played an exciting scenario, write down a description of what happened. Most players really enjoy reading about others' experiences with scenarios. It helps them pick new scenarios for the next time they play, perhaps learn a few things about it, and also allows a bit of gratuitous enjoyment in another game of ASL. Call me for my email address and send it to me.

For information about our club, and the next club meeting, please call Matt (280-8414) or Mike (288-3778).

Austin ASL Tournament

Who: the Austin ASL Club and you
What: the Fourth Annual Austin ASL Tournament
When: June 28-30
Where: Georgetown Recreation Center, Georgetown, TX
Why: need you ask?

The fourth annual Austin ASL Tournament is scheduled for June 28-30. Work it into your schedule now, as you will not want to miss this event. Once again, David Hailey is taking charge. He has secured the same location in Georgetown as last year, which was a very good facility with plenty of room. This tournament adds a unique twist to ASL. Not only are players recognized by their individual performances, but also how their team fares in a variety of theaters. Teams can be formed beforehand or at the beginning of the tournament. This format adds a nice touch of camaraderie, as players take a heightened interest in other games going on across the room. For more information, contact David Hailey at (512) 869-1267.

If you have never attended an ASL tournament before, you are in for a real treat. There is no experience quite like a total immersion in ASL for an entire weekend. Chances are you will get to play more ASL games in one weekend than you could otherwise play in a few months of face-to-face meetings with your favorite opponent. Moreover, you'll get a chance to play different people, with different playing styles, than you are used to. It will help improve your ASL play quite a bit. If you are a newbie, fear not - there will be plenty of more experienced players around to help with difficult rules questions, and there will be other newbies there too. Really, I mean it - you **DO NOT** want to miss this event. Let's show some club spirit and make this tournament the best yet.

Club Notes and Ladder Standings

The last club meeting was held Saturday, May 18, at Mike Seningen's place. Attendance was very good - perhaps players are trying to gear up for the tournament in June? Matt Shostak and Bob Purnell squared off in Panzers Marsche! with Bob opting for the Russian side. Bob had Matt whining from the get go, with veteran-like moves such as shocking the armor leader's Panther with a 50mm mortar, and taking out a halftrack with an LMG, so he must have been doing something right. A mistake in setting up his T-34s proved to be too much to overcome, however, and the Germans prevailed. Todd Hively's Americans beat up on Eric Gerstenberg's Germans in First and Goal, and the game was over quickly enough for them to start another one. Congratulations to both of them for getting in the first Italian-Ethiopian scenario on our club's ladder, which also happened to be perhaps the most exciting match of the day, as a berserk Italian squad survived a hail of bullets on the last turn to force a down-to-the-wire finish in the last CC phase. Todd needed a six to win, but couldn't get it, and Eric's Italians got the big W. Meanwhile David Hailey and Greg Swantek were embroiled in an infantry exercise in Point of the Sword, with David's Brits winning at game end. Mike Seningen and Chas Smith duked it out in the longest game of the day, a match of The Citadel. Both sides mauled each other, but Mike claims Chas' setup was just too good to overcome. Mike Austin also made an appearance, although he didn't have time for a game. It was good to see you Mike, now let's get you on that ladder!

I have to say I am very pleased with how the ladder has increased enthusiasm in our club. Everyone in the group is to be congratulated for taking it in the right spirit. If you think it's an absolute measure of a player's skill, however, you'll be in for a big surprise the next time you take someone lightly. The ladder works best when each person plays a variety of opponents, so you are encouraged to do so. You'll find that you learn more anyway.

Player	Points	Record
Shostak	1272	13-2
Hailey	1106	3-0
Purnell	1085	5-2
Smith	1085	8-4
Esparza	1062	2-0
Tom Woller	1037	1-0
Swantek	971	1-2
Lavan	967	0-1
Seningen	961	2-5
Gerstenberg	954	2-5
Hively	946	4-8
O'Quin	940	0-2
Kirk Woller	786	2-12
Austin	1000	
Milam	1000	
Sosa	1000	
Valdez	1000	

Recent Results

Purnell (Amer) def K Woller (Germ) in Morgan's Stand
 Purnell (Germ) del K Woller (Russ) in Bread Factory #2
 Purnell (Germ) def K Woller (Russ) in Blood and Guts
 Shostak (Germ) def Gerstenberg (Fren) In For Honor Alone
 Hively (Germ) del Smith (Amer) in Zon With the Wind
 Esparza (Germ) def K Woller (Amer) in Morgan's Stand
 Shostak (Germ) del Purnell (Russ) in Panzers Marsche!
 Hively (Amer) del Gerstenberg (Germ) in First and Goal
 Gerstenberg (Ital) del Hively (Ethi) in Golden Mountain
 Hailey (Brit) def Swantek (Germ) in Point of the Sword
 Smith (Russ) del Seningen (Germ) in The Citadel
 Shostak (Jap) del Seningen (Amer) in The Rock
 Smith (Germ) del Hively (Fren) in The Debt Repaid

Scenario Challenge

Tom Repetti

Answers from last time

- Name That Scenario, given the brief clue:
 - pulkka - Silent Death
 - Polish cavalry - either Into the Fray, Age Old Foes, or Rattle of Sabers
 - Muslim partisans - Hazardous Occupation
 - RCL - Obong-Ni
 - Italian human wave - Cestello Fatato
- Which scenario does not belong with the others?
 - White Tigers
 - Children of the Kunai
 - Brandenburger Bridge
 - Hill 253.5
 - For Honor Alone

White Tigers - all the rest have air support

- Which scenario does not belong with the others?
 - The Rock
 - Bofors Bashing
 - First Banzai
 - Retribution
 - End of the Ninth

End of the Ninth - all the rest take place on islands. A is in the Philippines, B is on Crete, C is on Attu, in the Aleutians, D is in Sicily. Bob Oppen said that only First Banzai doesn't have 2 boards, which could very well be true. Not a great question.

Between The Rock and a Hard Place

Matt Shostak

Mike Seningen and I got together to play scenario 68, The Rock, recently, and the match proved interesting enough to prompt an after action report on it. The scenario features a large force of Japanese trying to fight through U.S. Marines and Army troops on Corregidor in 1942.

The terrain is not for the faint of heart. Boards 36 and 35 are placed side by side. From the Japanese perspective, board 36 is the far (or south) board while 35 is the near (or north) board. Board 36 has 6 hills, but they can be thought of more as 4 hill masses, each aligned roughly parallel to each other across the width of the board. Board 35 is flat with a lot of kunai, but the scenario calls for overlay 2, the famous heavily wooded and gully-scarred hill, to be placed near one end (the Japanese right, or the west side of the board). Special terrain rules for the scenario include: all streams are dry (hence like gullies), all swamps are open ground, all orchards are shellholes (that's a lot of shellholes), and all brush is brush (not bamboo). There is a road running the length of the board from the northeast to the southwest (Japanese close left to far right). Light jungle is in effect. A mild breeze is in effect from the northwest.

The U.S. player gets a mixed bag of Marines and Army troops, 17 squads in all, plus a few machineguns and leaders, to set up in a roughly northwest-to-southeast strip close to the center of the board. In addition, he gets 5 crews to go with three .50cals and 2 MMGs, that must be set up in a trench complex in the southwesternmost hill area. The trenches are special concrete trenches with a +3 (+5 vs. OVR/OBA) TEM. Lastly, the US gets 6x447, 2x227, a 10-2, a 7-0, a .50cal, and a MMG that can enter on/after turn 1 on the south edge of the board. The Japanese receive a force of 27 first- and second-line squads, and the usual assortment of machineguns and knee mortars to go with them. They are fairly well led, with 6 leaders ranging from a 10-0 to an 8+1. They also get a radio for a module of 70mm OBA with plentiful ammunition. Perhaps the most tantalizing toy in their arsenal is a module of 200mm OBA directed by an offboard observer. It is entitled to continuous access, and need only draw a card for extra "chit draws. However, it is limited to 2 missions altogether, there must be a full player turn between them, and it can never be accurate. As reinforcements, the Japanese get two type 97 CHI-HA tanks that enter along the road on turn 3, and a 9-1 armor leader.

The victory conditions allow for immediate victory for either side. The Japanese can win by exiting 8 VP off the road in the southwest, which means they will somehow have to get past that trench line with the plethora of machineguns. The U.S. can win by exiting 8 VP off the northeast edge.

Mike chose the American side and set up with great care to stay out of LOS of the offboard observer. In this he did a great job throughout the game. Since jungle is 2 levels high, and there are so many hills with jungle on them, it is difficult for an offboard observer, even at level 4, to see much. The Americans were also careful to set up far enough back so as to be out of any serious danger from the Japanese, either through prep fire or banzai, on turn 1. I then set up the Japanese with most of their strength in their right flank, in the hopes of storming the overlay 2 hill, and then working around by the end of the game through the flank of the trench position for the exit. A smaller force was charged with holding the left flank of the Japanese line, but they were led by the 10-0. Lastly, I placed 3 first line squads HIP near the American exit area in the Japanese rear, bolstered by 2 other first line squads nearby. These guys were the goalies, responsible for preventing a sudden American victory. This is the only scenario I know of where the Japanese, on the attack, can set up HIP. This HIP capability is not granted by SSR, it is free for being Japanese and setting up onboard.

I started turn 1 with all of the knee mortars going for smoke. Most of them got it, or white phosphorous, and some even kept rate. It was one of the best displays of getting smoke that I have ever had. I followed it up with a couple of huge banzai charges. The idea was mostly to gain the extra movement and morale, rather than to dispatch the enemy, since the American troops were simply too far away to reach on turn 1. The Japanese suffered very little damage on turn 1. The 10-0 on the left flank did suffer the indignity of one of his squads step-reducing, despite having maintained concealment while assault moving next to a U.S. squad. Mike brought a big stack of his reinforcements in on turn 1. I found out soon that it was a 7-0, a couple of crews, a couple of half squads, and a squad. They made a break for the quick exit victory and on turn 2 ran into the HIP Japanese. They were broken up fairly well, and those units spent the rest of the scenario chasing each other around the jungled hill on that flank. After the initial rebuff there was little fear of that group exiting by itself, but Mike still hadn't committed the 10-2 with the rest of his reserve, so the Japanese goal keepers had to stay in position.

The middle game saw the Japanese hoard swarm the overlay 2 hill on their right flank. Mike played his forces very well here, as they got the maximum delay out of the Japanese and also whittled them down as well. Still, many of those American troops were lost also. In the center and left, the Japanese worked their way into and across the gully that ran across the middle of board 36 between two hills. A marine 9-1 and squad showed themselves briefly on the edge of the hill and got hammered by the 8 inch naval guns. They survived the first attack pretty much intact but got hit again while trying to rout and were eliminated. Other than that, the 200mm OBA achieved no tangible effect except to create a couple of shellhole hexes. For the rest of the game, Mike superbly kept his guys concealed and/or in blind hexes to the observer. Although I managed to keep a spotting round on the board for most of the game, its only effect was to keep the Americans from getting too bold.

Late in the middle game I thought things were going pretty well for the Japanese. On the right they had overtaken the hill and were getting set to work their way around to the extreme right. A few Americans had survived in good order and withdrawn from the hill, but they didn't look like they would cause too much of a problem. Mike had brought on the rest of his reinforcements against the Japanese left flank, thereby essentially giving up any chance of a sudden American exit victory. I made a foolish move, however, advancing a leader with 3 first line squads and light machineguns into a jungle hex on the far right of the overlay 2 hill. I did not notice that some units in the American trench line could get a bead on them. Despite the fact that they were concealed, a rate of fire bonanza reduced this once proud platoon to a couple of step reduced squads. At that point I thought I had made a critical error. I had nothing to gain by putting them there, so I essentially threw away about a squad and a half and a leader. Still, there was some hope. Needing only 8 VP exited to win, I knew that if I could get both tanks off the game was mine. Mike's only antitank weapons were his various machineguns, and CC. The Americans, however, are saddled with a +1 PAATC by SSR. So I thought that there was some chance that with care I could get the tanks off.

For the rest of the game, I pretty much just tried to creep the Japanese forward, while moving the tanks into position to make a quick dash for the exit. One of the obstacles was the hill in the middle of the American position, about 6 hexes to the east of the trench complex. There were still a couple of American squads up there, out of LOS, waiting to smack any Japanese that tried to get across. Several Japanese units, including the 10-0 and one of the tanks, were at the foot of the hill or on the slope. The tank moved up and went into bypass of the jungle hex occupied by one American squad, thereby freezing him from firing out. Then the other Japanese units moved up to cover the tank, taking care not to expose themselves to very much fire from the supporting American units in the trench line. This tank took many shots from all sorts of machineguns, but survived unscathed. The American squad failed to take it out in CC. In the following American prep fire, however, one of the machineguns managed to stun it. The U.S. squad could not take advantage, however, as a 24+1 shot directed by the 10-0 clobbered them, they failed ELR, and wound up out of the rest of the scenario.

The second Japanese tank had to work its way through the gully in the center, and therefore was not in position to make a rush for the end line at the same time as the first tank. The first tank made his move, and again took shot after shot from various machineguns all over the board, until it was finally knocked out by a close range shot from a .50cal when it reached the trench line. With ever-dwindling forces, the Japanese were getting desperate. Although they were getting quite close to the trenches, there weren't very many of them left. Toward game end the second tank made his bid for the exit. This time it was successful, netting 5 points for the Japanese. As it turns out the armor leader was in this tank, making it a total of 7 points, although I did not realize it at the time. This tank ran an even tougher gauntlet than the first one, since by now the American 10-2 was on the hill opposite the trench position, which was perfect for getting a rear shot (or several) against it. However, only a 2 or a 3 TK roll could harm the tank, except from very close and/ or against the side/rear, so it wasn't too surprising that the tank made it. The 10-2 was also in position, coincidentally, to collapse what remained of the Japanese left flank. Still, only one point was now needed for a Japanese victory (although I thought I needed three).

After the tank moved and had therefore restricted much of the firing options of the Americans, the infantry attacked. Leading with the least potent units, like the many 137 half squads now on the board, they closed with the trench line. Then the 10-0 and his group conducted a banzai to get across the bridge and into the trench line. They survived a 4 -4, plus several other attacks, to do so. In several places some Japanese units were whittled down or eliminated, but overall Mike's dice started to go cold. The ensuing close combat phase in the trenches turned out pretty well for the Japanese. On the north (Japanese right) of the trench line a 137 managed to eliminate 2 crews, one of which was CX, the other which was manning a MMG. Although two other 137s were lost in other close combats, the 10-0's group got a big bonus. Not only did they eliminate the crew they were fighting, but the boxcars by that crew allowed them to withdraw. They chose to do so within the trenches but one hex closer to the edge. This proved to be huge.

Mike spent his next turn (after rallying a 558 under DM) arranging his units to fire on the exit hexes. Little else happened. On the next turn, the last dash took place. The Japanese moved everything they had, least valuable units first. Mike put down a lot of residual, but a couple of crews (one step-reduced) managed to reach the last hex, threatening to get off during the advance phase. They pinned there, however, under lots of American fire. Finally the 10-0 and group moved last. As they exited the trench they took a 6+0 from the other hill, but Mike rolled a 10. They were able to continue unmolested the rest of the way, due to the other Americans having already fired and being unable to fire again for various reasons. Mike's dice were really cold throughout this critical movement phase. Thus the Japanese pulled out the lucky victory at the end, it was turn 9 out of a possible 10.

This scenario certainly provided a lot of tense moments, and it came right down to the end. I think there are two major frustrations in this scenario, one for each player. For the Americans, the tanks represent an easy Japanese victory. Except point blank, none of the machineguns have a very good chance to stop them. For the Japanese, the 200mm OBA is frustrating because the observer can see so little, particularly of the trench position, which is what he would like to blast the most. That means the infantry has to go in alone, and that's tough in the face of all those machineguns.

As the Japanese player, I think I made several mistakes in this scenario. Fortunately, a lot of bad luck on Mike's part at the right moments allowed me to have a chance. First of all, I think it was a mistake to use first line squads, my best infantry, as HIP units to protect against American exit. This took five of my best units away from the main attack. Perhaps it would have been better to use second line units as goalies instead. Second, I never got to use the 70mm OBA. Radios are tough to use in the PTO (+1 to the contact roll), and I was sort of hoping to bring the leader into a position to call down a white phosphorous mission on the trenches in the end game. As it turns out he didn't have enough time to do so. Maybe he could have been better used on the left flank, and maybe he should have tried to call down his artillery early in the scenario. Third, I misused the Japanese MMGs. They rarely fired a shot in anger since they were involved in the hill assault on the right flank, which was characterized mostly by movement. At the end of the scenario these crews had to abandon their weapons in the mad dash for the exit. I think Mike played a very, very strong game and deserved the win. There were several moments when I thought of resigning. He always managed to put good order units in front of the Japanese. Although a few individual units got overwhelmed either in CC or for failure to rout, never did an entire position fall this way. All it would have taken would have been one or two machineguns maintaining rate of fire on that last turn to give him the victory. Beginners should take note. I've said before that you'll never experience a miraculous win if you concede early. This scenario illustrates my point. I thought of resigning several times, and probably would have a couple of years ago, but I stuck it out just to see what would happen in the end game.

DEEE-Fense! DEEE-Fense! DEEE-Fense!

Tom Huntington

I hate setting up to play defense. Attacking is so easy -- you look at where your opponent is hiding, and try to exploit any weaknesses you see. You concentrate fire on a lynchpin point, and charge wherever the defender starts looking vulnerable. As the defender, it's your responsibility to anticipate EVERYTHING the attacker could do, and provide some level of deterrent. EVERYWHERE. His success depends on your failure to foresee what he's up to. Of course, once the game is underway, defending is the easy job. You just roll around to plug the holes he creates, and try to keep him from winning. But the set up, that's what scares me most.

So what do I go through when I'm getting ready to defend? Well, after I'm done weeping, there's the obvious things -- read the victory conditions carefully, look at what troops I get, look at his troops, and try to imagine how I can use my toys to stop his toys. I really read the rules on anything that's new -- minefields, wire, DCs. I try to imagine how I can use these to stop him. Then I look hard at the mapboards I will be defending -- look for choke points he'll be passing through, look for ways to stop him there. I try to spot a "rally haven" where I can put a leader that can help rally the boys, without getting attacked himself.

I usually assume my opponent is doing the same thing. So I try to put myself in his shoes--if I was attacking this pitiful force, how would I do it? See any great positions to fire from? How would I get across those wide-open spaces? If I were attacking, what would be the biggest thing in the defender's arsenal that could cause me the most trouble?

This is all very general advice, and isn't helpful for specific situations. "Know your opponent." "Use terrain to your best advantage." D'uh, But I find myself doing this before any game, and the sweeping generalizations of von Clausewitz and Sun Tzu actually begin to apply to my tactical problems.

There are also a number of rules that help out the defender, but they are scattered throughout the rulebook. Seems a shame that they are so thoroughly hidden.

I try to find places on the mapboard where I can lay down overlapping fields of fire. If a MG was covering one area, and the crew was broken, could another one of my guns cover for him? I also look for opportunities to lay Fire Lanes -- gotten torn apart by them before, and have since added them to my List Of Things I'd Rather Do Unto Thee Than Have Done Unto Me (LOTIRDUTTHDUM). I'm still weak on the notion of defending in depth --usually I present a strong force up front, hoping that they'll break, rout, rally, and come back to reinforce the troops still holding the line. Not a great tactic, and I try to see how to improve on this. One step towards defending in depth is to make sure my big guns are further back, where they won't get overrun on the first few turns. "Never set anything up on the front that you can't afford to have turned around and shot at you later." Sobering thought, and I usually scare myself into pushing even the LMGs towards the rear areas. And often, if no good single rally haven is available, I try to stick a leader near the buildings or woods that a couple of squads would rout to, if they broke.

There's a lot of rules that you can pull out of a hat just because you're setting up to play. I could, in theory, set up in Crest Status (but the opportunity doesn't come up often). If I'm the Scenario Defender -- meaning my opponent is coming in from offboard, and I already own any terrain that needs to be held to win -- then I get to use Bore Sighting. I always try to remind myself that Bore Sighting is not only for cannons, but also for MMGs, HMGs, and Mortars. Cool stuff, if you think you know where your opponent will be heading. I've been bitten by this before though -- if you are shooting an MG at Infantry, a Bore Sighted hex gives your MG a bonus only during your Defensive First Fire (i.e. when he's moving). I've often Bore Sighted a position that offers cover for the attacker, only to watch him move next to it, stop, then use the Advance Phase to move into it after I can no longer BS him.

If I get neat toys like bazookas, or if I'm playing late war Germans and remember to read up on PFs, I try to remember that these weapons suffer from Backblast if I'm in confining terrain. Best to put them in more airy outdoor places like woods, if I don't want to cook the squad.

Minefields are still an enigma for me. I've gotten to use them a couple of times, and both scenarios only gave me enough minefield points to make them "tempting" without promising carnage. There's nothing more disappointing than having your opponent point at your hidden Minefield hex and say "I'll bet they are all there". Am I that obvious? But then, it's infinitely satisfying to watch your opponent step on the mines -- especially when they do you good. One tactic I have yet to work up the nerve to try is to mine the hell out of a building hex that is a Victory Condition building. At least I know he'll be heading there --but how do I rout out if I'm inside?

Lines of Sight are a sticky issue. One of my regular opponents thinks it's cheezy to check LOS when you're setting up. Another opponent does it regularly. I usually plan my set-up on the ps maps, where LOS aren't officially the way it'll play on the board. Keeps me from being tempted to trace lines. But you can tell a lot if you take the time to absorb the lay of the land. There's always some subtle LOS opportunities along hex-grains, and they are for some reason something that I rarely anticipate. Maybe my opponent doesn't, either. I also need to remind myself that buildings sometimes come with upper levels, and I look at how much the board changes if I can see over that wall or maybe stop worrying about that grain field. Again with the Fire Lanes, I gotta remember that Fire Lanes only fire along the same level, so anyone upstairs can't be setting up a Fire Lane down the street.

Then there's Concealment. Sometimes a scenario gives me "?" counters. If I'm the Scenario Defender, before my opponent moves onboard I get to cover every real unit (but not my dummies) with a free "?". So I can use the OB "?" to create pure dummy stacks. Lots of opportunity to set up strong on one flank, and make my troops look evenly distributed because of my dummies. If my opponent isn't coming from offboard, then sometimes I look for spots where I can set up out of his LOS -- anyone out of his LOS gains a "?" after his set-up automatically. That way, I can maximize the use of my "?" counters that the OB gives me.

The Concealment Loss/Gain table has some interesting treats on it. Cannons (which might even HIP for free) can keep their concealment easily (colored die is <= 4 on the TH DR) when they're firing, but lose it the moment I change their CA. Ouch. Infantry can be in OG and keep their Concealment in an enemy's LOS so long as they don't do anything to lose concealment. There's also a rule (A10.531) that says if there's any TEM or Hindrance for an open ground hex, you can keep your concealment there. So hiding behind a wall, or having HA, is all I need to keep the "?" marker. But I got to remember that dummy stacks must set up in Concealment terrain. I can also deploy 10% of my guys at set-up-- rarely do I see a time when a half-squad can do a job better than a full squad, but if everyone is setting up with free Concealed markers then the half squads start looking tempting.

If I get to HIP any of my units, I look around for potential surprises. You must put your HIP units in Concealment terrain. It's popular (I hear) to let a HIP unit get passed by when the attacker is advancing. Then I can later hope to pop my unit out and kill people for Failure to Rout. It's always tough to actually find a spot where a unit can get passed by without being found, however. It's also good for my soul to review what terrain is Concealment terrain -- everyone knows that buildings and woods are, but so are brush, grain fields, and orchards. Orchards look so innocent It's also legal to deploy a HIP squad during set-up, and hide both half squads. More food for thought.

Cannons are a dream. First, if I get to set them up at the beginning of a scenario, they are considered Emplaced. This is +2 TEM no matter where I put them --why waste the good buildings or woods locations, when the cannon can do just as well on it's own. I already mentioned Bore Sighting, but Cannons can use BS anytime they fire at the right Location (not just against moving targets). Cannons can also set up HIP if they are in concealment terrain -- you don't need any SSRs to do it, its just part of being a Cannon.

Defending Vehicles are usually portrayed in the scenario as little more than big targets. I look at their guns' set-up position just like I would with Cannons, and as the Defender I have to weigh moral issues like setting up CE or not. Vehicles can't set up onboard in Motion unless a SSR says they can. But you can set up a vehicle in Bog terrain (woods or buildings, for example), and assume it pulled in there without bogging down. And if the terrain allows it, I can set up behind walls to be HD, or make HD checks during set-up on the edges of hill levels. There's even a short reference of

added protection from the IFT for unarmored vehicles that are HD (A7.308). Seems invariably the best walls are where you don't need them, or they point the same direction that your opponent is approaching you from. Such is life.

Okay, so I'm still defending, and I'm still outnumbered 2 to 1. He's probably got more tanks than me, and they're probably better ones, too. But there are a bunch of tricks the defender can use to mess with an attacker's mind, and hopefully by experimenting with these I can make him worry about my setup almost as much as I'm worrying about his next six turns. So I hope.

The State of ASL in Central Texas

Matt Shostak

It seems to me that the most important issue for ASL in the Central Texas area is attracting and retaining new players, beginners and grognards alike.

Picture, if you will, the following scenario, taking place sometime in the not-too-distant future. Your wife has decided to visit her mother for the weekend, leaving you home alone to do whatever you want (within reason, of course). After a brief fantasy involving your favorite swimsuit model, you come back to reality and think of ASL. You call your regular opponent, but he is unavailable that weekend. Darn. You go get the club phone list, and you see Tom's name. You've played him before and he's pretty cool. Just as you start dialing, you remember that he moved out of town six weeks ago. Okay, you decide, I'll call Matt. He's always playing, and he usually knows how much the other guys are playing too. It turns out Matt already has two games scheduled for the weekend, against Kirk on Friday night and against Eric on Saturday. And since he's playing Mike on Tuesday night, he doesn't feel like it would be in the best interest of his marriage to schedule a game for Sunday, too. Dang! You call Mike, but he can't play on weekends as a rule. So you delve deeper into the phone list. Of the other guys on there, you've never even met 5 of them, another one or two you saw once at one of the pseudo-monthly club meetings. Despairing, you wind up renting movies and stuffing your face all weekend.

Does this scenario sound far-fetched? I don't think so. Something like this can, and probably has, happened to most of us at one time or another. It was considering such a dilemma that got me to thinking about the state of our hobby in our local gaming area. First, the good news. Things are a dam sight better for ASL around here than they were a few years ago when I first got into the hobby. I started ASL in late 1991/early 1992 without a single opponent to play. I don't know what I was thinking. Maybe I thought I could have fun playing the scenarios of Beyond Valor solitaire. Fortunately, I was connected to the Internet, and I made contact with Mike Seningen a few months after I picked up the game. He knew a couple of other local players (who have since moved away). We got together quite often, and he taught me a lot about ASL. It was Mike's idea to start a local tournament, to help "put us on the map" for ASL. He put his own money and his own hard work behind it. The tournament is now about to enter its fourth year, with David Hailey capably taking over the reigns from Mike after the first two. Through the Internet we made contact with several other local players and started forming this club. Now we have roughly a dozen members of varying degrees of skill and availability, so it is no longer a humongous effort to find a game for a weekend, at least for many of us. In addition, we have group meetings every once in a while to give the guys a chance to get together, meet the other members, and play somebody different for a change. The bad news is that we are still not where we could be as a club. I have seen three of my own regular opponents move away from town in the last several years, forcing me to break in new ones. And although new ones have become available, the additions are only just barely keeping pace with the losses. We are treading water. Although our tournament is fun and low-key, we also seem to be treading water with regard to attendance. We have high hopes for this year's tourney later this month, but I'd be a bit surprised if we got more than 21 players.

What can we do about this? Well, I won't make any "rah rah" appeals to "take one for the team" in order to try to coerce guys to do something for ASL around here. I would hate to sound preachy, and I know you all have plenty of stuff to do. But perhaps the scenario I described in the second paragraph may persuade some of us to act in our own enlightened self interest to try to attract and retain new players. This newsletter represents my best efforts toward that end, but not all of our efforts have to be that involved. I believe that we can do a good job of recruiting if we only do a few simple, easy things, but do them consistently. You can even help in recruiting by actually playing ASL. That's my first point. We have a club that is split about half-and-half between experienced players and beginners. Some of those beginners are on our phone list but rarely play. If you make the effort to arrange games with these guys on a regular basis, and take care to mentor them as they learn the tricks of the trade, you will be doing quite a bit. The club as a whole will benefit by having yet another player who can hold his own in a scenario. The benefit to the newbie and to yourself should be obvious. Of course I should emphasize the "mentoring" part. Sure if you play a newbie you should clean his clock fairly often, if not always. But don't talk him into playing a beach assault right away just because you've got a hankering for it. And after each whipping session, take the time to discuss the choices you each made during the scenario and how they affected the outcome of the game. Already I have taken this tack with a couple of the players in our club. It has helped me get my ASL fix each weekend, and I think by now the guys can at least play a pretty decent game of ASL. The other things I think we can all do include going to the hobby store every once in a while to check out the "opponents wanted" list. If they don't have one, suggest that they start. Make sure our latest club newsletter is there. Keep your eyes open, especially if you're on the Internet, for players newly arrived to the area seeking games. Attend our tournament and help keep it going. Brainstorm with us to help us find ways to attract more players to our tournament. Write something for this newsletter.

Can we ever reach the level where, if you need an opponent for this weekend, you can just grab the phone list and start calling, reasonably sure that by sheer weight of numbers, you're bound to find an opponent? I think we can. I know we would all like that. But we'll have to get off the couch once in a while to achieve it.