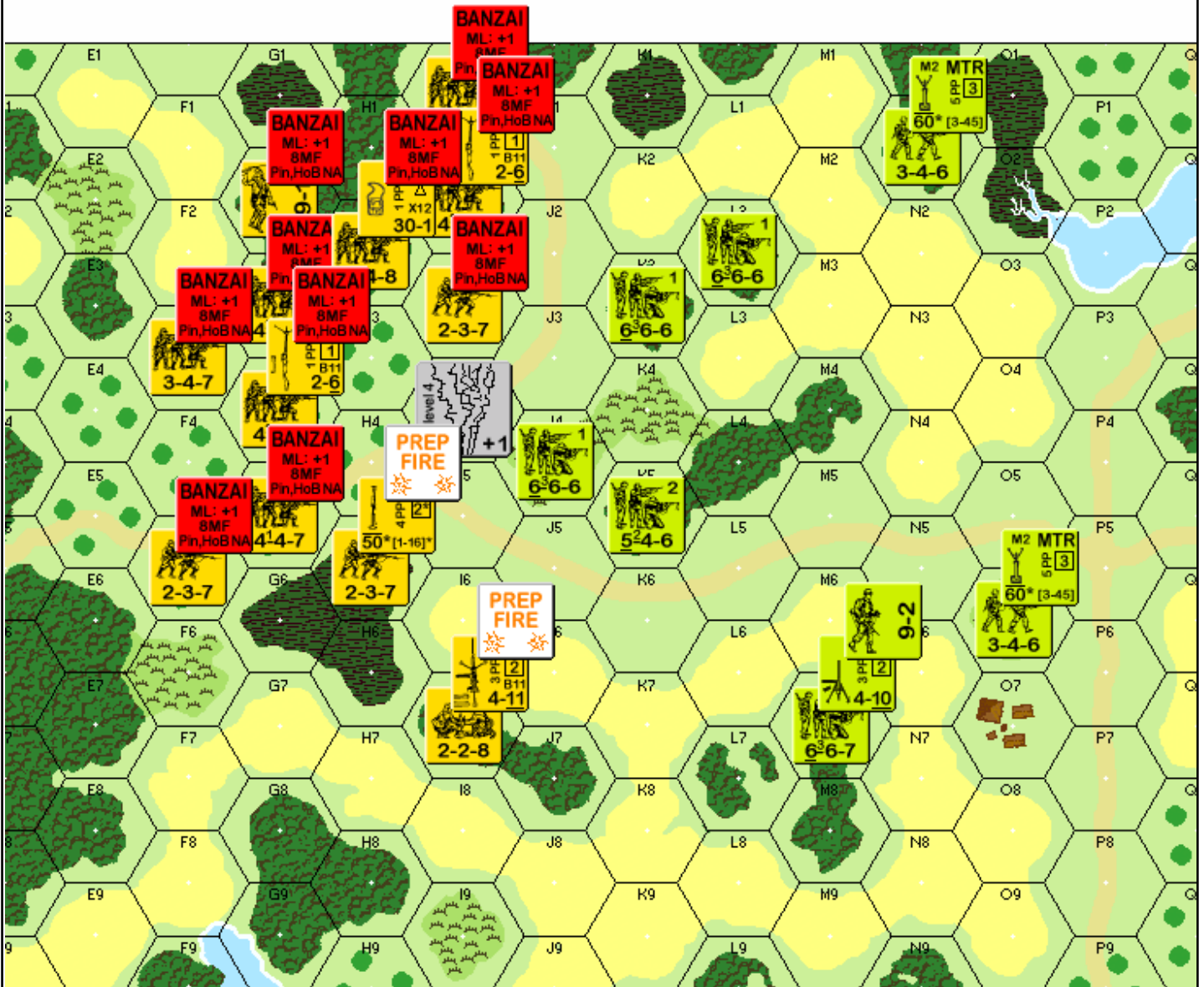


# Banzai!!!



The Newsletter of the Texas ASL Club

November, 2008 Volume 13, Number 4

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## Editor's Foxhole

**Matt Shostak**

I hope you all will thank Nick Drinkwater when you see him. Without his prolific efforts, we would have had precious little to fill the pages of this newsletter lately. There is a lesson here for all aspects of healthy game club life: don't expect the other guy to do it. Step up. Don't expect the other guy to call you for a game, write that AAR, write that article, host a game day, submit the game to the club game tracker and to ROAR, etc. Do it yourself. If you want a good gaming club, it's up to you.

## Scenario Analysis: Up the Numa Numa Trail

**Nick Drinkwater**

Fijian / US [ELR 5, SAN 4]  
Japanese [ELR 3, SAN 3]

### Scenario Attractions

Full scale assaulting Japanese company; stealthy Fijian Scouts supported by powerful but brittle US army troops; moderate-sized but quick playing scenario; interesting victory conditions; multiple attack routes; dynamic, responsive defense; the importance of maintaining fire discipline.

### Rules to Review

PTO light jungle (G2), kunai (G6), swamp (G7) and bamboo (G3); paths (B13.6); deep streams (B20.43); advance versus difficult terrain (A4.72 – but see line 4 EXC for deep streams); concealment – concealment – concealment!

## Introduction

A moderately-sized scenario that plays out much more quickly than it looks; this one comes from Mark Pitcavage's Buckeyes pack contribution to *Heat of Battle* (HOB), which is full of intense jungle madness and mayhem. Though played out on two terrain-choked boards, the action will quickly focus onto a central core area of board 34 surrounding some key jungle trail intersections. Once both sides understand all the implications of the victory conditions, this should play out in approximately 3-4 hours for moderate-speed players. Being an all-infantry assault with none of the tricky stuff (caves, paddies), this is a super scenario for new PTO players to stretch their wings as it requires more than just the usual 'take this hill, stand and die' approach you often get – a more cerebral jungle fight than normal.

Note that others much more qualified than me have written copious amounts on the various tactical tricks of attacking as and defending against the Japanese in jungle environments (see in particular the early Journals). This review does not aim to improve on any of those articles – instead it will focus on and assess some of the interesting tactical challenges presented by the scenario designer for the players to solve.

## Board Configuration and Victory Conditions

This scenario is set on boards 34 and 36 with light jungle (with paths and deep streams) in effect. Two patrols have collided and the fight is on to control some key jungle trail-points. The Japanese can set up in an "L"-shaped cordon; they can attack the enveloped allied patrol from the board 36 hills (the long arm of the "L") or from across the deep W hex row stream on board 34 (the short arm of the "L"). The Allies start the game nestled between the two arms, within 5 hexes from a major jungle trail intersection near 34Q5 (see Figure 1). The side with the most VP after six turns will win. CVP are awarded normally, but the Japanese must also control at least four of six victory locations at game end – these are typically crossing points on the trails and worth an additional one or two VP each to both sides. In addition, they can receive CVP for destroying (not capturing) each of eight native porter counters (worth 1 VP each) that the Allies have been given.

## Opposing Forces

That all sounds more complicated than it really is – it plays out very smoothly once both sides are fighting for their lives. The Japanese receive eleven 4-4-7s, a couple of crews, two knee mortars, MG support, a DC, a 9-1 and two 9-0s. That is a pretty tasty package and of course, as they are fighting in the jungle, all the concealment, infiltration,



banzai and other Japanese tricks will come into play. On the defense, the Allies consist of a fire team of three and a half US 6-6-6 squads, an MMG, a 9-1 and a light mortar that are the backbone for the Feisty Fijians: seven 4-5-7s (stealthy – massively important here), an 8-1, 8-0, light mortar, and two LMGs, and the Fijians are treated as British.

Roughly equal forces, but the Allies first need to try and stop the Japanese from taking over at least four of the victory locations, keep the native porters out of harm's way, and try and kill more Japanese than they lose themselves. A tough ask.

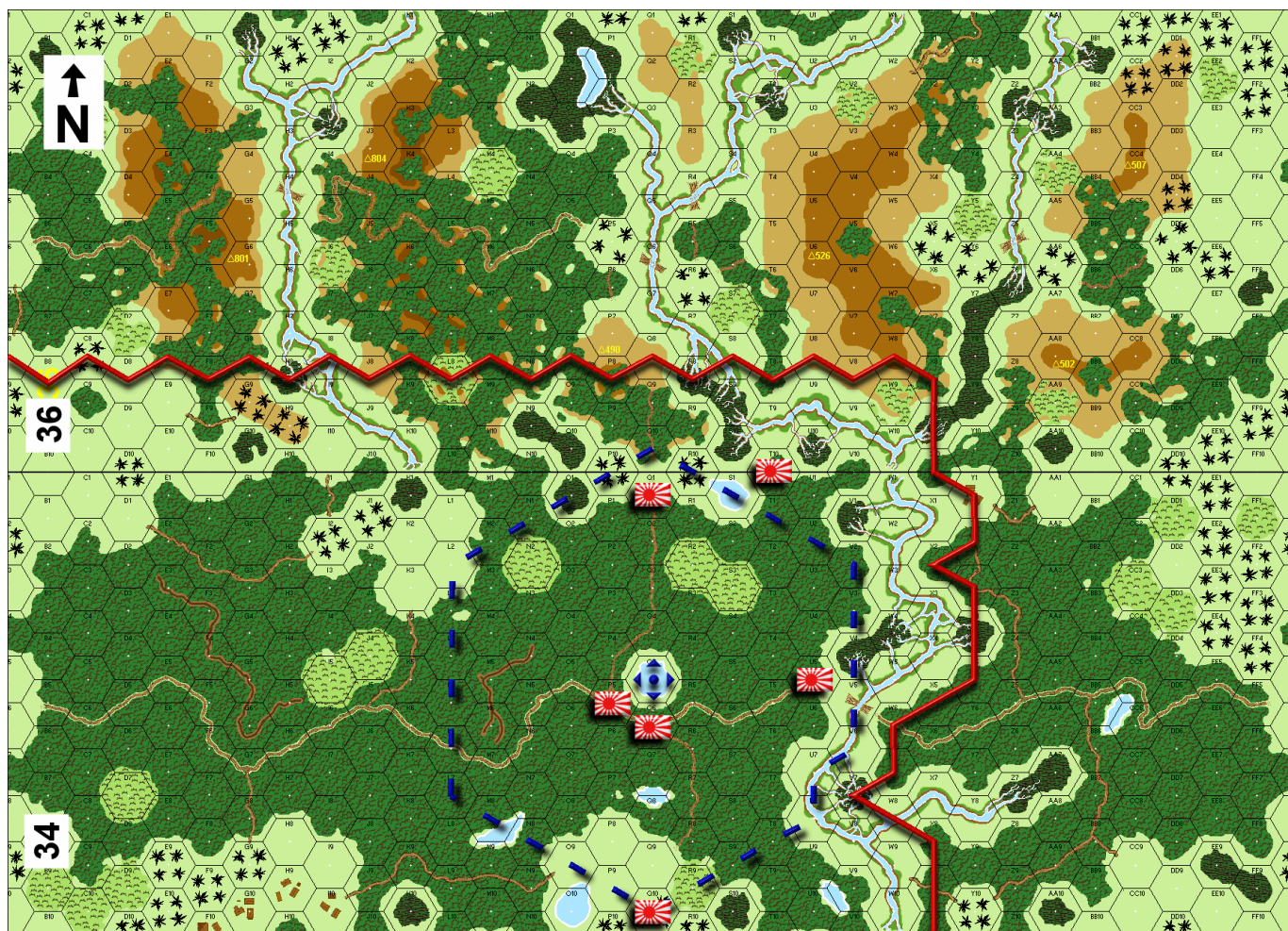


Figure 1. The playing area: the 5-hex-range perimeter from 34Q5 has been marked with a blue line. The Japanese L-shaped perimeter is marked in red. Hexes marked with Japanese flag counters are victory locations, worth 1VP each, except for 34Q6 (worth 2VP).

### Allied Setup – Looking East

Setup of the Allies is very important to understand. Crossing the 34W1-34W10 stream will be hard for the Japanese, so the Allies need to try and interdict all the key crossing points, especially the 34V5 ford, as they may get lucky and inflict some early damage as the Japanese launch their assault. It may be possible that one of these interdictors will get a Smoke or WP in the face, but that is a risk they need to take – when the Japanese emerge dripping and leech-covered from the stream they will in most cases be unconcealed, CX, and at their weakest. It may be

possible to catch the odd Japanese squad in this condition and the destruction of a squad or two would be most helpful to the overall Allied cause. Note that the 5-hex setup limitation means that the stream in hexes 34W9 and 34W10 cannot be seen initially by the Allies – it is important to get someone over to that corner quickly as infiltrating Japanese may sneak along hex row 10 of board 34 and swiftly snag the southernmost victory location. Worse still, they may be in a position to threaten the Allies' porter team as well – watch out for this!

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## Allied Setup – Looking North

As well as this eastern attack, the Allies need to try and slow the Japanese juggernaut that will be coming directly from the board 36 hills to the north, probably through the light jungle corridors of 34O3-Q3 and 34T2-U2 (see Figure 2). Again, there are some opportunities to interdict them as they cross the open hexes at the board seam. The decision on whether to keep or drop concealment is going to weigh heavily on your mind – firepower is not the Fijian specialty, but their fabulous stealth bonus really helps in the inevitable hand-to-hand close combats and it would be beneficial to go into those contests concealed!

In contrast, things rapidly get ugly for the Americans if they try to slug it out using their bayonets against the Japanese, even if they are at a 3:2 firepower advantage, so their best bet is to maintain distance and shoot; shoot fast and shoot often. 12-flat and 12+1 shots will hurt even the Japanese. Often the best friend of the Allies in this game is the humble pin result – useful at slowing down the Japanese and not letting them leap all over you!

## Defending the Victory Locations

Of the six victory locations, the one in 34Q10 is going to be extremely hard for the Japanese to get (assuming they have not opted for a southern board edge creep). For attacks sent across the ford or from the hills, there is a lot of jungle that must be traversed, and even a slight 1-2 turn delay will mean this victory location will probably be out of reach for the Japanese. In contrast, the victory location in 36T10 will be an easy catch for the Japanese and it is probable that the 34U5 victory location immediately adjacent to the ford will be lost by turn 3 or 4. Interestingly, one of the victory locations (36T10) is outside the initial Allied setup area so a unit will need to run up and tag it. However, it is also in somewhat of a blind alley position so you need to balance the need to claim this location with the possibility of drawing off some of the main Japanese force that will have to chase you down.

This leaves the two locations at the central trailhead, which in most games will probably form the focus of all the late turn action – hexes 34P5 and 34Q6 (the latter which is worth 2 VP). This central area will be the eventual meeting point of both the northern hill attack and the eastern stream attack. The small pond immediately north of hex 34Q6 assists the defenders a little as it will channel southward bound attackers left and right and also opens up more LOS opportunities for 6-6-6s to shred the Japanese. However, Allied players may need to face the fact that they will lose

the required four victory locations by turn 5, and if this does occur, the Japanese must be made to pay a heavy price in bodies by that point!

## Safeguarding the Porters

The safety of the porters is a big concern for the Allied player as they are very simple VP for the Japanese to claim. At game start, they should be placed far away from the possible approach routes of the Japanese, probably in the southwestern corner of the setup area (perhaps in the kunai field in 34O9 and its environs). Once the Japanese attack has developed, these guys should respond accordingly to any stray Japanese half-squads seen heading their way and start hustling due west to the huts around 34G10 – they should always stay a turn of movement away from the Japanese. It is perhaps even worth sacrificing the 3-4-6 as a cover guard (e.g., in 34P7) to head off any bad guys that start moving their way and get your porters to safety. There should be no reason that the natives are killed and it is a bad way for the Allies to hand easy VP to the Japanese.

## The HIP Unit

SSR 1 states that one Fijian MMC (plus SMC/SW) may set up HIP. Some thought needs to be given to this setup as it could well prove a game winner. One obvious ploy is to put the HIP unit in an out of the way position in the jungle (e.g., 34M3) and leave him undeclared until turn 5/6 when he can jump back and possibly reclaim an unguarded victory location (34Q1 could well be ripe for the picking as it is the first victory location the Japanese will conquer). Note that the Allies move last, so there is some potential for last turn cheap wins.

Alternatively, you could prey on the common occurrence of not sending units through that troublesome bamboo (e.g., 34S3, or better still, 34N2) in order to check them out for lurking nasty surprises. It may be that you could get some very easy VP from some broken Japanese half-squads eliminated due to failure to rout, or again you may be able to spring a last turn location recapture dash! There are several opportunities for fun here, but the important thing is the nagging doubt you will leave in the Japanese player's mind when in the bottom of turn 5 they *still* have not appeared yet. At the very worst, you may force the Japanese to sacrifice one or two squads for guard duty in these backwater victory locations when they may well have made the difference in the fight around the crossroads in the last two turns. It's nice to be able to turn the sneaky tricks back onto the Japanese for once!





*Figure 2. The action area on board 34. VC locations are marked with Japanese flag markers (34Q6 is worth 2VP). Principal Japanese attack routes are marked with red arrows: most attackers will come from the north supported by the attack across the stream ford. Initial Allied setup limitations mean that a sneak flank attack across the stream at 34W10 cannot be seen (red arrow, lower right). Possible Fijian HIP sites in bamboo (light blue) and jungle (dark blue) are marked as stars. These are all places that are one movement phase away from one or more of the northern victory locations. The dashed blue arrow (lower left) marks the escape route for the native porters.*

### Japanese Attack Routes – Across the Stream

This is definitely the tougher of the two attack routes and for most Japanese players forms the axis of any subsidiary flanking attack. The stream is deep and difficult, and apart from the ford, you will emerge CX from an advance vs. difficult terrain into the fringing jungle – read A4.72 carefully. It is very likely that your opponent will have set up two or three “?” stacks here, so your concealment will be instantly stripped, and it is very likely that he will have set up half-squads with light mortars, as this is the one place where he can obtain an abundance of 2- or 3-hex lines of sight minimum range opportunities. However, you

could counter fire with fire and use your mortars to Smoke or WP his stacks first to help your assault, or if they are depleted, get airburst benefits instead. Roll low and be lucky, but it still could be a tough assault.

It may ultimately occur that the pressure due to your northern force makes the streamside defenders’ retreat a foregone conclusion, thus opening up the east flank. Maybe a platoon with mortar support is your best bet on the east side and hope to keep the defender under pressure from airbursts! Keep an eye open for an opportunity to sneak a unit across the stream at the out-of-the-way

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locations in 34W9 and 34W10 – that creates many potential problems for the Allies. Nice!

## Japanese Attack Routes – the Northern Hills

The routes through 34M1-T1 are probably the easiest approach routes to the central core of the defense around the crossroads and will form the focus of most Japanese attacks – maybe 8-9 squads should be used here with two of the leaders. The Allies may well defend the board seam where there is more open ground, but there are ways around that and the 34U1 track is like a freeway into the heart of the defense. It will be defended, but push hard through here whenever possible. As always, be aware for opportunities to “bounce” Japanese half-squads onto concealed Allies and follow that up with a concealed unit of your own. You know all the tricks, you have all the skills, so use them!

Keep an eye on the Allied squad count so that you don't get surprised by a forgotten HIP squad tucked away in a corner – check out those bamboo hexes, even if it slows you down for a turn. Also, be aware of the need to claim the awkward victory location in 34T10 which is hidden in the back reaches of the board. The Allies will definitely run a squad up there which means you will need to as well, but whatever you send up there will be coming very late to the main fight. The Japanese can also directly assault this hex across the stream on turn 1 but you may then end up unconcealed and CX versus a stealthy concealed Fijian, which is not a good place to be.

The Fijians are a little tougher than normal British infantry, so they are effectively ANZACs. As such, they may well be concealed and stealthy when encountered so banzais may not be the best way to assault them, instead use normal movement in the jungle to get next to them – do you really need the extra morale pip in this situation versus the problem later in the turn of being lax? The Fijians are the weaker of the two Allies with respect to firepower and so their attacks may be more survivable. Make sure *you* are making your opponent ask the hard questions of when or when not to drop concealment, not the other way around. In contrast, it is likely the US troops will form the tough but brittle core of the defense around the crossroads; infiltrate around and encircle them and watch them fall swiftly – the 6 morale is their biggest cross to bear and they won't come back if they have nowhere to rout.

## Summary

A great little single evening scenario that is just the right side of small – there are enough units that one or two bad rolls won't unhinge the entire night, and there are plenty of options to play with different setups and defenses. Counterattacks by the Allies should be a part of any strong

and flexible defense, this should definitely come down to a huge amount of carnage and mayhem around the central crossroads as each side tries to eke out a VP advantage. A very nice scenario indeed and recommended as an advanced test for those new to PTO.

## Mini AAR

Matt Schwoebel selected this scenario from the Buckeyes pack and I liked the look of it as it was big enough to keep us involved for a lot of the day, but would also let me out to go and see to my game-host duties. We rolled for sides and I received the challenge of the Allies. My aim was to make any crossing of the stream deadly for Matt for a turn or so but then slowly collapse my screen of Fijian defenders back onto the American-held core. A screen of northern Fijians were to try and delay the northern thrust of the Japanese by at least two turns and take as many of the opposition with them as they could. The porters were to move to the relative safety near the huts to the southwest and then ‘hover’ in anticipation of any thrusts by solo Japanese half-squads.

Matt pushed a platoon across the ford into my Smoke-enshrouded Fijians, but on a thin LOS I was able to 2KIA a 4-4-7 and accompanying 9-0 waist-deep in the stream. Great start for the good guys. After that and some mutual mortar destruction, we indulged in all the usual forms of jungle fighting, but the Fijian stealthiness and my refusal to be tempted to drop all concealment on first contact with the enemy kept me in the hunt and we continued to trade squads. One interesting hand-to-hand melee went three rounds without resolution (we're talking 8s and 7s here) before everyone finally got bored of pillow fights and shot everyone else! As is my wont, I resolutely continued to fail all my ambush attempts, but then so did Matt, and I was getting marginally ahead on the body count by turn 4 on some lucky point blank fire death dealing.

However, this turn also saw my riskiest move when I moved a 6-6-6, an 8-1 and a concealed 8-0 onto a CX striper. I even managed to ambush them, but of course only CR'ed the buggers; the sweat was pouring off me as Matt rolled a 1-6 return attack... and CR'ed me! Luckily, random selection meant it was only the 8-0 who gave up his life for king and country; the unit I could most afford to lose. After that, we entered a general slugfest before, in one final big attack, I ‘snaked’ an adjacent Japanese crew from a squad and a hero – two more precious VP up! That one hurt the Japanese offensive a lot as it also took away the availability to the then-adjacent Japanese HMG. Despite me breaking two more squads, the VP total was swinging further in my favor.

In the top of turn 6, Matt had taken the required four victory locations but I was up a bit on overall VP (by approximately 7-8 points). Then I revealed the trump card

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– a solo Fijian squad had patiently sat ignored and bypassed in the 34S3 bamboo for the entire game. They woke up, shaved, did their ablutions, had some rashers of man-pig for breakfast and then sauntered off singing songs from *South Pacific* to reclaim the now-unguarded 34Q1 victory hex for the good guys. I was ahead on the CVP count as well, had managed to extricate most of my imperiled broken troops, and the native porters had run to safer places.

Great game and a good, fun opponent in Mr. Schwoebel! Thanks Matt!

## Tactics Tip

Rick Reinesch



A large number of scenarios come with mines being given to the defender as a part of his order of battle. These can consist of either antipersonnel (A-P) mines or antitank (A-T) mines. Now the scenario can specifically assign A-T minefield factors, or they can be traded at a ratio of 1-for-3 with A-P minefield factors. A-T minefields can be very effective at blunting the effectiveness of an attacker's armor units, so how best to utilize them?

Since it attacks both on the way into the minefield and on the exit from it, a 1-factor A-T minefield should get an effect 31% of the time, while a 2-factor gets a result 53% of the time, and a 3-factor has a 75% chance for an effect.

Some handy tactics to use with A-T minefield factors include:

- Combining A-P and A-T mines in the same hex. If an armor unit enters first, the A-P attack is resolved before the presence of A-T mines is revealed. If the A-P results in immobilization, then the A-T mine stays hidden. If an AFV enters the hex first, then the element of surprise associated with the minefield is gone since it is probable that both the A-P and A-T minefields will be revealed. However, if an infantry unit enters the location first, then the A-T minefield remains hidden. Alternatively, you can place a mixed minefield with the A-T mines visible. When the engineers slip in for a removal attempt, they will have something more pressing to worry about.
- Placing A-T mines in critical friendly locations, especially if there is a high degree of likelihood that an OVR or VBM freeze restriction will be utilized. Of course, your infantry can move in and out of A-T minefield locations without concern.

- Putting A-T mines in wire hexes. This keeps your opponent honest if he wants to drive a fully-tracked AFV through the wire hoping for the 1 dr that will clear the wire. Suddenly that annoying AFV blows up into little pieces instead. Moreover, once the minefield is found, it is unlikely that any additional armor will want to venture through that wire hex, so even a 1 factor A-T minefield can help funnel an attack where you want your opponent to go by keeping both the wire and minefield in play.
- Placing A-T mines in plain view, and not just on paved roads. If you do not want your opponent to go in a certain direction, then a visible A-T mine counter can give your opponent pause. How many factors are there? The mines are vulnerable to removal when in plain view, but sometimes the effect on your opponent is worth it. (*Hint*: See the next tip.)
- Make sure to provide covering fire for your minefield. There is no reason to give your opponent the opportunity to remove your minefield unopposed.

*For more discussion of the use of mines in ASL, check out Matt Shostak's article A Mathematical Minefield in volume 3.3 of this newsletter, available for download at <http://texas-asl.com/>.*

## AAR: A Pleasant Diversion



Nick Drinkwater

US Player: Nick Drinkwater

German Player: Zeb Doyle

### Introduction

Zeb and I had lined this one up as soon as it was published a few weeks ago and we were eventually able to find a free weekend to fit it in. The end-of-the-world financial collapse had meant that Zeb had been hugely busy at work recently and this was his first ASL for some months, so clearly I could expect him to be rusty and would walk all over him - **not!** Neither of us had a preference on sides so we diced and I pulled the challenge of the Americans, perhaps the worst choice for me as, like so many ASL players, my combined arms game is merely average, and of course I'm facing a rules lexicon and tank god across the table. But hey, gotta learn it somehow so why not today?



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## CG Highlights

This scenario comes from MMP's one-off *Operations Special Magazine*, which was released in August 2008. The scenario comes with its own specially-drawn map by one of MMP's in-house artists, Niko Eskubi, and is very different from all other ASL board art seen to date. The best way to describe the terrain is *rural-real* as it is trying to represent wet and muddy France in December 1944. The open ground looks *textured*, the crest lines have a scalloped look, which conveys the terrace / plateau look of the ground, dirt roads have ruts in them, and the buildings (all stone) are shown with a tiled-shingle effect. Certain buildings are marked with white open stars as they are American CG objectives.



**Typical Singling HASL terrain: open (level 1) ground with a slightly textured feel, dirt roads with ruts, stone houses with tiles and shadows and out-of-season orchards; all very evocative of a damp, wintry day in France in 1944.**

The other main piece of terrain to consider is the out-of-season orchard which looks *twiggy* – better than the usual 4 green blobs. Despite the differences in form and feel, I think we both felt that the map handled really well - my only snipe is that some fairly dark shadows had been included around the buildings which caused me to miss an important LOS, but more on that later. The map, 31 hexes by 18 hexes, is on semi-glossy paper and feels a little bit more robust than HOB's original Kreta map. Mine has been folded and unfolded several times and I've seen no cracking or lining of the folds, so it seems pretty robust. The map needs a fairly large amount of table space to play on but should be manageable for most gamers' tables. Useful boxes have been added to the map fringe for

keeping track of things like CVP units, OBA, and game turns. Early versions of the map have a compromised north arrow, later corrected on newer map sheets, but even without this correction, it's very obvious which way is north (the German side). Overall, it's another nice addition to the HASL portfolio and a nice change from the usual aesthetics.

## CG Victory Conditions

Two scenarios are included in the magazine. One (*Fitzgerald's Fire*) is a 4.5 turn micro scenario set in the NE corner with 12.5 squads and five tanks and represents a small German probe to take back one corner of Singling village after the Americans' first attack. The other scenario (*Abram's Charge*) is a six-turner with a lot of vehicles (18) and a fair number of squads (~24 -- well, lots of German ones anyway) set on the entire map. In this scenario, the Americans are on their initial attack to take the village, and to win the scenario have to accumulate 55 CVP against the Germans based on captured building locations (one point each) and damage and death to Axis units (normal CVP applies), though mindful of a 65 CVP cap themselves (fairly generous).

Interestingly, it is the setup for the second scenario that is also the setup for the first of three campaign game scenarios set on the map (the CG is called *A Pleasant Diversion*). The main differences being that scenario 1 may end early due to a dice roll on each player turn starting with turn 5, and it is not *so* essential for the US to hit their VP objectives in the first scenario as compared to the standalone scenario. A neat and simple counterbalancing reinforcement schedule is applied to the US, wherein the worse the Americans initially do the more CPP they will have available for reinforcement purchases and vice versa. In contrast, the Germans are on a fixed schedule where they will receive one infantry, one armor, and one artillery RG for each of the remaining two games. The three scenarios for the CG are on a single date (morning, lunch and afternoon) so there are no complications around night etc.

The overall challenge for the US player is to take a significant amount of real estate and destroy / capture a large number of German CVP. To win Scenario 1, they need to achieve 55 CVP (just like the original stand-alone scenario), 105 CVP by the end of the second scenario and a CG-winning 150 CVP by the end of the last scenario. Alternatively, the US can win the whole CG by controlling all of the marked CG victory buildings, or at the end of each of the first two scenarios if they control 4 or 8 CG victory buildings, respectively.



## Terrain characteristics

SSRs are fairly limited on the scenario card: there is a flame in the SE corner of building N9, off-board observers are at level 2 for the US, level 3 for the German, all US units must enter as riders, five of the US tanks are equipped with gyros, and there are a few additional rules to be aware of on two pages of chapter Z rules that come with the magazine. As described above, the terrain is a mix of very solid French stone village and farm buildings, which predominantly lie E-W across the map, but there is a small 'avenue' of houses that lie alongside a SSE-NNW entry road (R8-V18) that projects south towards the American entry edge, and similarly, another annex of houses that stretches two hexes NNE-SSW toward the German board edge entry along the R6-V0 road.



The majority of the village is on a level 1 plateau, but the ground dips in the SW corner to level 0, and the entire north side of the map dips down to level 0, rendered in a more earthy, soggy brown color on the map. The south-central approach to the village is partially protected by a big out-of-season orchard, as are the slopes on the SW corner of the village at the edge of the level 0 ground. It is the east side of the map where much attention will focus - apart from the odd isolated orchard, almost the entire eastern third of the map is level 1 open ground, split by the eastern half of Singling village itself. It all looks very inviting for sweeping envelopments by mobile armored forces, but what horrors could be lurking out there to trap the unwary?

Numerous single-level buildings dominate Singling (which of course makes them level 2 obstacles on the plateau). There is a steeple in the village church and there are a few 1.5 story multihex buildings in there, too, including a large 5-hex municipal building in the east central portion of the village (the one with the flame in it in hex N9). Setup restrictions preclude the Germans from lining up at the south edge of the village and gunning to death everything approaching wearing olive drab - they must set up on or behind hex row 8.

Also, to help the approach to the village, the Americans have been given two simultaneous WP preregistered fire missions that can only be placed up to 10 hexes away from the US board edge - again, a mechanic to stop the US from plastering WP all over the main German strong points at

game start. With an observer at level 3, its a fairly moot point where the German places his observer; the same cannot be said of the US observer, which being at level 2, can only typically see the front southernmost hexes of the village. The US player must exercise great care in his off-board observer placement - it is fixed for all three scenarios and he is going to struggle to find good LOS that can see anywhere into the back of the village. This is something to be very aware of.

## Force Balance

Probably the best thing about this HASL CG is that it really emphasizes the yin and yang of both opposing forces at this time of the war. The Americans are stuffed to the gills with every imaginable gizmo and gadget in the book (gyros, white-background Sherman guns, smoke mortars, white phosphorous, quality armor leaders (10-2, 8-1)), but for scenario 1, are particularly short on infantry, with only 7.5 rider-borne squads to start with. They do have a plethora of leaders, bazookas (no WP as we're still in 1944) and MGs including a 9-2 and a hero, but these guys are being asked to do a big job in scenario 1 and every single squad is critical. It will be inevitable that the US player will be hurting for troops somewhere in this game as they just don't have enough to go around and do all the tasks we'd

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like them to do. There are definitely no 'throwaway' half-squad bump concealment testers here - those guys will be needed to run around and snag buildings, but in an OSHA-approved safe and secure way.

Clearly then, it is really important to plan the US attack carefully, use the WP barrages to screen approach routes from that nasty HMG in the steeple and try and get the GIs into cover and buildings as soon as possible, or the German artillery will be dropping around their ears and in no time they will be regretting that lack of cover. One for one, the US troops (ELR 4) are clearly superior to all the German squads (ELR2), including their two 5-4-8s, but the Germans will be conducting a stone building defense throughout and thus they are hard to break, even with the potential offered by US assault fire.

## The Americans

The US tank force is as good as it will probably ever get in a 1944 scenario - thirteen elite flavors of Shermans including seven of the 76L versions, and even better, the brilliant 105\*mm support tank which is a monster for helping the US ground attack. It may actually be worth using the 8-1 AL in this beast as it such a useful tank for you; it also comes with a healthy H9 to boot. Being elite, the main force Shermans have APCR on a 5 or less and that can be threatening to even Panther turrets, but as we all know, return hits from many of the German AT assets will be fatal on most occasions.

It is clear that with the limited number of troops available for the ground assault, the armor is the key to victory for the US: played well and to their strengths (use of bounding fire/gyro/ALs, motion attempts, smoke mortars/grenades, use of co-axial MGs to get spins, swarming if the opportunity arises) and they are formidable. Played poorly and the battlefield will soon become littered with burning M4 hulks. Much of the successful use of the Shermans will come down to the initial positioning of the German tanks and antitank gun - if the Panthers are isolated in some board-edge position, then of course it may be worth sacrificing a Sherman or two to scratch the beast. However, crafty German play is unlikely to present any real opportunities to do this and the US player should reckon on any apparently 'isolated' Panthers in fact being well protected by the 'schreck', 'fausts and the antitank gun. I think that playing a good combined arms game as the American in this is a huge challenge (and hence a lot of fun) for most players - it's way too easy to end up with destroyed tanks everywhere in the pursuit of poorly planned and executed tactics.

## The Germans

In effect, the Germans have perhaps the slightly easier job in this scenario, despite having the weaker troops and

being initially outnumbered 13-4 on AFVs in scenario 1. The two Panthers are lethal to everything they hit of course, but the 75L on the Stug and JgdpzIV are also dangerous to most of the US armor, too. The antitank gun is really useful and its ROF of 2 makes it a critical piece. After the Panthers, it will be a secondary linchpin of any defense as it can seriously hurt any American attack. The other key weapon the Germans have is the panzerschreck in the hands of a 2-3-8 half-squad: very tasty, and really helpful on the western side of the village where any US tanks must close up to within 3-4 hexes distance from the village to get on to the level 1 'lip' to provide direct fire support to their ground troops.

Placement of the tanks and AFV is an interesting conundrum for the Germans - the eastern level one plateau looks open to broad, sweeping armor assaults and American envelopment. But careful placement of the antitank gun, maybe one of the AFVs and liberal use of 5/8<sup>th</sup> inch dummies can make it a really tough proposition for the US - dare they risk it and what do they consider acceptable losses? Additionally, Panthers in buildings in the core of the village supported by lots of 'faust-totin' infantry make them really hard to knock out as swarming tactics will be invalidated by a late-war German infantry screen, and that 75LL is lethal to any US vehicle that dares to take them on frontally in their approach routes. Tough cookies indeed.

The other huge German defensive asset is their OBA - the 80mm stuff, even when dropped as harassing fire, will make a mess of any US infantry caught in the open on their approach run in (and this applies equally to the reinforcements which will be walking in from the southern board edge in the second and third scenarios, too). In those later scenarios, additional bigger caliber OBA is available to the Germans and that can really hurt the Americans who are pretty much always behind the curve on the infantry numbers for the entire game. If the OBA can be dropped early and accurately then it's really going to mess up the US attack timing, too, as they may need to hunker down to avoid the worst of it - the advantage the German has with the level 3 observer over the comparable level 2 US guy is a big one!

## AAR - Mini Campaign Game Scenario 1

There's a ton more tactical stuff you could write here on this game but that's best left to others whose combined ops play is stronger than mine. All I knew at the beginning of this was that I was facing a tough opponent and I was trying to beat him at a form of the game I know he excels at! But then, hey, we all have to learn sometime. Right?

Zeb had spread across the width of the board with several 5/8<sup>th</sup> inch "?" stacks closing down all the obvious choke points on the eastern side of the village at level one.



Clearly some of these were dummies, but clearly I was also probably going to burn some armor finding out the hard way what they really were. The extreme west end of the village was more open and there was some potential to perhaps put some flanking / rear maneuver in there through use of the road in hex row D, but the distance needed to travel here was large and I knew that any German response in their turn 1 would leave my rider units in the open and at height disadvantage with nowhere to go.

## Early Turns - Cautious Progress

Conscious of the need to capture location VP and also the essential need to try and keep as many of my troops alive as possible, I dumped the two WP barrages in the central approaches (around the O11 orchards and in the V11 area) blocking LOS to the southern 'avenue' of buildings and then quickly dropped off 5 squads there to snag some easy VP locations on my side of the board. After that, their job was to push on hard into the core of the village and then turn left (west) to close the vice on the defense with assistance from my flankers. Two squads riding bareback on simple 75 Shermans went initially to the west up the D hex row road and then turned in due east and snagged some of the outlying buildings there (C7, F7) - all went well, until Zeb dropped concealment on his 'schreck in I7 and bagged his first Sherman on turn 2 as it climbed onto level 1 at 3-hex range in hex F6.

Seeing the numerous concealed units on the east side of the village, the 76L Sherman force tentatively pushed on to the east-central area trying to test some of the menacing "?" stacks in Z7 and CC8 with long-range fire with little success. In turn 2 things got worse, as Zeb dropped concealment on one of his Panthers in a building - despite an orchard hindrance or two, he nailed a 76L gyro Sherman, which of course had my 10-2 AL in it. Sigh.

## Slow Going to the Crossroads

In the meantime, my central infantry force pushed slowly onwards claiming more of the 'avenue' before it met the wall of skulking, concealed conscript squads just south of the crossroads (around Q8 and Q9). Now that doesn't sound threatening normally but in a possibly short scenario where VP locations are important, all they have to do is delay me to have a big impact - this they of course did admirably. I was somewhat lucky as I was able to smoke in and then have his steeple HMG malfunction for a turn or two, but it was all very slow going due to the need to preserve troops and not take needless risks. Zeb is a master of the 'deployment of cannon fodder' defense and today was to be no different - there were more "?" stacks popping up everywhere to block, tarry and impede me, all helped by the stone building defense - only two units disrupted all game which is a testimony to his play and my bad dice.

## Mayhem on the Western Flank

Even when I did take prisoners with my western flank force, it came back to nail me in a later CC that I could not escape from, and I lost a squad and he was able to rearm the escapees, too! To add to the calamity, Zeb saw an opportunity to take out my isolated flanking Sherman in F8 on the west side with his Jagdpanzer IV, but was unlucky and bounced a shell off me in bounding fire. I was able to save his ass by driving a second Sherman into his hex and then my initial survivor nailed the Jagd IV through the side with a multiple hit. Nice move and good to be able to capitalize on a rare mistake by Mr. Doyle for once.



*Zeb's excellent Panther trap in O10. With full flank protection from a German infantry screen and the fire in hex N9, this Panther is almost invulnerable. Anything wandering in front of its gun will pay the price – burning Shermans in hexes M14 and O12 bear witness to this!*

## Bad Dice, Bad Play

Elsewhere things were less good. My dice rolling slowly started to go down hill and I started to have a few important morale check failures. Also, conscious of the time, I started to get a little too aggressive with my armor. Another 76L Sherman went down to a laser thin LOS which went through a building shadow in hex N9 from the newly revealed Panther in O8 - that one hurt a lot, but I didn't help myself by failing to roll for smoke mortars to assist with keeping such threats at bay. Having successfully machine-gunned a couple of dummy 5/8" "?" stacks on the far eastern flank I was able to sneak two Shermans over to the far east hex line in DD5 and DD6 to try and put some hurt on the village. Dumb move really as they were both left a tad isolated and of course I paid the



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price: the Stug unveiled itself close to the back 'annex' of Singling, but missed – luckily for me he went down to a huge critical hit in return from a bounding fire Sherman.

However, the 76L antitank gun then popped out of hex V5 in a brilliant refused flank position, pivoted, fired, hit, kept rate, killed, fired again, killed again and I was another two tanks down. Four dead so far but two German tanks to show for it in return – acceptable odds but both Panthers were still alive and kicking. It was clear that Zeb had basically left his left flank to be protected by mainly dummies and the odd sacrificial half-squad or two, but had formed a refused flank 'ring of steel and fire' in a rough semicircle running from V5 - T7 - S9 - Q9 - O8 - L7 - I8 - I6. In this, both Panthers were nestled nicely in +3 terrain where they could not be outflanked or swarmed without subjecting the US armor to torrents of PF shots, and the US infantry couldn't get close as they were struggling to wade through a wall of half-squads. Very nicely played.

## Endgame in Scenario 1

Coming to the end of scenario 1, I was able to get a squad, MG and leader into the SW corner of the burning building (N9) and this did cause Zeb a few problems - the flames were about halfway through eating the building up, but if I could hold tough in there I may have been able to claim the 10 locations before it all went up in a puff of smoke. In addition, my infantry had pretty much cleared away the southern most 'avenue', but they then ran into the roadblock of Panther-supported half-squads and second line infantry at Q9 and S9. At this point, my guys started to fail smoke grenade attempts and I had approximately four such failures in a row. Not helpful, but I did shred a 4-3-6 that went berserk in front of my 9-2.

In addition, Zeb's reinforcement Panther came on in the far NE corner (EE1) and started to threaten my now somewhat shambolic eastern armored probe. Running away from this behemoth, another Sherman 76L in hex X10 was snagged on a low-odds shot from the antitank gun - 5 down now, and we were now at 8:2 (+ antitank gun) in terms of AFV assets. At this point things had really ground to a halt due to the ever-present problem of a lack of troops, and so I was very relieved when I rolled a two at the first opportunity to end the scenario at 4.5 turns.

## Wrap-up

So, after all that, I was only 38 CVP to the good and most of that was due to the easy capture of the outlying buildings. For the loss of the Jagdpanzer and the Stug, I had lost 5 tanks, four of which were 76L, three having gyros and the 10-2 AL were already gone: a bit frustrating

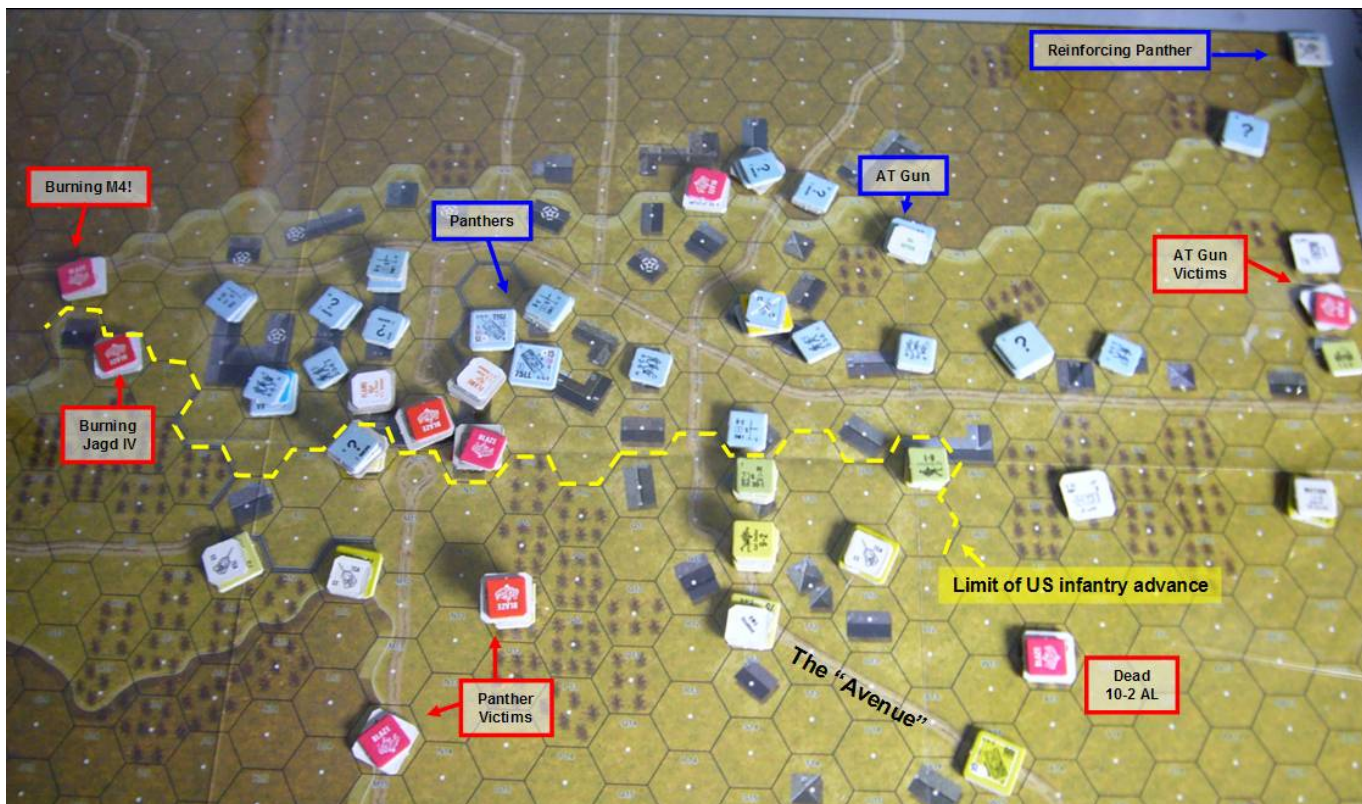
really as one was on a thin LOS and the other on a low-odds rate tear, and generally Zeb would continue to find that critical ToHit tank roll just when he needed them.

In contrast, I had killed off 3-4 German squads for the loss of one of my own but they were all conscripts and I hadn't really touched his main core (4-4-7 / 5-3-8) of defenders yet. All of this could have been so much worse, but Zeb managed to pull two reds right off the bat for his OBA. My OBA was marginally effective, but it was only partway through the game when we realized just how amazingly limited the number of good (none) and average (a few) US offboard observer sites there were, and T18 wasn't one of even the average ones, sad to say. I did manage to scatter some of the central village defenders around the church through an early fire mission, but not much else and I could not see any of the back of the village where the concealment recycling effort was in full swing. That was a big lesson! The tops of those level one buildings are at level two, so you need to find some oblique long views into the heart of the village to help here (maybe hex DD18 or K18, though the options are limited).

## Reinforcements to the Rescue

All this death and destruction meant I had 66 CPP to spend in the reinforcement and refit phase. Clearly, I was in need of infantry and so I opted for two more 6-6-7 platoons, with an 8-1 and 8-0, but these guys were coming in on foot the hard way as the ground (apparently) was too soft for APCs. As OBA was free to me, I carried on gamely with my 100mm but also stuck with its limited LOS opportunities. On the armor front, I was able to reinforce with the two M18s, but their ROF of 2 is offset by the OT nature of these beasts. This was still an improvement on the three Stuarts I could have obtained - these guys would seriously be at risk in this CG, as the limited LOS range issues would mean they would need to expose themselves to serious pain to inflict any kind of damage on the stone building-protected Germans here.

Overall, this is a very streamlined refit phase so apart from finishing off melees, resolving encircled units, removing heroes, getting rid of DM, and resolving one more set of blaze-flame creations etc., the action in the second scenario kicks off pretty much immediately after the last one has ended. Vehicles do get to choose stopped or motion status if they like, which was a possibly useful escape route for another M4 that initially was looking like it was going to get shot by his newly arrived Panther, but might now just escape due to the motion status, or so I thought.



*Situation end of CG1: The US infantry have been relatively successful in the centre pushing up the 'avenue', and have established a foothold in the burning building (L9 lower level, under the German "?"). However, this success has been at some cost to their armor. The Panther in O9 is in a particularly strong position, having one flank protected by the blaze in N9. The value of the antitank gun position is readily apparent.*

### AAR - Mini Campaign Game Scenario 2

So, we were off to the races on the next CG day. As Zeb had won the scenario he was lucky enough to move first and so I was instantly given cause for concern by the three Mark IVs that came on to assist the reinforcement Panther on the far east side, together with a bunch of infantry (4-3-6s I think) that were sent to reinforce the middle of the village. Even though I had started the game in motion, my stranded, isolated 76L Sherman went down to one of the four tubes facing it, as it couldn't find a smoke mortar and I forgot to roll for smoke grenades (dumb, dumb!) – overall armor balance was now at 9:6 (+antitank gun) and that is a very, very ugly ratio when facing three panthers.

### On the Double, Forward March!

In my turn 1, hugely conscious that I would not be able to pull the same trick twice and get Zeb to pull reds twice in a row, I put feet to leather and thrust a stacked platoon down the left side entry road (hex row D) for nine hexes to try and get straight on to the western side of the village and quickly into stone building cover. Good plan. The other platoon went as fast as they could up to hexes J13-K13 to try and reinforce my small foothold in the now merrily

burning municipality building. My mood improved a lot when Zeb immediately pulled another red as his opening gambit - three in a row - sweet! Just need one more....

### The Counterattack

Knowing that all manner of death would be coming if Zeb's armored push did come my way on the east side, I tried to evacuate the rest of my turn 1 armored probe and form my own refused flank along the line of the southern 'avenue' - roughly along the line S9 - W16. These brave survivors would be stiffened by the presence of the two M18s and their ROF 2 guns. Again nice plan, but for this one, another sloppy move saw me in W15 just in LOS from Zeb's new Panther in hex EE7. Amazingly, I hit it with APCR, but only immobilized it and the crew opted to be brave and stay in. I hit it again, but this time the crew left as fast as their Hitleresque boots could carry them - sweet - but I was unable to machine-gun the buggers. Of course, they shook themselves off and climbed straight back in and stuck a shell straight through the paper-thin walls of my M18 as it tried to start up and drive away, even with a couple of hindrances and a burning wreck. That was a grievous and heavy blow.



### Progress...of Sorts.

Things were still progressing fairly well in the center for a while - my 9-2 started to warm up and I atomized the HMG in the steeple with a critical hit from the 105\*mm Sherman - very nice! I even managed to push a squad through to east of the village crossroads in U8 where I hit an exposed MkIV with a bazooka shot, costing me an acceptable half squad to backblast. Of course, this one rolled the required 10 to shock and it returned to normal two turns later. Hmm. OK, let's try that one again - this time, I roasted it, and even more fundamentally, I managed to remove a second Panther in R6 to a turret hit APCR from my last 76L Sherman. Better! (8:4 on the amour balance, though the

Germans had an immobilized Panther in a great position and the antitank gun).

In the burning building, my isolated heroes in L9 played chicken with three German half-squads and the flickering flames and blazes as we all wanted to be last man standing and in control before the flames consumed the entire building. Amazingly, all three German units had to leave due to blazes, where my guys hung in choking on their mere flames. Sweet, as that was 10 victory locations for me!

So, it was not so bad at this point, but then of course my dice started to play up, I made a couple of errors and it all went ugly very fast.



*Situation on the western side at game end: my first platoon of reinforcements is shattered and broken in K13, the other platoon is suffering hard under the perfectly erred 100mm OBA in I10. My last hope for building capture progress on this flank, the stack under the blaze in L9, has just broken and routed from a simple NMC failure in the WP in hex K10.*



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## The beginning of the end

One of my reinforcing infantry stacks, which I neglected to split up, (dumb, dumb, dumb), ended up in an accurate 100mm harassing fire in the open in D9 - Zeb couldn't find that second red card for me again and so the mission came in bang on target. Stuck in the centre hex of the harassing fire barrage, my guys were unable to move anywhere and ended up decimated. That was **huge** and a massive loss that could have at least been partially avoided. Then, to pour salt on that wound, he tried to correct it, erred, but of course it came in perfectly anyway on my second reinforcement platoon who were lined up at the wall in hexes H9 - I10 - J10. These boys were hung out there, unable to get across the open ground between them and buildings in J8 and K8 as they (again!) couldn't find their smoke grenades in time, and their supporting armor had depleted their smoke assets. It was all starting to assume the shape of the pear again.

Only one squad got whacked by the OBA this time, but again, my units were sitting in it with nowhere to go and that was looking extremely grim. Both sets of reinforcements were now effectively interdicted before they had even had a chance to get into a building. Next up in the tale of woe, my slightly toasted die-hard 8-1, 6-6-7 and MMG assault moved into a smoke-shrouded hex (K9) prior to advancing into the buildings in hexes J8 - K6. Here they (of course) both became broken from a lousy NMC and were forced to rout back to the still-smoldering L9 refuge. Finally, after another Sherman was destroyed and most of my smoke rounds from my surviving tanks were used up, Zeb's sniper twice fell onto my 9-2 in Q8 and the 2 squads with him - the first one grazed him, the second one nailed right through the heart: a brutal and soul-destroying combination.



*The eastern half of the board at game end. The immobilized Panther and MkIV and antitank gun support dominate the open level 1 plateau with burning evidence of their power everywhere. My 9-2 and troops are offboard, having just been shot through the heart, but the sniper marks his old position. My assault in the middle has ground to a halt and is leaderless with nowhere to go.*

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## No more - I give up!

At that point I called it quits. All my reinforcements had effectively been neutralized for this scenario and many were casualty reduced and broken, my best leader was dead, my central attack had fizzled out as it ran head first into the Panther-reinforced stone building defense around the crossroads, and I was now down to seven tanks to four mobile German ones. However, due to the immobilized Panther on the board edge in hex EE7 and the covering antitank gun, the whole eastern third of the game area was effectively closed off to me. I had suffered a net loss of four buildings in this scenario with no prospect of getting them back and my smoke assets were dwindling very fast.

Even worse, my reinforcing infantry for the final scenario would take at least two turns to get into position in a game that could potentially be a maximum of only four US player turns in duration, as I again would be moving second. They would also have to face the full wrath of Zeb's additional OBA during this approach which could see pretty much everything, yet with little to no support from my own OBA which could see almost nothing of relevance. Hypothetically, at the end of this CGS, I was possibly up to 60-70 CVP overall which was still only about 50% of what I needed to win the overall CG and I hadn't significantly attrited Zeb's infantry at all - maybe a single squad in this second scenario. I know a lost cause when I see it and this was a lost cause all right.

## Why I Lost

Well, obviously Zeb is better at this game than me!

But there were too many small mistakes with the tank handling: overly aggressive when caution was required, cautious when aggression was needed and still not a firm enough handle on tank tactics. I know how they should be played, I know the mechanics of how to play them, sometimes I even know when they should be applied, but I am still failing the combined arm test at present and need to work harder. The biggest mistake I made was the stupid stacking under the OBA, but that was the pressure of the timetable to get things done and to get to places quickly overtaking the common sense need to disperse. Other mistakes were smaller but just as critical - I fully accepted that I was going to burn a couple of tanks through burning vehicle reconnaissance, but I didn't help myself with a failure to use smoke mortars as often as possible and forgetting to pop smoke grenades at critical moments, and I was a little unlucky with Zeb finding some low-odds shots to burn a couple of the tanks, but I of course left them there to be hit in the first place! There are still too many little niggly mistakes in my play that an opponent of the quality of Zeb will maximize on every time and punish me to the fullest!

I think this is a great, fun experience that is a little bit different from anything else we have in ASL. Both sides are presented with some unique challenges - the Germans with making the most of the low quality of their infantry and using their armor carefully to maximize the damage to the US. For the US player, it is possibly a sterner examination - it is critical to husband your infantry forces as you will need every single half-squad, but you must take care with the tanks, too; yet if the opportunity presents itself, try and mercilessly punish any careless Germans who have stuck their necks out too far. Clearly, the German OBA is a massive threat and the Panthers are key counters in this game, but the antitank gun is also a major asset for the Germans. If any of these anti-Sherman assets go down early to a lucky shot or malfunction then the German task gets harder, but it's still very achievable, especially with all the other antiarmor potential present in the German OB.

The US has their key units too - the 9-2 (especially in Scenario 1 when it can be combined with the hero) can always unhinge a defense and is desperately needed here to make up for the shortage of infantry. Any 76L Sherman with a 10-2, APCR and a gyro is an awesome combination, but I wonder if the American's most important asset is really the 105\*mm support tank? This is a beast that can really assist the sorely pressed infantry assault and is something which needs to be looked after carefully. There will definitely be some testing PMC moments for the US in this one, but I do believe they have been given the tools to achieve their task; it's the task of getting them into the right place at the right time which is so challenging.

## Summary

After an hour for setup, we played the first CG scenario over approximately 4 hours which, considering it turned into only a 4.5 turn scenario, was quite slow for the two of us, but we both knew the importance of a lot of the moves and we wanted to get them right. The second scenario which ended on turn 4 took approximately 3 hours since everything was already set up. I think the whole CG could be done, just barely, in a single long-day's gaming assuming that the German defense was pre-prepared. This is a great day of gaming and MMP is to be highly commended for producing something that captures the distilled essence of a bigger campaign game but can be played by those whose gaming time is limited by real life - nice job MMP!

A great concept, hugely enjoyable and much fun, but it needs to be recognized that this mini CG can be very unforgiving if played poorly by either side - you can easily see that there may be some early-finish American-loss blowouts when the tank force gets shredded and the infantry are butting their heads against a stone wall under a rain of fire. On first playing, the more experienced player should almost certainly take the US side as they are the



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more fragile force and probably need a little more finesse to get it right on the first attempt. However, for those still learning or trying to perfect their combined arms skills, then the Americans are a hell of a lot of fun to play, and even if you do go down in fiery flames, the game warrants replaying just to try and crack the conundrum! Give this a go - you won't be disappointed.

## 2009 Texas ASL Team Tournament Preview



### Rick Reinesch

Wondering what to ask for Father's Day this year? How about a trip to Austin to play a ton of ASL? The planning for this year's tournament is well underway, and it is not too early to put in for that vacation time and plan to make the trek to Austin the end of June. This year promises to be just as much fun as last year, so start making those plans now to attend the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Texas ASL Team Tournament in Austin, TX, June 25-28, 2009. Last year we had 42 players from points all over the country participating. The website has been updated with the latest and greatest information on tournament activities, the hotel and registration fees. Make sure and preregister; you never know what goodies I will come up with for those doing so.

As in previous years, Thursday's games will be informal gaming, with those games counting toward the Major Johnson award. On Friday morning, we will launch the formal phase of the tournament where we will track wins and losses over the weekend to crown the team and individual winners. Our tournament runs an open format; players are free to match themselves with anyone, and play any mutually agreeable scenario. As the TD, I seed the teams so that every team has an equal chance at the top prize. And while we call ourselves a team tournament, individual play is still paramount. We offer plenty of individually based prizes, from the individual champion and runner-up, to the Major Johnson award given to the individual playing the most ASL over the weekend, and any number of mini-tourneys.

Registration this year is \$36 for the Thursday-Sunday gaming, \$31 for Friday-Sunday; and \$21 for Saturday only. Your entrance fee includes participation in any Mini-Tournaments should you desire to enter. Make sure to meet the June 11th registration deadline to avoid the \$10.00 surcharge for late registration. As with last year, we are at the La Quinta Inn-Round Rock and have a fantastic room rate of \$65/night.

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

## Favorite Scenarios: Jerry Simmons



### (SP115) The Five Pound Prize

A mixed British force of elite and 1<sup>st</sup> liners defends the buildings along the stream of board 22 with a couple of 57L AT and a Carrier C. The SS are slightly outnumbered in infantry but are backed by three PzIVH. Both the British and Germans get armor reinforcements. There are enough VC buildings on either side and either end of the stream and the German has two board edges to enter from.

My playing of this one ended up with my British wining but hanging on by their fingernails.

### (ITR1) Debacle at Sung Kiang

This one is a 1937 action that has the Japanese trying to wrest control of 11 buildings from an equally strong but lower quality Chinese force. Both sides have "armor" in the form of armored cars, all with 0 armor. The Japanese have some open ground to cover before reaching the buildings they need, but once in the buildings they outclass half the Chinese force. My Japanese started well, using smoke to reach the first buildings relatively unscathed. However, by game end they had spent themselves and hadn't managed to take enough buildings.

### (ITR4) Clash at Ponyri

What can I say? It's a large east front combined arms slugfest. A strong German force, with everything from FTs to OBA, tries to take five buildings and a water tower from a dug-in and fortified Russian that receives reinforcements over three turns. The water tower is the only level 2 structure which makes for a good spot for the Russian OBA observer. Even though my Russians pounded the Germans with OBA in the central woods, my left flank was rolled up and it quickly went down hill from there.

### (MP18) Marsh Madness

I enjoyed the uniqueness of this one in that the entire Russian OB sets up HIP. The German needs 10 VP that



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come from bridges, pillboxes, and trenches. A single German PzIVC provides armor support but has its movement severely restricted by the terrain. With stealthy, HIP Russians about, the German needs to be mindful of where he steps lest he get ambushed and wiped out in CC. After managing to immobilize the German AFV in the middle of the woods with the ATR, my Russians were slowly hunted down to a loss.

## (SP150) The Legrew Maneuver

A combined arms German force is trying to exit 26 EVP with a strong American force only one step behind them. German dummy counters will keep the American guessing on entry and after that the chase is on. Does the German stand and fight, risking being cut off and unable to exit? This one has good replay value. My two playings of this one were completely different with one American Win and a German loss, but both were a hoot.

## (FT87) Viva la Muerte

This one's board configuration is reminiscent of *Cream of the Crop*, another great scenario. Spanish SS units with heavy TD support are trying to take seven buildings from a Russian with ordnance and armor support. The German can't be careless with his AFV since they'll all be recalled as soon as he loses three. On my second playing of this one I managed to knock out both Hetzers by the end of turn one. Excellent handling of his armor, and my rolling an 8 when I needed a 7 to kill a third AFV, kept the German armor in the game through the end.

## (J18) The Pinnacle

I played this one in the process of learning cave rules. A strong combined arms American force needs to take a building and a couple of hill hexes at the back of the playing area. The Japanese has a mixed-quality force aided by good fortifications and ordnance, along with every trick the Japanese can pull in 1945. A patient American will carry the day, provided he survives the vicious fight at the end when confronted with the Japanese in their caves. My Japanese were brutal on the American armor, which did little to stem the relentless American mob swarming the VC hills.

## (AP34) Bocage Blockage

This little new comer is already a favorite for me with its tournament size and replay value. It's the first scenario to use the middle-of-the-board geomorphic capability of the

AP4 boards. A small German infantry force is trying to keep the American from controlling 3 stone buildings. The German has bocage and an American CVP cap on his side. The American adds two of four available support groups to his starting OB, which increases the replay ability of this scenario tremendously. I've lost this one as the Americans and won as the Germans and still don't have a favorite side.

## This Happened to Me

Bill Dorre and I started to play *With Tigers On Their Tail*. My first shot from a Tiger (DR12) malfed the gun. The ensuing rally phase saw the gun become disabled (dr6), forcing the Tiger to be recalled. So by turn 2, I was now left with only one Tiger, with 12 T-34s of varying stripe yet to enter. – *John Hylar*

This happened to me at the Oklahoma City Thunderbird ASL Tournament. I was playing Paul Hornbeck in *First Threat* (ABTF4) in the first round of the championship single elimination bracket. The German SS win if they have more Good Order units or mobile AFVs in the exit area (the last two hex rows) than the British can inflict in CVP by the end of the scenario. Paul and I had a seesaw game with cold dice on my part in the first half of the scenario and hot dice near the end as the SS were poised to flood into the exit area. Timely entry by the British 9-2 and a couple of heroes really helped stem the push.

In the top half of the final turn, the Germans had managed to get into the two-story single-hex house in the corner of the victory area with a squad, 8-1 and MMG on level 1; a squad, 8-0 and LMG on the ground level; a tank in bypass and another tank in an adjacent hex for a total of 19 points. The British had been able to amass 11 CVP to that point. I had a squad, the 9-2 and both heroes (one with a DC) in a single story building adjacent to the German infantry. The British would have to turn around 9 points in order to pull out a victory.

The squad and 9-2 prepped to no effect. Going to the movement phase, my intrepid British hero assault moved out of the building to toss his DC through the ground floor window at the German infantry. And that was the signal for the Germans to release all hell. Paul started out with a 8 up 3 from across the street - no effect; a 16 up 3 from the ground level of the building - 1MC passed; a 20 up 2 from level 1 that wounded the hero. He passed his wound severity (just a flesh wound) and gamely continued on. The tank in bypass opened up with a 16 up 3 from its machine guns - no effect. The MA shot missed. Intensive fire: hit,

# Banzai!!

but the British in fine stiff upper lip fashion passed his MC. Paul was almost out of shots, just one tank left to fire. Paul held off. Into the building went the DC.

Our British hero staggered back to his building with the 9-2. Just as he reached it, the second tank opened up (Def. Final Fire), sticking the MA through a window and letting loose a round. The resulting explosion fatally wounded the DC hero just as he reached the front door, and broke the 9-2 and the squad inside(Aaagh!). Now the only British left standing in the building was the second hero. Carrying on in the fine tradition of the British 6th Airborne, a single SMC was left to try and save the day.

The DC went off in the Advance Fire Phase and broke all of the SS on the ground level, coming so close to ruffling the building. But that gave me back only 3 of the points I needed. The routing German infantry vacated the ground floor, leaving just the tank in bypass in the hex. The British hero advanced into CC. I started out with a base CCV of 2, -1 hero mod, and -1 for street fighting. I had a chance for a Gammon bomb, rolled, and got it! Add an additional -2. All I needed was a 6 or less on the CC roll against the tank, and the 6 points it was worth, to pull this game out. As the hero moved out of the building to place the Gammon bomb on the tank the damn thing went off prematurely, a la *Saving Private Ryan*, scattering little bitty pieces of British Tommy all over the tank. Yep, rolled a 12. – Rick Reinesch

## Club Notes

### Biweekly Lunch Gathering

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

### Game Days

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

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

## Next Issue

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