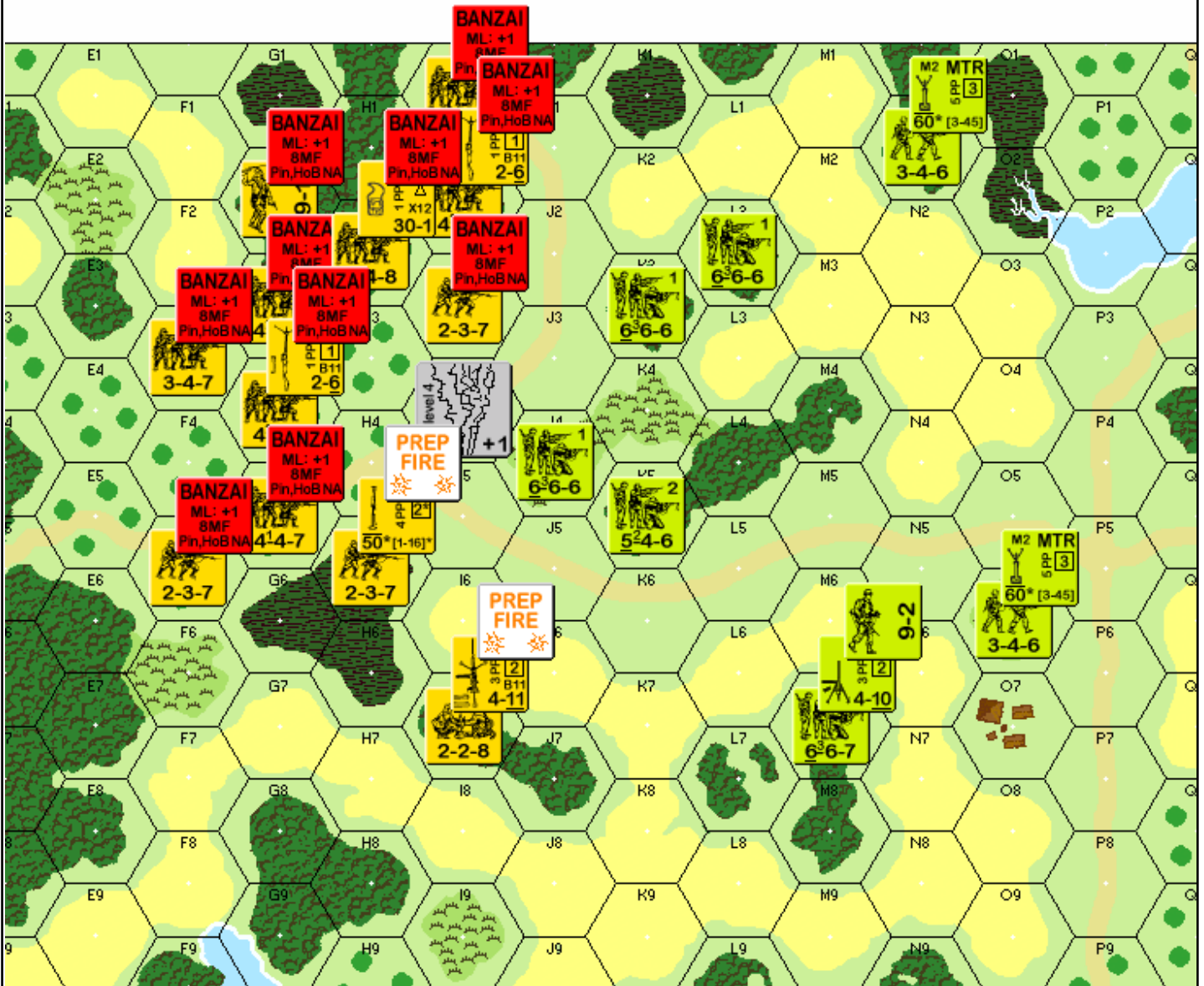


Banzai!!!



The Newsletter of the Texas ASL Club

May, 2009

Volume 14, Number 2

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

In this Issue

Editor's Foxhole	2
Steel From the Sea	2
A Critical (Hit) Issue	5
2009 Texas ASL Team Tournament	6
Scenario Analysis: The Meat Grinder	7
Tactics Tip	14
Scenario Analysis: Up Inferno Hill	14
Favorite Scenarios	22
Turning Fifty	23
Turning Fifty	25
Club Notes	25
Next Issue	26

Editor's Foxhole

Rick Reinesch



Here at *Banzai*, we are holding something of a celebration. You see before you the 50th edition of this newsletter. To see it from its humble beginnings when we started it back in 1995 to where we are today, hopefully like ASL, we have improved with age. To have been able to cover this hobby, recounting the exploits of so many games, profiling players, covering tournaments, spinning tales, and (hopefully) giving good advice, has been both an honor and a privilege from all involved over the years.

So I thought I'd take my shot at editing an issue of *Banzai*, just to see what all of the fun was about. (Yeah, right). One doesn't realize the amount of effort that goes into pulling one of these together until actually trying it. I don't think I'll be quitting my day job any time soon. My hat's off to you, Matt. Considering the fact that this is the 50th edition of this newsletter makes your dedication, contributions, and efforts over the years just that much more impressive.

In celebration of the 50th issue of *Banzai!!*, we've pulled together some great articles. There a couple of fine pieces from Zeb Doyle on Naval OBA and Infantry Target Type Critical Hits. We follow that up with Matt's classic scenario analyses of a couple of *Action Pack 5* scenarios. I have a current rundown of the upcoming Team Tournament (and I expect to see all you folks there the end of June), and we finish it all off with some of those tips and tidbits that have made us famous.

So here is to the next 50 issues. With all of the fresh faces entering the game, fantastic HASLs, Action Packs, quality Third Party Products, and extensions to the core modules coming out, the future for this newsletter and for the future of ASL looks very bright indeed.

Steel From the Sea



Zeb Doyle

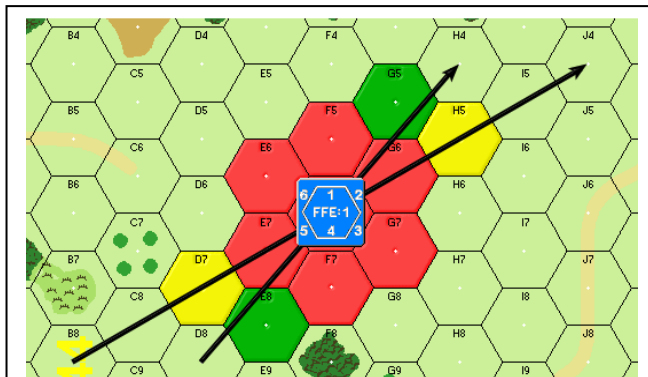
A large part of what makes ASL a great game is how complete and accurate it is. Virtually every piece of battlefield equipment used in WWII is represented in the game and the results are reasonably close to history. With options ranging from the ubiquitous MG42 to the esoteric Sturmtiger, the representation of naval artillery in ASL may seem to border on excess but with the navy making an appearance in such vital battles as the siege of Leningrad, Utah Beach, and Tarawa (to name but a few), most players will eventually find themselves using ship-to-shore gunfire. Luckily, ASL integrates the navy into the game quite well, and the results are just as complete and accurate as land-based artillery. This is a brief summary of just how Naval OBA (NOBA) differs from its land-based cousin.

The most obvious difference with NOBA is how powerful it is. Land-based OBA generally ranges from 60mm to 200mm in size, while the smallest available NOBA module is 100mm with various larger sizes all the way up to 400mm being possible. The larger guns even put the famous Katyusha rockets to shame and may send many of us scrambling to review the C.7 Heavy Payload rules. However, NOBA does fall short in the area of versatility. Generally, most nationalities can fire only HE Concentrations, although U.S. modules sized between 120mm and 150mm can also fire WP Concentrations. In addition, any NOBA module can fire IR, and if sized at 150mm or more, can even fire an IR while engaged in an HE/WP mission (G14.672). Still, the ability to place an IR while firing HE pales in comparison to land-based artillery's options such as SMOKE and Harassing Fire.

Despite this lack of versatility, NOBA is remarkably effective at its standard mission of dropping high explosives onto the enemy, although it differs in several key ways from conventional artillery. The most important difference is that NOBA has a Line Of Fire (LOF)(G14.62), which traces the path of the NOBA from a predesignated Ocean hex (abstractly containing the ship) through the module's onboard AR/SR/FFE. Unlike normal OBA, it's important to see exactly where the shellfire is coming from because naval guns have a comparatively flat trajectory and, even when the gun is gyrostabilized, the roll of the ship at sea causes an elongated zone of fire. To reflect this in ASL, the Blast Area of a NOBA Concentration contains nine hexes rather than the usual seven (G14.65). As the NOBA LOF is drawn from the predesignated Ocean hex through the AR/SR/FFE, the last hex the LOF crosses as it enters the Blast Area and the first hex the LOF crosses as it exits the Blast Area is also attacked. Since fewer shells hit the extreme ends of the elongation, the two extra hexes are attacked at only half strength (barring a CH), or, if the

Banzai!!

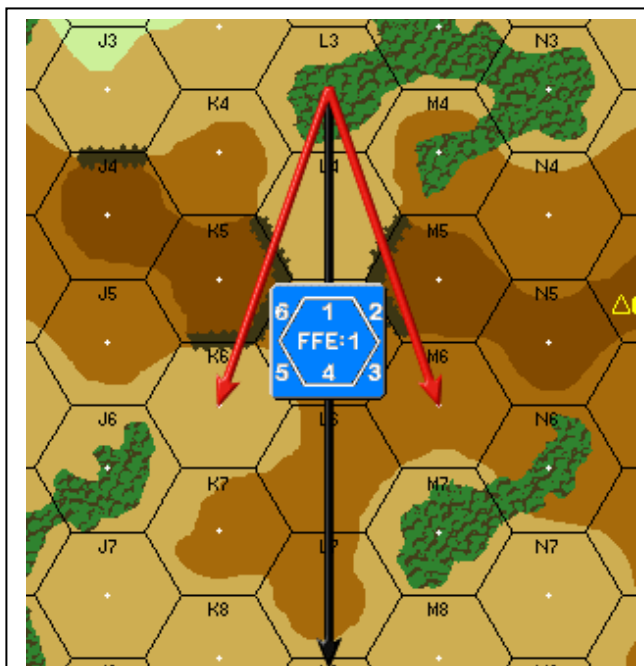
module is 250mm or larger, on the 16FP column with the Heavy-Payload DRM halved, as per C7. (See the example below).



This example shows the two different types of elongated Blast Areas. For purposes of this example, each LOF will be traced from a non-Ocean hex. The red hexes depict a normal seven hex FFE Blast Area and the black lines show two possible NOBA LOFs, which will determine the location of the extra NOBA Blast Area hexes. The first hypothetical LOF is traced from 44B8 to the FFE in F6 and then beyond to J4. As per G14.65, the last hex the LOF crosses as it enters the normal Blast Area and the first hex the LOF crosses as it exits are the extra two hexes that NOBA affects. In the example, those two extra hexes are D7 and H5 and are marked in yellow. Those areas would be attacked at half strength with HE. Another hypothetical LOF has been traced from D8 through the F6 FFE to H4. Here, the two extra hexes are E8 and G5 and are marked in green.

The elongated fire zone is a nice bonus for NOBA users, but the flat trajectory of the shells has some additional ramifications that are not as pleasant. Hitting a defense situated on the far side of a hill has long been a challenge for artillery officers, but for naval gunners it is simply impossible. In ASL terms, these areas are called a Reverse Slope (G14.66), and are defined by tracing the NOBA LOF to every hex in the Blast Area. A Reverse Slope exists when a hex being hit by NOBA has a preceding (adjacent) higher-level hill hex intersecting the LOF. Due to the flat trajectory of naval fire, each hex that is a Reverse Slope is immune to NOBA attack, whether it is HE or WP. Even worse, if an AR/SR is placed or lands in a Reverse Slope location, the entire mission is cancelled. Obviously, this presents a serious challenge to NOBA in hilly terrain, but man-made structures can have the same blocking effect as hills. Any Multi-Story building that is also multi-hex creates Reverse Slope hexes exactly as if the building were a hill of the same full-level height. After considering all those hills and buildings on our ASL maps, it is only a small consolation to learn that an upper building location in a Reverse Slope hex

is immune to NOBA only if it is lower than the hill or building that created that Reverse Slope.



Here is an example of Reverse Slope hexes. For the purposes of this example, the LOF is assumed to originate in L3 and has been traced through the L5 FFE to L8. Normally, the NOBA Mission would affect the FFE hex, all the adjacent hexes, and the two additional NOBA Blast Area hexes L3 and L7, as per G14.65. However, due to the presence of the hills, the LOF must be traced to every hex in the FFE Blast Area. If, in the preceding hex, the LOF crosses a higher-level hill, then the hex being attacked is a Reverse Slope (G14.66) and is immune to attack. In the example, hexes K6 and M6 are Reverse Slopes as they are both lower than the adjacent hill hex that the LOF crosses. Note that L6 would still be attacked as L5 is only equal in height. As a final example, if a Multi-Story building existed in K6, units on level two of the building and higher would still be affected by the OBA, as they would not then be lower than the K5 hill. The entire mission will also be Cancelled if the entire blast area of an FFE is in Reverse Slope hexes.

The last thing that makes NOBA attacks different from land-based artillery is that in some ways it is slower and not nearly as accurate. Perhaps it takes longer to reload the larger caliber naval guns or to readjust the ship between fire missions, but regardless of the reason, once a NOBA mission cycles through to an FFE:C, it cannot be converted to an SR or replaced by a new FFE:1 (G14.671). That may

Banzai!!

May, 2009 Volume 14, Number 2

not sound too serious, but it means every time you have a new mission, even if you want to keep your target hex the same, you must still call in a fresh AR and risk the full Extent of Error, as per C1.3-C1.31. Overall, NOBA is a bit of an ungainly beast compared to land-based artillery. More often than not, an HE Concentration is the only available option, there will often be hexes in the Blast Area that are immune to attack, and sustained fire from multiple missions centered on a single hex is far more difficult. Still, the fact that 400mm NOBA HE works out to be a 36-4 attack means that sustained attacks will quite often be unnecessary!

Now that we have examined the damage NOBA can do, let us turn our attention to the process of actually calling in these powerful attacks. Just like regular OBA, the first step in using NOBA is establishing Radio Contact with an Observer before gaining Battery Access. Normally, this would be an observation plane, an offboard observer, or an onboard leader with a radio or phone. Although NOBA has these three standard types of observers as well, naval warfare is much more complicated and your lowly 6+1 leader will find himself deeply disappointed when he tries to dial up the USS Iowa for assistance.

In fact, naval gunfire is so complicated that onboard observers are limited to specially trained Shore Fire-Control Parties (SFCPs) (G14.61). These highly trained groups are represented by 2-2-7 crews, and are normally restricted to the U.S. and British. To represent their specialized nature, SFCPs are considered Inexperienced for most purposes, possess an inherent radio with a Contact value of 8 and a breakdown value of X12, and are immediately eliminated if the radio ever malfunctions. Historically, naval radios transmitted on High Frequency rather than the more normal UHF or VHF, and therefore had to be grounded to the earth and also required a generator for a power supply. Because of this, the inherent radio is 3PP and cannot be used while the SFCP is a Passenger or Rider. Importantly, however, SFCPs that start onboard are always allowed to set up HIP just as if manning a field phone. Aside from these differences, SFCPs are similar to any other onboard OBA observer. The radio equipment may be a bit more complicated for water-based artillery, but the basic idea of dropping high explosives onto the enemy remains unchanged.

This same observation principle applies to offboard NOBA observers as well (G14.68). Referred to as Shipboard Observers, they must trace their LOS from Level 1 in the same pre-designated Ocean hex as the NOBA LOF, but receive the same C1.63 automatic Radio Contact benefits as any other offboard observer. Here, the more complicated naval fire control technology, in the form of optical range finding equipment and fire-control "computers" actually pays off. While a normal OBA offboard observer is only

accurate on a dr of 1, a Shipboard Observer grants a -1 to the accuracy roll and halves (FRU) the Extent of Error dr. Even better, a Shipboard Observer who manages to place an AR can skip over the SR process entirely and simply place an FFE:1 instead. Although Accuracy and Extent of Error must then be determined as above, this nicely circumnavigates NOBA's major weakness of not normally being able to change from an FFE:C to an SR. Unfortunately, this direct observation is a bit of a double-edged sword; if the ship can actually see its target, it wants to make very sure it is not mistakenly firing elsewhere. To reflect this, Shipboard Observers can only place an AR in or adjacent to a hex with a known enemy unit, and must make an extra chit draw if the Observer knows there is a friendly ground unit within six hexes of the AR. The Shipboard Observer system is not without its flaws, but is very low risk and in a worst case scenario can still provide the enemy with a powerful incentive to remain Concealed.

The last method for directing artillery fire is the Observation Plane, which cannot be described as low risk at all. Here, the OBA and NOBA rules are actually identical and are contained in E7.6: the plane can only be attacked by Heavy AA fire and Aerial Combat, and is considered an Offboard Observer (C1.63), except it can make its Aerial LOS checks from any Friendly Board Edge hex of the owner's choice and this hex can be changed at will. Note that since the observer plane uses Aerial LOS (E7.25), one should find it easy to be able to see almost any non-hidden unit that is not directly behind a full-level-or-higher LOS obstacle. This eagle eye view and almost complete immunity to attack make the observation plane a very tempting option for anyone who has ever lost a radioman to a sniper, or had a field phone with no LOS to the enemy.

However, the observation plane carries with it a few serious drawbacks as well, making the choice between the land-based observer and the eye in the sky far more difficult. First, the plane does not share the automatic Radio Contact that the ground C1.63 offboard observer receives. Failing radio contact can be extremely frustrating, although the fact the radio cannot malfunction is something of a comfort for any pessimist (E7.61, and note the errata on the MMP website about deleting "is subject to malfunction/ repair/ disablement normally and" from lines five and six in E7.6).

Second, as if the finicky radio weren't problem enough, the observer plane must also pass a Sighting TC (E7.3) before it can request Battery Access. This TC can be made against a known or concealed enemy unit anywhere in the planned seven-hex Blast Area of the artillery strike. If there is no enemy unit present, the plane must make the Sighting TC against a hypothetical HIP unit. In these situations, the plane may get some help from C1.6, which states that concealed units in non-concealment terrain and in LOS are always considered Known to observers, although this

wouldn't help spotting any hypothetical HIP units. However, a bad Sighting TC can potentially result in Recall (E7.31) on a DR of 12, which makes the unbreakable radio slightly less exciting, and as per standard artillery rules, any attack against a concealed/HIP unit requires an extra chit draw, although C1.6 will again be of some help here if your opponent is kind enough to leave his concealed units in the open. The thought of having to make Radio Contact rolls, Sighting TCs, and potential extra chit draws is enough to make the risk-averse among us cringe, but an even worse fate awaits the truly unlucky, as any Mistaken Attack (E7.32) resulting from the Sighting TC results in the opposing player taking control of the plane and resolving a Fire Mission against your own troops. Suddenly, the observation plane is looking like a very powerful, but also rather risky, way of calling in those 400mm NOBA shells.

As you can see, each type of Naval Observer has its pros and cons, but barring extraordinarily poor luck, at some point you will have gained Radio Contact. Just as with normal OBA, the next step is to get Battery Access. The only real differences with NOBA are that the Draw Pile is always five black and two red chits regardless of nationality (G14.63), and that any chit that would normally be permanently removed is instead immediately mixed back into the pile. This means that drawing two or more red chits does not result in loss of the NOBA mission, and for anyone who has suffered through an opponent gleefully rationalizing why your Pre-Registered 150mm+ OBA module never fired a single round in a scenario, it is very reassuring to know that your NOBA will never run out of ammunition or be called away to a more critical sector. It may take some time, but NOBA Battery Access is virtually guaranteed. Once gained, a standard AR is placed. It is Accurate on a dr of 2 or less regardless of nationality (G14.64), and NOBA specific modifiers of a +1 drm for Heavy Surf (G13.449) or -1 drm for Shipboard Observers (as above, G14.68) may apply. Interestingly, NOBA can never have Pre-Registered hexes (G14.6), so if the AR is inaccurate, it will initially always have a full Extent of Error unless using a Shipboard Observer.

Inaccurate or not, at this stage you will have gained Radio Contact, Battery Access, and will actually have NOBA on the map. The details of each step are slightly different when compared to land-based artillery, but the process is similar enough that even the lowliest landlubber should quickly feel comfortable calling in broadsides. This opens up a number of new scenario options, from Normandy to the Baltic to the Pacific. Congratulations, and remember to steer clear of those Reverse Slopes!

A Critical (Hit) Issue

Zeb Doyle



I've played a few people lately who didn't quite grasp how Infantry Target Type Critical Hits are handled in ASL. Some were newbies, some were veterans, and so I thought I'd give a shot at explaining this slightly convoluted mechanism. I think misunderstandings arise because it is simple to apply all the Target and Firer-based TH modifiers to the Basic TH number. That is the more natural and intuitive way of doing it since you then immediately know what you need to roll to achieve an effect. However, this is ASL and so anything natural and intuitive is probably wrong...this game is complicated for a reason!

The correct way to handle Infantry Target Type Critical Hits is to find the Basic To Hit number (table C3), add up the Gun and Ammo Type modifiers (table C4) to wind up with the Modified To Hit number. Then tally up all the Firer- and Target-based TH modifiers (tables C5 and C6, respectively), and apply those modifiers to the dice roll, NOT the Modified TH number. This may seem pedantic and meaningless, but just like many other things in this game (like Motion/Non-Stopped, etc.), it can make a huge difference. To repeat, the Firer and Target hit determination modifiers modify the dice roll, not the TH number. (C3.7)

To make this less abstract, let me use an actual game example to show what a huge difference this can make. We know from C3.7 that an ITT CH occurs when the Final DR is less than half the Modified TH number. Remember though that the Final DR is AFTER we apply all those Target and Firer-based modifiers (the modifiers modify the dice roll, not the TH number, remember). This makes a world of difference. OK, example time: once, long ago, I had a 57L antitank gun that only had AP ammo available. My opponent moved a 6-5-8 out of a gully and over a wall into an open ground hex ADJACENT to my gun and in its CA. I think we all agree that at one hex the Basic ITT TH# is 8, and it winds up that that is the Modified ITT TH# as well, and the TH DRM modifiers are:

Case J4 FFNAM/FFMO: -2

Case L Point Blank Range: -2

Total DRM modifiers: -4

We'll stop our example here for a quick side note. Notice the difference between Basic TH number and Modified TH number. The Basic TH number is unchanged from the Modified TH# 99% of the time, but there are a few things that can alter it, especially if you are playing in unusually open terrain like the desert. Referring back to the Gun and Ammo TH table (C4), you will notice that the length and caliber of your weapon (note that the ≤ 57 mm and ≤ 40 mm modifiers are cumulative for calibers less than or equal to

Banzai!!

May, 2009 Volume 14, Number 2

40mm), as well as the use of APDS/APCR and SMOKE, will change the Basic TH number to the Modified TH number. Again, most of these changes mostly come into play at very long ranges and therefore rarely come up. Although it's good to know that your 75LL Panther gains a nice edge when dueling a * gun at 13+ hexes, the main thing to remember is that every single Target- (table C6) and Firer-based (table C5) modifier will modify the DR, not the Modified TH number.

Getting back to our example, the natural, intuitive, and wrong way to do this is the following calculation: Basic 8TH, -4 mods, so need a 12 to hit, CH on a 5 or less. Not bad, but look at the correct calculation:

Modified 8TH, -4 to the DR. Notice the Final TH DRM number is unchanged from the paragraph above; a 12 will still hit the 6-5-8. However, what happens if the dice roll a 7? Since we are subtracting four from the roll, our Final TH roll would be a 3, this is less than half of 8, and therefore a CH. Obviously, the chances of rolling a 7 or less are vastly higher than rolling a 5 or less and this can make a huge difference. In my game, I got the CH and ROF, but the 6-5-8 survived the 4-2 (another CH oddity is that FFNAM and FFMO can apply to both the CH TH and IFT rolls (C3.71)...a rare case of ASL double jeopardy!) and since he spent 6MF in my LOS, he had to sweat out another shot.

This time, I got to add Case N Acquired Target as well, and so there was a total -5 DRM modifier on the shot. Running the math again, you'll notice that a CH occurs on a DR of 8 or less (Modified 8TH, -5 to the roll, means an original 8TH DR is modified to a net 3TH DR). Assuming ROF was kept, and a third shot fired, you would have a -6 modifier, and get a CH on a 9 or less. When you compare that to the wrong way of doing things (Basic 8TH, add 6, need a 14, CH is on a 6 or less), you'll again see a monster difference and that's why this one phrase is so important: the DRM modifiers (tables C5 and C6) modify the dice roll, not the TH number.

OK, that exhausts the usefulness of that example, so I'll just finish up the story by saying that yes, my AT gun got six straight Critical Hits, finally lost rate, IF'd, got a normal hit, and then the totally unaffected 6-5-8 advanced in and killed the crew in CC. I'd like to think that's some type of record.

One other unique characteristic of ITT CHs is that a snakes is not necessarily a critical hit! A snakes on the ITT requires a second, subsequent die roll if the snakes would not have resulted in a CH based on the above process. After rolling an Original TH DR of 2, you must follow that up with a subsequent dr. It will result in a CH if the dr comes up with a 1 or \leq half the Modified TH#. For example, you have a Modified 8TH with DRMs of +2. Based on the process above, if snakes are rolled, this would not be a CH ($2DR + 2DRM = 4$, which is not less than half of 8).

However, a CH would still occur on a subsequent dr of 1 or on a dr less than or equal to 4 (i.e., less than or equal to half of 8).

Let me add just one 'for the reader' example if you are still having trouble. Assume you have an AFV parked behind a 1+5+7 pillbox with a crewed Gun in it. You are at one-hex range, are CE, and have a double acq on the pillbox. Your gun has a base TK number of 15 or higher, so you can fire AP into the pillbox and ignore the NCA TEM (B30.35). Figure out the odds of a tasty gun-destroying CH if you fire AP. Now figure out the odds if you fire HE. Also, calculate the odds doing the math the wrong way. If you want to play with this a bit more, try having the AFV BU or be three hexes away (or both). Getting really crazy, you might remember that the Basic TH number is unmodified 99% of the time, but it can happen; see what happens if you are a * gun firing at 25-30 hexes. Compare that with an LL gun and you will appreciate the Panther just a little bit more!

It is hard for new or experienced players to break away from looking at the dice and thinking they need to roll some number for success. Yes, indirectly this is true but that is not how ITT CHs are determined. Focus on "with my modifiers the end result needs to be X", not "I need to roll Y". The main takeaway from all this is that when doing the math correctly, negative modifiers vastly improve the odds of an ITT CH and positive modifiers make it much more difficult. By doing the math wrong, while it might smooth this process out, it thereby makes the dice the key part of the equation. It might help to remember that when doing the CH process right, skill is emphasized as more important (guys running in the open are in trouble, guys in stone buildings are pretty safe), while luck matters more when doing the calculation the wrong way. And we all know ASL is a game of skill, not luck, right?

2009 Texas ASL Team Tournament



Rick Reinesch

We aren't that far off from the biggest ASL bash of the summer. The planning for this year's tournament is wrapping up nicely and this year's tournament promises to be just as much fun as last year's, so make those plans now to attend the 17th Annual Texas 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 info and the registration fees. Note that the last day to get the great hotel rate is June 5th, so don't delay! And while you are at it, make sure and

Banzai!!

May, 2009 Volume 14, Number 2

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 course of 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 team part of the tourney so that every team has an equal chance at the top prize. Check the website for details on how the team tourney works. Moreover, 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, along with any number of mini-tourneys.

And speaking of minis, I'm excited to announce that the *Opening Assault Mini* will once again be taking place on Thursday! The action this year will be something unique and special, revolving around the invasion of Normandy and the subsequent battles in the hedgerows of northern France in celebration of the 65th Anniversary of this period. This is your chance to experience a small part of this pivotal battle for continental Europe and see if you can survive that fateful day and the days that followed.

All this action is just too big for one mini tournament so we are going to be holding two Thursday minis this year. For the first mini, we are featuring the Critical Hit product *First Wave at Omaha*. This module brings the fury of Omaha to the players in a massive historical module that has three linking maps to recreate Omaha Beach West and portions of Omaha Beach East with *six feet* of running map length. Every detail is there, along with all of the Vierville and Les Moulins draws. You will recreate the scene of the hardest fighting in Normandy and the setting for the opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan*. The expectation is that we will have 4 to 6 players battle on the beachhead all day long. And at the end of the day, we will hold a drawing with one of the participants taking the game home. Join in and experience something truly unique in the world of ASL.

For the other mini, we will be featuring two scenarios, one from last year's *Action Pack 4*, and one from the just recently released Bounding Fire Production's *Beyond the Beachhead 2*. As always players will be paired up, one Axis and one Allied, to remove any issues with scenario balance. Your objective is to do better than the other players of your side, either Allied or Axis. The team with the largest number of points at the end of scenario play will be the winner. It's that simple. We'll be posting the specific scenarios as they are determined.

We will kick off all mini play promptly at 9am Thursday, June 25th. If you are interested in participating in either mini, please contact the Tournament Director (me) directly. We'll post participants for the minis online as they come in. You can find my email address in the Club Notes at the end of this newsletter.

Registration this year is \$36 for all 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. We are at the La Quinta Inn-Round Rock with 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>.

Scenario Analysis: The Meat Grinder



Matt Shostak

Attraction: Asymmetrical adversaries vie for control of a village.

This scenario crept up on me. Certainly not the flashiest of those included in *Action Pack 5*, it looked like yet another tourney-sized short encounter. It wasn't until I played it that I could truly appreciate what an interesting puzzle this scenario can be. I really enjoy it when both sides in a scenario may be evenly matched, but the capabilities of their units are vastly different, which I will call asymmetrical for lack of a better word. Here the Russian defenders have a pair of KV-2s that have very little to fear from the German tanks, being nearly impervious to fire from all angles. However, they are slow and ponderous compared to the panzers, and may therefore have a difficult time destroying their opponents, because they might never be able to really catch them. The Russians also have a powerful 76LL AA gun, a very dangerous weapon on this battlefield. However, on the other side of the lethality spectrum the Russians have an AA truck that, although capable of spraying a lot of lead, is also extremely vulnerable, and their three BT tanks are also quite undermatched against their opponents, the Pz IVEs and PzIIHs.

Victory Conditions: This is a game of points. Each side earns casualty points, and each side also gets 2 points per multi-hex building that it controls. There are 13 such buildings on the map by my count, for a total of 26 points. Three of these are relatively close to the German entry area,

Banzai!!

May, 2009 Volume 14, Number 2

but the others are at some distance away where the Russians can defend them better.

German Advantages: 9-2 leader, Flexible armor, Smoke

German Disadvantages: Time, Difficulty dealing with the KV-2s

The 9-2 leader is certainly a key piece on the board, and in fact may even be the Germans' best weapon against the KV-2s. He will be key to keeping the German attack on schedule by rallying the troops and directing fire from the MMG. The German armor here is actually pretty good, though it's easy to forget because of the daunting presence of the KV-2s, which the German tanks can hardly penetrate from any angle. However, the German tanks are much faster than the KVs, half of them have a very healthy amount of smoke ammunition available, they have good machine guns to hose down Russian infantry, and the PzIIIs have a rate of fire of 2. They are easily superior to the rest of the Russian tank force, which consists of only two BT-7 M37s and one BT-7A. However, time is most definitely not on the attackers' side here. They only have 5 turns to accomplish their mission, so any setback could potentially jeopardize their timetable. Then there's the KV problem. Since they can't easily be killed by direct fire, it may require some time and skill to neutralize them.

Russian Advantages: KV-2s, 76LL AA, HMG

Russian Disadvantages: BT tanks, AA truck, long defensive frontage

It can be fun to watch the Germans try desperately to swarm around a KV-2 with their own tanks, finally managing to score a hit on the flank or rear, only to realize that their shot still needs a pretty darned low roll to penetrate. Meanwhile, you are already planning which of the impudent gnats you will hit with that 152* sledgehammer in the next fire phase. The KV-2s are dominant weapons at this time of the war, if used correctly. The 76LL AA gun is also quite a heavy hitter. With a basic kill number of 16 and a rate of fire of 2, this weapon can wreck any of the German tanks quite easily, and if it catches several of them in its field of fire at once, watch out! The Russians also have an HMG, which might only be a small advantage but one worth noting, since the Germans can only respond with an MMG of their own. A weapon such as this with a rate of fire of 3 can really give some German infantry the business, especially if it catches them in the right kind of terrain. It's not all good news for the Russians, though. Those BT-7 tanks are a big problem, because they are so easy for the Germans to kill and thereby gain a lot of victory points. A good amount of energy will be spent just trying to keep these guys alive for a while. In other situations where their loss does not count directly against the victory total, it may be fine to have some BTs in

your OB, even if they don't survive long. But here they are just giveaway points if you're not careful. The same goes for the truck, which really doesn't want to be here. It's worth 4 points and is easily killed by just about anything. Lastly, the Russians have a relatively long frontage to cover without many units, so they will either have to spread themselves thin, or cede certain buildings, and the points that go with them, to the Germans in order to create a stronger position elsewhere.

Russian Defensive Philosophy and Setup

In order to arrange a viable defense, it is important to look ahead and paint a mental picture, in broad strokes, of how the battle will play out. This is a point scoring contest, and there are 13 buildings worth 2 points apiece. A glance at the map reveals that 3 of the buildings are within easy reach of the Germans near the center of board 56, while the others are rather spread out, almost linearly, along board 49. It is easy to imagine that the German player will want to pick up the easy points afforded by those 3 buildings on board 56 and any others that are left undefended. With only 8 Soviet squads available, it seems that trying to defend everything would allow the enemy to select his targets and overwhelm them piecemeal. In addition, the Germans will be trying to score whatever casualty points they can, and the BTs are relatively easy kills worth 5 points each. The truck is even worth 4 points. Good luck keeping it alive for the entire game. What else are the Germans likely to do? Well, they can't afford to spread themselves too thinly either, as they only have 10 squads against the defenders' 8. They also won't likely want to engage the KVs in a tank battle. The absolute best shot they could generate in such an encounter would be a point blank APCR hit through the rear from one of the 50mm guns of the PzIIIs. That would be an 18 to kill against 8 armor, which isn't bad, however APCR isn't exactly plentiful here with a depletion number of 4. Without APCR, the same shot would be a 13 to kill against 8 armor – nothing to sneeze at, but nothing to count on either. A savvy Russian player should be able to make such shots very difficult to attain, and costly to boot. So chances are the Germans are going to seize the board 56 buildings, and they'll probably assign a good portion of their infantry to this task, because they can step off from there to attack the board 49 buildings, as well. Trying to turn either flank may pay off for the Germans, but it may also eat up a lot of time, too.

So with this in mind how does the Soviet commander array his forces? It seems that a defense anchored in the center is a good idea. If the Germans come straight through the center, then the Soviets should try to bottle them up, slow them down, and make them pay. If they instead try to flank, there ought to be time to reorient the defense to face the attack, and by the time the Germans get around to it they

Banzai!!

May, 2009 Volume 14, Number 2

may have to be slightly more rash because of the ticking clock.

A KV-2 in 49Q10 can be a rock for this defense. Difficult to flank, it dominates the central approaches and threatens infantry and armor alike with the Hammer of Thor. Moreover, if one KV-2 is tough, then how about a pair of them? Placing the other in a spot like 56R10 probably makes it more than twice as hard for the Germans to play their fancy bounding fire swarm games. Once they are secure in the center, you need to find locations for the other key pieces. The truck is a big problem. It's an easy 4 points for the Germans. I suppose you could hide it in a corner somewhere and constantly keep it in Motion, ducking and covering constantly, but that is unsatisfying and, well, wimpy. Besides, its 16 firepower AAMG might actually be useful if it can ever get a shot. With such an unarmored vehicle, the first places to look are behind walls. Walls will make it hull down to direct fire, and at least give it +2 TEM against small arms. It will still likely get quickly killed, but perhaps it will survive long enough to dish out some damage in return. One likely spot is 49K7. From there it can reach out to 56O3, a building that will probably have some German guests before too long, and of course it can hit a few other hexes in that corridor as well. It can also protect the flank of the 49K9 stone building with fire out to 56H1. It should be set up with its VCA facing the gully behind it for a covered escape route if things get too hot.

The 76LL AA gun is the ace up the Russians' sleeve. It could almost win the scenario by itself. A basic kill number of 16 should be proof against all the German armor. The best the Germans have is 6 armor factors, and that only through the front hull. Indeed, if this gun can bag two German tanks early it could put the Germans in a 12 casualty point hole right off the bat, a deficit that could be very difficult to overcome in the time allotted. This weapon is not to be wasted. There are certainly plenty of places to locate it, as there are concealment locations all over the map. That's the good news. The bad news is that there aren't many places with really broad fields of fire. So you'll have to be content with a decent spot and take what kills you can. Just remember that it cannot set up in a building, and if set up in an Open Ground hex it would lose HIP easily to infantry within 16 hexes with line of sight. Possible locations for this weapon are 49H10, J10, L10, N10, 56O1, or 49T10, V10, X10. Others could easily be imagined as well. I would love to be able to pull off a ruse with this gun to catch the German PzIIIs with their pants down. It might go something like this: the BTs sally forth and park somewhere where they look vulnerable, but while the 76LL guards their backs. The German player, greedy for easy points, enters his PzIIIs to attack them from the flanks or rear. Once all 3 have parked, the 76LL opens up and smashes their petty dreams. That all sounds wonderful, but I suspect it would be very difficult to pull off in

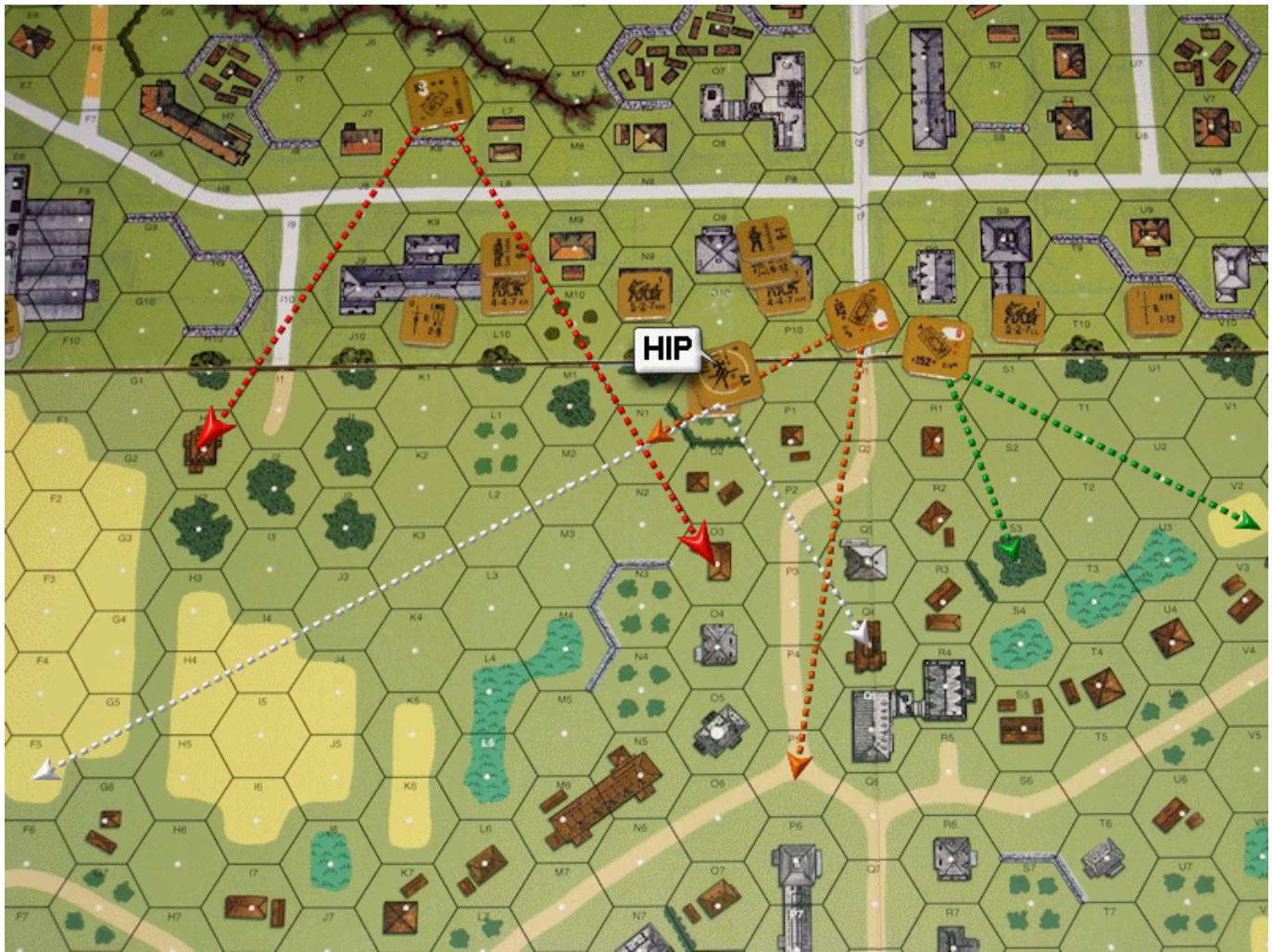
practice. Still, it would be glorious and well worth an entry in the *Style Points* section of this newsletter.

Now, what can be done with the BTs? I've denigrated them so far, but are they completely useless? As with the truck, I think it's unmanly to simply hide them, forever scooting around, trying only to stay alive. Moreover, it's probably unproductive. They just need to be given a role that suits them. By themselves they are a poor AFV matchup, especially against the PzIIIs, but in conjunction with the KV-2s and the other Russian defenders, they can stiffen the defense. Isolated Russian AFVs are relatively ineffective, but together they can act as a force multiplier. So, what should they do when they enter? I think the best thing for them is to drive and park somewhere close to the KV-2s. There they can protect somewhat the backsides of the behemoths from frisky panzers, and the KVs in turn can protect them as well. It is doubtful that the KV-2s can protect them from all angles immediately, but just being close is a help. Consider this situation: suppose a panzer moves against one of more of the BTs from outside its covered arc, and remains out of sight of the protecting KVs. What can the Russian do? The threat of a bounding fire kill against the BTs is grave, especially at close range. For one thing, the BTs can shoot back, but they could also kick into motion (if they can make a successful motion attempt) and change their covered arcs for a quick escape next turn. This may make them considerably more likely to survive, because in the next turn a KV could start up and lumber over to face the German tank, which would likely be distracted from its initial quarry when it sees the big bully coming, and may very well kick into motion itself, pop smoke, and run like crazy. Another advantage of putting the BTs in the center close to the KVs is that they'll also be close to the Russian infantry, which may also offer some protection from rampaging panzers. There is an ATR available, for example, and the best it could do against a PzIII is a point blank hit in the rear hull, which would be a 9 to kill against 3 armor factors. Such a shot is difficult to arrange, but the chance may arise if the panzers get very aggressive in the Russian backfield chasing BTs. The village terrain also affords many street fighting opportunities for the Soviet infantry.

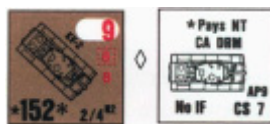
In the sample setup (see picture 1) most of the Russian infantry is positioned to hold the ground in the center and support their tanks (which in turn support them as well). Naturally, the 9-1 is teamed with the HMG and will try to put the hurt on some German infantry as much as possible. Usually I consider it a no-brainer to exchange for a Commissar whenever possible, and in this scenario I think that is especially true. Sure, the Commissar may hand some points to the Germans if the Soviet infantry should prove too cowardly, but in such a short scenario, with casualty points at a premium and pretty good chances of suffering rout failures due to AFVs in the rear areas, being able to

rally quickly is crucial. A couple of squads are deployed to the flanks to slow down the German rush to seize those

buildings.



Picture 1. A sample Russian setup, showing the fields of fire for the AA truck with dotted red arrows. The 76LL AA gun is hidden, and covers the wide field all the way out past F5. It could even turn to cover the center of town toward P2 or even S1 if necessary. The KV-2s dominate the center like a pair of male lions guarding their pride. The 9-1/HMG/4-4-7 will try to keep German infantry away from the 76LL and the KV-2s.



KV-2

Mission: Intimidation

Tactics: Let the Germans come to you. If the tanks won't play, treat the infantry to a 152mm facial. Be the rock around which the rest of the defense can rest. (See commentary related to pictures 2-4)



GAZ-4M-AA

Mission: Try to accomplish something positive before getting killed. Cover the 49K7-56O3 and 49K7-56H1 corridors with fire, then escape into the gully.

Tactics: Take good shots if available, and run if necessary.



76LL

Mission: Pain

Tactics: Try to hold fire if it looks like waiting might put more than one panzer in your sights, but it might be necessary to be satisfied with just one. After that, use HE against German infantry.



9-0 Commissar

Mission: Rally the troops. Or else.

Tactics: Appeal to their love of Mother Russia and the Great Stalin.

Banzai!!



9-1, HMG, 4-4-7

Mission: Keep German infantry at bay, and away

from the KVs.

Tactics: Choose good shots, and roll low.



Picture 2. Avoid the temptation to push the KV-2s forward to engage in terrain with a lot of escape routes. Here the KV-2 commander thinks he has caught some Germans with their pants down. But this promising situation ...



Picture 3. ...can quickly turn into this...



Picture 4. ...or worse yet, it might even turn into this. The KV-2 was unlikely to hit the German tanks in the Advancing Fire Phase due to the large positive modifiers (+5 for NT type in bounding fire, +1 more for buttoned up). The panzers then smother it with smoke, and their ace, the 9-2, leads his band of renown to glory.

German Attack Plan

As mentioned above the Germans don't have a lot of time in this scenario, and obviously they want to pluck the low-hanging fruit off the victory point vine whenever possible. If the Russians do not guard the flanks at all, it may prove worthwhile to send a small force, perhaps even only a half squad, to grab some buildings. However, with this Russian setup there appear to be guards on the flanks, so it would require a bit more force to take them. Instead, the Germans will focus on a drive right through the center, counting on smoke from the tanks, the 9-2's leadership, and the fighting spirit of the landsers to carry the day (see picture 5). The illustration shows Germans in their positions after the first turn, assuming they all make it unmolested. The Pz IVs will try to cover the KVs with smoke, which should allow the infantry to get up close and eventually kill them or drive them away. These tanks will also try to find spots to put direct fire on the Russian infantry, without exposing themselves to the KVs. One advantage to fighting through the center of town is that, should the KVs come forward to try to bring the fight to the panzers, the German tanks have many options to pop smoke, go into motion, and change covered arc to escape through a blind area almost immediately because there is so much cover available. The tankers have to be very careful, however, to avoid parking more than one tank in the likely field of fire of the 76LL, which could put a serious damper on German hopes for adding this little bit of lebensraum to the Reich. So they will stay separated as much as possible until the deadly gun is revealed. The German player must almost resign himself to losing at least one tank to this piece. It is certainly possible that the infantry could neutralize it before it gets

any targets, but that is often a slow process and it may occur too late in the scenario for that to do much good. So the Germans must strike the right balance between

aggressiveness and caution, and it's difficult to say in advance precisely what that balance may be.



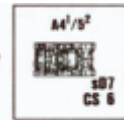
Picture 5. An example German attack. The Pz IVs have taken up conservative positions such that if the 76LL appears, it will probably only bag one of them. From these positions they plan to fire smoke into P1, Q1, and R1 to cover the infantry as it advances toward the center of town. The platoon on the far right led by the 8-1 is aiming to turn the Soviet flank from the 49W9 building area.



PzIV E

Mission: Leverage the infantry assault with smoke, high explosive, and machine guns.

Tactics: Avoid the KVs if possible, and concentrate on the Soviet infantry. If the KVs sally forth, pop smoke, kick into motion, and turn to face a quick escape route. If you cannot get into motion, smother the KV in smoke during the next prep fire phase.



PzIIIH

Mission: Hunt the BTs and score some points. Support the infantry assault, and if

necessary as a last resort angle for a rear shot with APCR against the KVs.

Tactics: Use bounding fire to come after the BTs from the sides and rear. Overrun Russian infantry if the opportunity presents itself. Consider using VBM freeze against infantry if it can help the assault forward.

Banzai!!



9-2

Mission: Lead the assault.

Tactics: Rally troops, direct MMG fire, and close assault a KV if smoke cover is available.



4-6-7

Mission: Building control, destruction of enemy infantry.

Tactics: Fire and movement.

Conclusion

This design presents a very interesting tactical puzzle in a small package, easily playable in a few hours. It is fun as well as uncomplicated from a rules perspective. Both players have to show some tactical skill, however, to get the most out of their forces and have a decent chance to win. I really like the uneven capabilities in the armor battle. It seems to me that each side has good options and fair chances. Give it a try.

The Numbers Grinder

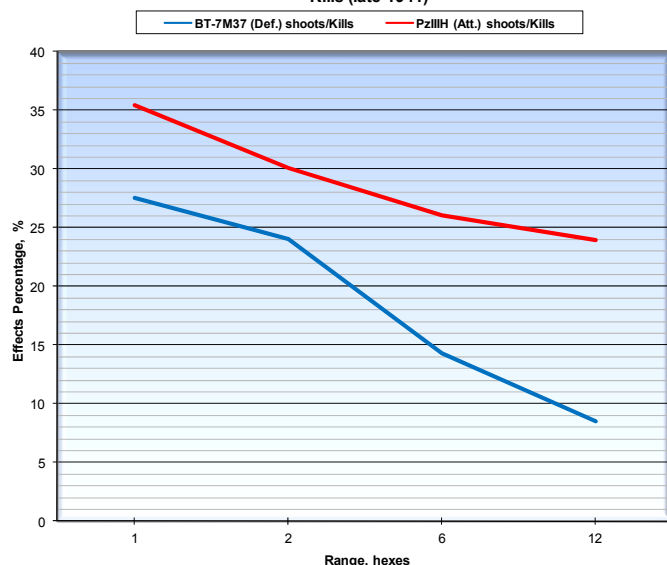
To illustrate just how underwhelming the BT-7 M37 is in its matchup against the PzIIIH, I decided to run them through the tank battle simulator code that I've written, and used in previous issues of this newsletter. In this simulator, I run a large number of iterations (usually about ten thousand). The case that I consider is when the attacker tank moves into the defender tank's line of sight, and stops. The defender will fire, using APCR / APDS if available, and then AP, until it either knocks out the opponent or runs out of rate. Then, if able, the attacker will return fire. The

simulation stops there though. It does not play through subsequent player turns. The results are tallied for each tank playing the role of attacker and defender, at all range levels on the fire chart. It is assumed that both tanks are in each other's covered arcs. The results can also account for BU / CE status, and hull down status as well. Here it was assumed both tanks are buttoned up, and neither are hull down.

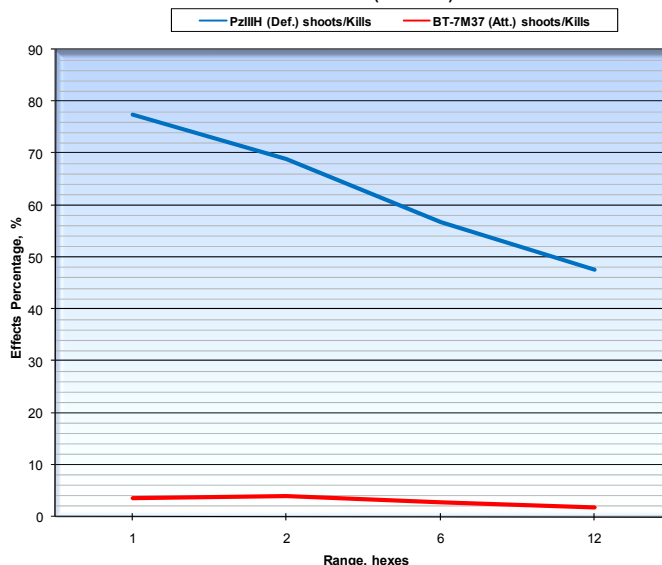
I'm only showing results at ranges under 13 hexes, as it is very unlikely in this scenario for any shots to be tried at beyond that range. Here it is quite easy to see the superiority of the PzIIIH. Even if the PzIIIH moves right up to point blank range against the BT-7, it still has a better chance of killing its enemy than of being killed itself (35% to 28%). The gap only widens at longer ranges. This is what better armor, a better gun, better rate of fire, and the possibility of APCR will do for you. Yet in this action the German tanks will probably come at the BTs from outside their covered arcs, which would lessen the defender's chances but not affect their own chances very much. Moreover, the panzers could go CE to further boost their odds a bit, and one of them has an armor leader. Going toe-to-toe with the panzers is clearly not a winning formula for the BTs.

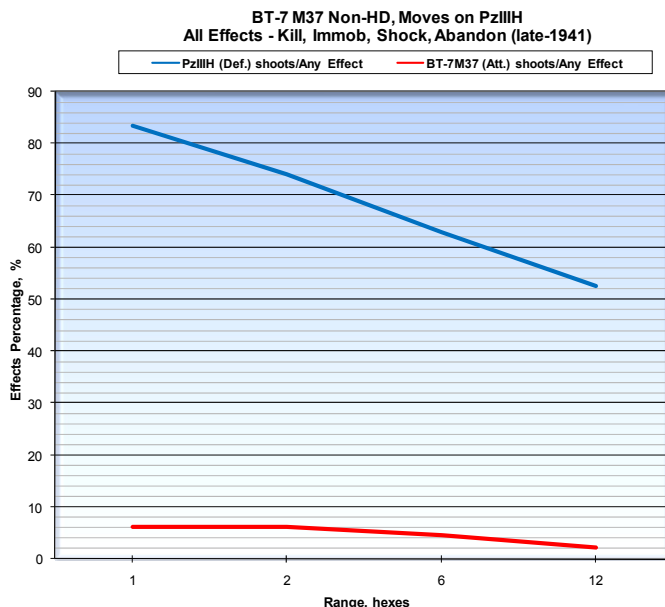
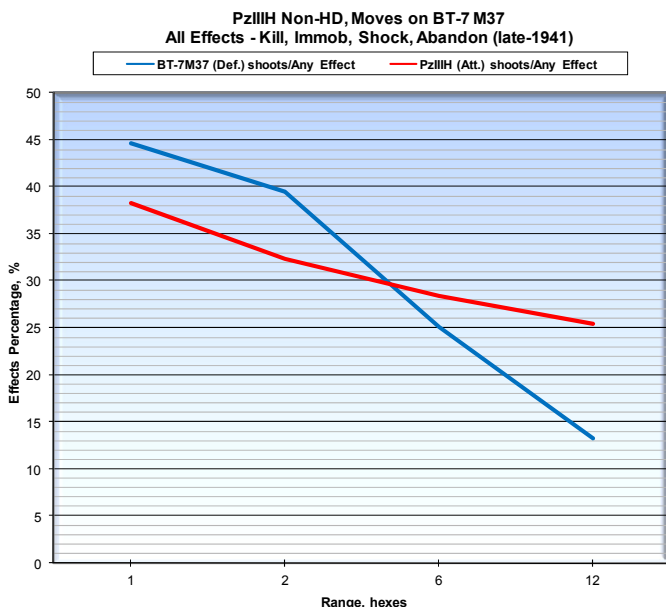
The numbers get really bad for the BTs if instead of letting the panzers come to them, they attack the panzers (although you should keep in mind that this assumes an attack through the front rather than the sides and rear). The BTs hardly have a chance at all if they are the ones pressing the attack through the front of their Teutonic opponents. Not having radios makes them even less flexible and thus hampers such tactics anyway.

PzIIIH Non-HD, Moves on BT-7 M37
Kills (late-1941)



BT-7 M37 Non-HD, Moves on PzIIIH
Kills (late-1941)





Tactics Tip

Rick Reinesch



There are situations in a game when a very deadly defender's Gun is in a key position, stopping you from advancing your forces. You would like to take the Gun out, or put hindrances in front of it to reduce its ability to reach out and kill your units. While the following tactic is very situationally dependant -- for example, you would need to consider the consequences if under a CVP cap -- it can be very effective at neutralizing an enemy Gun. Get some hindrances in front of that Gun by sacrificing a halftrack to attack the Gun directly. Force the Defender to commit to destroying the vehicle to keep the Gun from being overrun by the halftrack, or at the very least from being frozen in hex. Perhaps the attack will use up the Gun's ROF allowing other units greater maneuver, or since halftracks are normally thin-skinned, you could hope that any hit will brew up the halftrack creating a smoke hindrance. You would need to plan the halftrack's approach so that if it were brewed up it would be in a place to provide the most beneficial smoke hindrances for you.

If the halftrack is killed but does not burn, something to remember is that you can fire on your own wreck to possibly brew it up. You might even have a rear shot on the wreck, increasing the chances of killing it by enough to burn it. D10.1 states that a non-burning wreck may be attacked by either side, treating the wreck as if it were still the original vehicle. Wreck counters retain the VCA of the original vehicle and the TCA aligns with the VCA. So as a rule, make sure that when you flip that killed vehicle over, you retain the original facing of the VCA.

Scenario Analysis: Up Inferno Hill



Matt Shostak

Attraction:

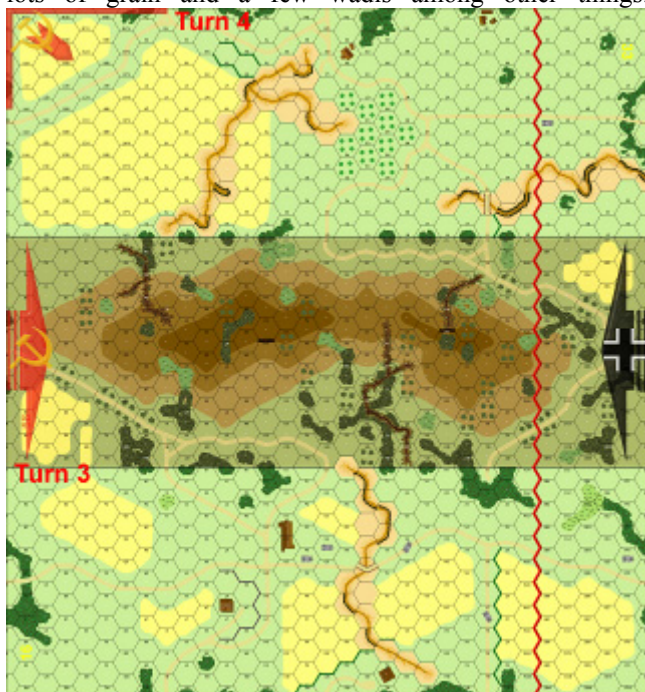
- Muscular Orders of Battle
- Early model Panthers
- Flamethrowers and MOL
- Room to maneuver
- HIP surprises
- Wrecks to start

Kursk scenarios are a great place to practice your combined arms skills. Usually they feature strong orders of battle on both sides, which make it fun for the players, because each is given enough power to put some hurt on the other. This firefight is no exception. The Germans arrive with a very powerful force, which includes a StuH42, three StuG IIIGs, three SPW 251/1 halftracks, one SPW 251/SMG halftrack, a flame throwing PzIII(Fl) and two of the new experimental Panthers, the D model. Twelve German elite rifle squads ride in alongside hell bent for leather on motorcycles and sidecars. They are led by a 9-2 officer and two 8-1s, and bring a few machine guns and a demo charge with them. The Germans have the support of 80mm artillery directed by an offboard observer. Opposing them are about 9 squads of Russians, armed with a medium and a light machine gun, plus an ATR, a flamethrower, and a light mortar. They have

Banzai!!

May, 2009 Volume 14, Number 2

fortified their defensive position with wire, trenches, and mines (both antitank and antipersonnel). They are also equipped with Molotov cocktails. The Soviets have hidden a dug-in T34 M41 somewhere on the battlefield, and they also have a 45LL antitank gun waiting in ambush somewhere. They are expecting reinforcements in the mid-game (turns 3 and 4 of 7.5) in the form of a couple of powerful SU-122 assault guns, and a couple of 5-2-7 sub machine gun squads with a 7-0 and three more T-34 M41s. The terrain here features a long hill in the middle of the map, flanked on each side by countryside flat spaces, with lots of grain and a few wadis among other things.



The hill itself has two peaks, one closer to the German entry positions, and the other larger one closer to the Russian. Each peak extends to level 3, and there is a sort of saddle in the middle of this long hill between the hilltops. The German task is essentially to seize each hilltop, and is couched in terms that require them to control a particular hex on each hilltop, and also make sure there are no Good Order Russian units adjacent to those hexes, at game end. Such a variety in the weapons and capabilities of each side adds a great deal of complexity to the tactical situation, because there are so many different ways these units can interact as they try to apply their strengths and minimize their weaknesses against each other. In short, both sides have a lot of options, and in my book that equates to more fun. In a way, this scenario reminds me a bit of *Expelling the Guards*. Both actions have rather a similar look and feel, with the Germans attacking to seize a long hill from the Russians in a combined arms fight. *Expelling the Guards* takes place in 1942, however, and here a year later the Germans bring some better armor.

German Strengths: Morale, Mobility, Superior Armor, Artillery, Smoke, 9-2 Leader

German Weaknesses: Time(?), Flank Shots, Panther Teething Problems

The Germans really have a lot here. All of their troops have morale 8, and the motorcycles and halftracks allow them to try some wide flanking maneuvers if they so choose. The Wehrmacht armor force is quite powerful. The Panthers have very little to fear frontally, and their guns are fully capable of smashing the Soviet armor in this battle. They have fairly reliable artillery on call, and it and their assault guns have healthy smoke capability to cover their assault. They also have the best leader on the board, which they might pair with a couple of machine guns. Seven and a half turns should be plenty of time, usually, to traverse basically one board length, especially for such a mobile force. However, climbing hills takes longer, and the board is cut with many wadis. Moreover, the mines, wire, and trenches may slow the Germans down somewhat. As they attack over the hill, they may find it difficult to avoid getting shot at from the flanks, which is where their armor is quite weak. The Panthers are vulnerable to their own temperamental engines, which may simply burn up under the strain. Any time one of them starts, the German player must roll the dice: a 10 results in a stall, an 11 an immobilization, and a 12 a burning wreck (with a surviving crew and scrounged LMG). Clearly, the Wehrmacht player would do well to try to minimize this problem, but it is certainly an Achilles heel to these otherwise dominant pieces.

Russian Strengths: Fortifications, Hidden Placement, Molotov cocktails

Russian Weaknesses: Static Defense, Infantry Firepower

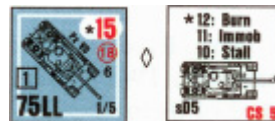
The Russians have wire, trenches, and mines to fortify their position. Since they know exactly where the Germans must go, they can probably arrange things to make it difficult for the Germans to avoid them. The trenches also should help the Soviet infantry hunker down and tough out the artillery, should it wind up falling on them. Many of the fortifications at least start the game hidden, and they can also hide the 45LL antitank gun, the dug-in T-34, and two squad equivalents. There is lots of concealment terrain on the map, so they have plenty of spots to choose from. It is a bit of a stretch to list Molotov cocktails as an advantage, but at least it gives the infantry some protection from close assault by German AFVs, especially the dreaded suicidal halftrack charge. This is a relatively static defense, though, so the initial Russian infantry will not likely be able to reposition very much. They are somewhat lacking in machine guns as well, with only one medium and one light available to them. In general, their infantry will have to pick

their shots with some care, as retaining concealment may often be the better option.

Matchups

Before deciding how to use the forces at your disposal, it is worthwhile to consider how they match up against their adversaries. Otherwise you might ask them to do things for which they are not well suited. Let us focus on the major weapons. First, look at the armor. The Panthers are nearly impregnable through the front, with armor factors of 18 for front hull and 14 for front turret, while the best kill numbers the Russians can generate are 17 for a 122mm HEAT round from an SU-122, and 17 for a 0-1 hex range APCR shot from one of their many 76L guns on the T-34s. The 45LL's base kill number is 11, or 13 with APCR, and can get as high as 16 with APCR at range of 0-1. Meanwhile the Panther's base kill number of 23 for its 75LL gun is almost automatic against any of the Russian armor, whose highest armor number anywhere in this scenario is 11. Therefore, it is folly to duke it out with the Panthers frontally. But everyone knows that, right? How about the other matchups? The other German tank-killing guns in this scenario belong to the three StuG IIIG assault guns. Their 75L has a base kill number of 17, but with APCR that kicks up to a base 20, and their APCR availability numbers for this scenario are a respectable 6 because this force from the Grossdeutschland is designated as elite for this scenario. That's perfectly capable of scuppering the Russian tanks, which typically have 11 frontal armor in the hull (and most have 8 frontal turret armor factors), but it's not a guarantee. The Russians answer the StuGs with the aforementioned kill numbers from their guns, which are enough to kill through the front, since the StuGs (and the flammpanzer) sport 8 frontal armor factors. Because the StuGs are small targets, and because German gunnery is better at longer ranges, they get a slight edge over the T-34s in a standoff duel, but in all likelihood, the real edge might go to the side that gets the first good shot. Regardless, it is a bit of a crapshoot for either side if they are just going to trade shots through the front. Obviously, the halftracks are vulnerable to just about everything, while the StuH42 is not really an armor superiority vehicle, but rather an infantry hunter. Its 105mm gun can only fire HE and HEAT, and the HEAT kill number is only 15, which might be good enough in an emergency but certainly shouldn't be relied upon. The Russians should not forget their flamethrower, which can be a very dangerous tank killer if it gets the chance as it doesn't care one whit about how thick the armor is. It simply kills on an 8 or less (halved to 4 at long range), subject only to beneficial modifiers if the target is CE and/or open topped. Where the German tanks are really vulnerable is through their side and rear armor. Even the Panthers have only 6 armor factors in the flanks, and the StuGs, StuH42, and flammpanzer only have flank armor of 3 (4 for the flammpanzer's flank turret). This makes them

even slightly at risk from the ATR, especially at close range. If the Russians can somehow generate side and rear shots against the German tank force, they'll be in good shape. It should be noted that the Russian tanks also have weak armor in the sides – only 6 factors, which is not nearly enough against the powerful German guns. An exploding AT mine is a great way to kill or immobilize a German tank. In fact, it is virtually guaranteed to at least immobilize its target. Lastly, the Russian infantry can protect themselves from rampaging armor by tossing Molotov cocktails. The base kill number is only 6, and it suffers by 2 if the target is moving or in motion, but it also gets a benefit of 1 pip against CE CT, or 2 pips against an OT vehicle, so it can be effective in warding off halftracks especially. What does this all mean? I think the Germans have a sizeable edge in a long range tank duel, so naturally they'd like to make that happen. The Russians have to be much more cagey, trying to pick their spots to find side and rear shots, although when pressed they can still kill StuGs through the front if need be.

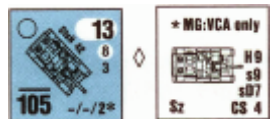


Panther D

Mission: Armor superiority.
Secondary mission: support infantry assault with HE and

MGs

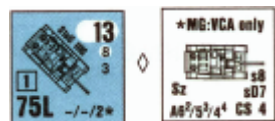
Tactics: Find good overwatch position and destroy Russian armor at long range.



StuH42

Mission: Infantry support with HE and smoke

Tactics: Shell Russian positions from a standoff position.

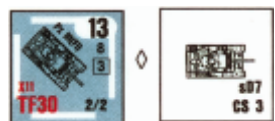


StuG IIIG

Mission: Dual mission – support infantry assault with HE and smoke, destroy Russian

armor opportunistically.

Tactics: Remain mindful of vulnerable sides. Use terrain blind hexes to protect from flank shots as much as possible. Maneuver turn by turn to good firing positions.

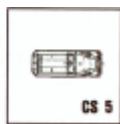


PzIII FI

Mission: Burn out difficult Russian strong points to assist infantry assault.

Tactics: Remain in motion and hidden by terrain and smoke as much as possible, coming forward only as needed to attack.

Banzai!!



SPW 251/1

Mission: Carry the infantry forward fast, then act as scouts and interfere with Russian rout paths.

paths.

Tactics: Stay in motion as much as possible.



SPW 251/sMG

Mission: Provide extra small arms firepower.

Tactics: Unload as soon as possible, and remove the AAMG to serve as an HMG. Pair it with the 9-2 infantry leader right away, and combine it with the 7FP CMG to provide large volume of well directed long range fire.

Artillery

Mission: Keep defenders' heads down with HE, or use smoke to cover the assault.

Russian Defense and Game Plan

Let us look at a potential defensive setup and discuss the various options. Although the Germans do have flanking options due to their mobility, they still have to seize the hilltops, so it would behoove us to have some sort of strong point on at least one of the hilltops, and perhaps both. One option would be to defend one hilltop only lightly (or not at all) and count on winning at the other hilltop by

concentrating the bulk of the defenses there. If such an approach is taken, it probably makes more sense to choose the “rear” hill, i.e. the one closer to the Russian side, as the last bastion. It would be easier for the reinforcements to reach, and it will take the Germans longer to get there. It would be much harder to hold the “front” hilltop, which is very close to the German entry area. The defense could set up a purely dummy position on the front hill, hoping that the Germans will waste some time on it, or they could put just a small force there to try to delay the Germans a little more. I think it is unlikely that the Russians could hold the front hill by force throughout the scenario, but they could perhaps sneak a unit there in the endgame and perhaps steal a victory. This unit could be something that remained hidden throughout the scenario, to dash forward for glory at the last moment, or maybe it could be a survivor of the initial forward defenders that managed to melt away off the hill somewhere, in such a place that the Germans couldn't afford to waste much time and energy mopping them up.

Let us consider a setup based on the Russian game plan to lightly contest the forward hill, strongly contest the back hill, avoid long range tank duels through frontal armor, and act opportunistically to exploit German flanks. The Russians plan to win by holding onto something on the back hill at the end of the game, but will keep an eye open for chances to sneak a unit onto the front hill victory area in a late dash for honors. The setup described and depicted here aims to execute this Russian game plan as efficiently as possible. *Units shown above entrenchments for clarity.*





Russian rear hill defense

HIP

Up front are a couple of trenches and foxholes on the forward hill. Most of the units there are dummies, there to slow the Germans down a bit. The bulk of the Russian infantry is positioned to hold onto the rear hill, and they are well entrenched to try to withstand the artillery. Wire protects this position. The mobile T-34s will try to retain concealment for a while, yet still cover the flanks of the hill and support the final position. The hidden units are a half-squad with the flamethrower, hoping to catch some unwary Germans or even a tank, while the hero, ATR, and half squad hope to get a nice close-range flank shot at a halftrack or StuG, and the hero may just retain HIP and make his run for glory on the last turn up the first hill. The mines are used on the forward hill. Since the Germans must eventually walk that ground, it seems they are likely to achieve some result, yet they are far enough forward that they are unlikely to get in the way of the defenders. The antitank mines here are all in one basket, hoping for a nice result on any cheeky German armor that thinks U4 is a good vantage point.

Trenches in 58X4, X5, J4, K4, L3, K5

Wire in 58M3, M4, L4, L5, K6

4 AT mines in 58U4

6 AP mines each in 58X5, W5, X4, U5

ATR, 2-4-8, Hero (HIP) in 58Z10

FT, 2-4-8 (HIP) in 58W3

9-1, MMG, 4-5-8 in 58L3

4-4-7s (one each) in 58K4, K5(w/LMG), K6, P2 (foxhole), Q5 (HIP), and L6 (foxhole, w/ mortar)

8-0 in 58K5

T-34M43s in 58J6 and 58O3

2x(small)? in 58X4, X5, W5

2x(big)? in 58V8

The 45LL antitank gun and the dug-in T-34 (the cupola) are key weapons because they can set up hidden, and thus have a chance to catch enemy armor at unawares and in the flank or rear. The defender has wide latitude in how he deploys these units because there is so much concealment terrain available over a large setup area, so how they are employed gives you a chance to exhibit some creativity. Although

Banzai!!

there are plenty of places to put the 45LL, it seems to me that there are two viable philosophies for it, both of which are angling for side shots at German armor. First, it could be located fairly close to the hill (and pointing back toward it), hoping for short-range shots that will maximize its ability to score hits, and also increase the penetration capabilities of its shells, particularly the APCR. Possible spots for such a setup are woods hexes 58T0, 58V0, and 58X0. On the other side of the hill, 58V8 or 58V9 offer similar chances. The disadvantage of such a position is that it is much more likely to get discovered and eliminated by German infantry. Going to the other extreme, how about putting the antitank gun far away in the 33110 building, again pointing back toward the hill? This position may look a little strange at first, because Russians typically do not want to engage in long-range firefights due to their need to use the red hit numbers. However, this locale has several advantages. First, it is far enough from the objective that it is very unlikely to get overrun by enemy infantry or tanks. Second, it is likely to get flank shots at German armor as it moves along the hill. And third, it may even cause routing

issues for German infantry on the hill. The armored cupola is not as vulnerable to infantry assault as is the 45LL, especially if protected by wire and/or mines, so if you like you could probably construct a strong position for it directly in the path of the assault, such as in 58O3, O5, P3, or Q5. It could even hunker down in the victory area in a place like 58L3 and try to ride out the storm there for the win. Yet it could also try to mirror the efforts of the 45LL and try to get long range flank shots from the other side of the hill, say, in a cozy spot like 16AA9. Such a position again has the advantage that it is much less likely to get discovered and overwhelmed by German forces, because they'll likely be too busy storming the hill, and any Germans tasked with eliminating this threat might not have time to influence the endgame. Zeb Doyle used this style of defense to good effect against Eric Gerstenberg when they played this scenario.

45LL (HIP) in 33110 (Right picture)

Cupola (HIP) in 16AA9 (Left picture)

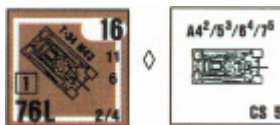


45LL ATG and Armored Cupola

Mission: Flank shots at German armor; possibly

interfere with rout paths.

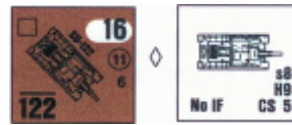
Tactics: Wait for good targets, then roll low



T-34 M43

Mission: Support defense of hill with direct fire

Tactics: Avoid the Panthers if possible, knock out the StuGs, harass German infantry, create a crossfire in combination with the 45LL and the cupola



SU-122

Mission: Blast German infantry

Tactics: Try to find positions that are hidden from German armor, yet have infantry targets available, perhaps at the back of the victory hill. Use HEAT to destroy German armor if a good opportunity arises.



FT, 2-4-8

Mission: Ambush Germans at forward hill. If possible, threaten forward hill at game end.

Tactics: Wait for a good target. Armor may park on nearby hill, or drive close by.

Banzai!!



ATR, Hero, 2-4-8

Mission: Ambush halftrack at close range, especially if laden with infantry. Threaten forward hill at game end if possible.

Infantry

Mission: Hold the ground

Tactics: Retain concealment, choose shots wisely, use Molotov cocktails with abandon especially against rampaging halftracks.



After the Turn 1 German MPH. Half squads have probed and eliminated the Russian dummy in V8. StuG and StuH line up to smoke the front hill.

German Game Plan and Initial Attack

There are at least a few different approaches the Germans can take with this scenario. In broad terms, they could try a simple frontal attack which attempts to take the hilltops one at a time, traversing the hill lengthwise. Alternatively, they could try some wide flanking maneuvers with their mobile forces, possibly in some combination with a force making a frontal assault. Here we'll illustrate the former, a simple frontal attack. As usual, I try to think of the role of the

various main weapons systems first, and give them tasks they are well suited to achieve. Naturally, the first things I notice in this German toolbox are the Panthers. They are great at the long range armor duel, but they are very likely to be a disappointment if I try to start and stop them a lot. Therefore, I need to try to find a good place to park them, and keep them in motion until they get there, so I have to chance very few startup rolls. The closer hilltop looks like a desirable perch. From there, the two Panthers could see much of the hill lengthwise, in addition to a view of the

lowlands to either side. Sure, they may have to risk a bog roll in the trenches and woods, but since I'm content for them to sit there I don't really care much if they bog. The flammpanzer also catches my eye. This beast is powerful, and therefore it is not a resource to be squandered. It should be protected carefully by the herd, using terrain, motion, and smoke to stay out of danger until it is needed to eliminate a pesky Russian position, and then it can be called forward. Obviously, the 9-2 is very important, and normally I like to have such leaders directing a few machine guns. He can be given command of the MMG to start, but the Germans should also strive to keep him close to the SPW 251/SMG halftrack so it can be used to full advantage. By removing the AAMG as a dmHMG, and stacking with the

9-2, the Germans could eventually cobble together a 19 FP stack, not counting any rifle fire from squads. The StuH42 obviously should be targeting Russian infantry with HE and smoke, and avoiding duels with Russian armor as much as possible. It has a pretty good chance at finding a HEAT shell in an emergency, but its kill number is still only a 15, hardly something to be counted on against this robust Soviet armor.

The plan is really a simple one. Each group will enter roughly in the center and plow up the first hill. Many of the infantry will dismount and seize the first peak. The Panthers will take up residence in good spots and start to work over the Soviet armor, while the rest of the armor and infantry opens the full combined arms playbook on the Rookies.



Turn 2 after German Prep. Assault guns succeed with smoke prep. Half squad under front Panther will probe down the road to Z9 and through the X8-X9 area. Panthers head for X4 and X5. 9-2 group heads for Y3-Z3 area. DC attacks trenches as does other dismounted infantry from AA7-X8. 8-1 group of 2 halftracks heads to left flank of hill around Z7 area.

Banzai!!

May, 2009 Volume 14, Number 2

Russian Reinforcements

It never seems like there's enough help, but there are some sturdy reinforcements on the way. The defense will have to play it by ear and send them where they can do the most good, but keep a few main goals in mind. They want to get to the victory areas by the endgame if possible. The SU-122s are meant to beat up on infantry, not other tanks. They could use their HEAT ammo, however, to scrap German tanks of the non-Panther variety. Nabbing a Panther would require some luck, but it's possible. The T-34 group obviously wants to deposit their 5-2-7 riders somewhere near the back hilltop, and then either hunker down in that victory area, or look for openings to make some easy kills against the Germans.

Conclusion

This is a really fun scenario because there is so much involved. It should be great mental exercise for both players. My early impression of this action is that the Russian side needs more skill to play well, because they need to make a good setup, and they have to pick and choose their shots well. It requires a certain amount of patience to do that effectively. The Germans, on the other hand, have been given a really good box of tools to use.

Rick Reinesch and I gave this scenario a try and created an after action report of our game in presentation form with a lot of pictures. Find it at in the AAR section of our club website (<http://texas-asl.com/>). Just remember that kindling is not allowed in this scenario. Rick and I allowed it by mistake, and it provided for nice entertainment to watch the grain field go up in flames, but it was illegal. Perhaps it could be considered as a Russian balance provision.

Favorite Scenarios



Walter Eardley

In selecting a scenario, I look for several elements including a larger Order of Battle (OOB), some fun toys on each side and some unique hook. For me, PTO is a big bonus, as well as a historical map. I really like scenarios where you have to do something other than just kill the other guy or take buildings. I like scenarios with CVP caps because it keeps people from using their cardboard troopers in a reckless manner. With that in mind, here is my list:

DASL 7 With Flame and Shell

I have played this one once each way and had a blast. It is a classic and deluxe is always fun. With flame-throwing Mark IIIs trying to dig out elite Russians supported by AT guns and some artillery pieces, this one promises to be a bloody,

down-to-the-wire brawl. For me, this is one of those "Anytime ... Anywhere" scenarios.

RB2 Blood and Guts

Red Barricades (RB) was where I cut my teeth on ASL. I have played a half dozen (or more) CGs and most of the scenarios. *Blood and Guts* is near and dear to my heart because it was the first time I beat my arch nemesis Jay Harms on this map. This is "in your face" RB action where both sides get to use all those fun RB tricks. What other scenario would you look at as the Germans and think, "I only have to move about three hexes forward. Dang! I am not sure the Pioneers, Sturm and Rifle squads with DCs, FTs and a load of machine guns, led by a 10-3 and 9-2 supported by 3 StuGs with one 9-2 AL is enough to do the job!" Of course, they are facing an elite force including 6-2-8 assault engineers led by a 10-2 who will probably be directing a .50 cal. Another "Anytime ... Anywhere" scenario for me.

J89 Himmler's House

Another deluxe classic. Jay and I squared off in this with me as the Germans. On the last CC roll, Jay earned a hard-fought victory. A dozen fanatic SS squads with a "District Party Leader" commissar and a 9-2 supported by two 88s and two 105 ART pieces defend against a horde of Russians including assault engineers with FTs and DCs, elite rifle squads and a couple of 9-2s for motivation supported by Stalins, Su-100s, and a couple of FT T-34s. With the variable rubble placement and lots of fun toys, I would play either side.

J9 A Stiff Fight

This is the *Fighting Withdrawal* of the Pacific. While very simple on the surface, it is a nice puzzle for both sides which easily can be completed in an evening. After several playings, this one always seems to go down to the last turn with the Gurkhas desperately trying to hold off the Japanese or the Japanese frantically trying to track down the Gurkhas.

OWT CG

My name is Walter and I am a Campaign Game junky. I think one of the most underappreciated and probably underplayed campaign games are the ones found in *Operation Watchtower*. Many will be frightened off just because it is PTO. Combine PTO with mostly night scenarios and a large portion of the player pool will dismiss it out of hand. The sad thing is they will be missing out on a very fun CG which can be played in a reasonable amount of time. PTO is not that hard and ASL at night is a completely different experience. Of course, this campaign featured my shining moment in ASL where I dropped DCs off the hill onto Jay's and Tom's Japanese trying to banzai up the hill. It was a beautiful ambush!

RB CG

As stated above, I am a Campaign Game junky. Some of my best memories playing ASL revolve around this map and these campaigns. Yes, they take a long time to play and are huge in scope, but ASL is Stalingrad and Stalingrad is *Red Barricades*. If you have not tried one of the RB campaigns, you have missed out on everything which is ASL.

63 The Eastern Gate

There are several things I like about this scenario. The first thing I like is the feel of the two columns strolling through the jungle and meeting each other. The second is the mad dash to the hill while trying to keep the other guy from getting to the hill first. Finally, the battle for the hill is always entertaining and bloody.

68 The Rock

This is actually about three scenarios combined into one. They really do not make these types of scenarios anymore. This is beefy PTO at its best. The Japanese have good troops, tanks, and OBA trying to dislodge Americans with .50 cal. If you have 16 to 18 hours to kill, you will not be disappointed if you select this action.

71 Jungle Citadel

Jungle Citadel is another massive PTO scenario which will not disappoint either player. The Chinese have to set up to defend the pagoda and still have enough left to defend the rear areas. The Japanese have to bully their way through a tough defense around the pagoda and try to get into the Chinese backfield. This is another scenario which is really two scenarios. If you are rushed for time, this is definitely not the scenario to play. The Chinese probably need 2 hours for setup but that is one of the fun parts of the scenario. The Japanese will have fun dismantling the defense!

G Hube's Pocket

My main attraction to this scenario is the "task" of the scenario. The Germans are trying to escort a column of trucks off the board while the Russians are trying to stop them. I think this encounter gives a good feeling of a desperate attempt to break out of encirclement, while the Russians know they can't let the troops escape to fight another day. Each side has some nice toys to play with and lots of different opportunities to use them.

A118 The Waterhole

The Waterhole is a very short scenario played on the wonderful *Nphum Ga* map. While small in size, it is big on action with 7-4-7 assault engineers battling a mixed elite and first line Japanese force over water rights. Easily played in an evening, *The Waterhole* will not disappoint either side.

VotG9 Eviction Notice

This is another scenario in which I like the feel of the setup. A group of German Sturm troops are set up in an exposed position backed up by some weaker rifle squads. The Germans are tasked with holding off a counterattack by a mixed group of Russians supported by some tanks. This is another one which is playable in an evening and will offer each side some fun options.

In writing this list, I spent a lot of time reminiscing about scenarios I have played over the last 16 years. I have come to the conclusion that it is not so much the scenario which is my favorite but the people who I played the scenario against which made it a favorite. A good, fun opponent will make even the worst scenario enjoyable.

Turning Fifty

Matt Shostak



This is our 50th issue, and it's only natural that we'd want to mark the occasion somehow. The best way that you can celebrate with us is to enjoy this issue, or even go back to the club website to read some that you may have missed. In this column I'd like to reflect a bit on this newsletter's long journey to 50.

I started this thing in the mid-nineties as Mike Seningen and I were trying to build up the club in Austin. At the time my idea was pretty modest; I was just looking for something to keep the attention of our players on a regular basis, and maybe even attract a new player or two. The early issues were rather raw, just a few pages each, and I actually printed them out and mailed them to the half-dozen or so players we knew. In fact, at that time it seemed like I knew more players from distant places than from Austin, because we communicated online via the ASL e-Mailing List. The early issues reflected that, with a large proportion of the articles coming from authors outside Texas.

As the club matured, so did this newsletter, which became more and more polished over time. We really made a big leap forward when Mike Austin stepped in at issue 3.1 and helped us tremendously with the look and layout. It really opened our eyes to what we could accomplish. As we gained more players in the club and developed contacts with new clubs in other Texas cities, the newsletter gained momentum because we got more and more contributions from the membership. We'd still also get the occasional article from someone outside Texas. Any story as long as this one, however, is bound to have its ebb and flow. We took a hiatus for a while when it looked like we weren't getting very many submissions, and we thought perhaps the newsletter format was a bit passé. Sam Tyson and I discussed it and decided to simply try to post our material on a blog instead. It turns out

that that format works really well for the number of after action reports that we see on our local email lists, but somehow it wasn't completely satisfying and didn't really duplicate everything that the newsletter brought to the table. I was encouraged one day when I read Mark Pitcavage's review of *Banzai* on his Desperation Morale website, where he praised this newsletter and expressed disappointment that it was gone in favor of the blog. That inspired me to pick up the torch again and move forward, and we've been going gangbusters ever since. Now we've reached the point where we shouldn't lack for material because we have so many people that are interested in participating in the endeavor.

I think *Banzai* serves many purposes. It has far exceeded my original, somewhat nebulous, goals. Besides being an entertaining and informative read, when taken as a whole it acts almost as a historical record of ASL in Texas. One of my original goals was to attract new players to the club. I have not kept track of how many players have joined our ranks because they found out about us through this newsletter, but when skimming through the old issues on our club website I noticed right at the top of issue #3 that we hooked Eric Gerstenberg way back in 1996. It would be worth the effort for that feat alone. I would love to hear from any others whose first exposure to Texas ASL was through the pages of *Banzai*. You can email me – find my email address in the *Banzai Staff* section.

One of our regular features in this publication is to list a player's favorite scenarios, usually after that player has been interviewed in a previous issue. When thinking about what to write for this 50th edition essay, it occurred to me that I might borrow from that idea and list some of my favorite articles that have appeared in our magazine over the years. So here they are, in no particular order, and this list is not meant to be comprehensive either, but rather just a sampling of some of the things I've enjoyed reading, writing, and working on, or am otherwise proud of for some reason. Naturally this list will be biased towards things I was more heavily involved in.

The Geometry of ASL by David Hailey – This article is a gem. It's one of those rare articles that can be helpful to your ASL game regardless of what theater or scenario style you are trying. I use some of the tips from this article to this day when trying to determine if a line of sight is clear. I also have a soft spot for articles that use mathematics in some form. This fine article can be found in issue 5.2.

A Mathematical Minefield by Matt Shostak – I got my own chance to flex my mathematical muscles here, as I tried my hand at some probability to see if it could inform the discussion about how to use antitank mines in a scenario. You can find this in issue 3.3.

Saving Ryan's Privates by Sam Tyson – This one from our very first humor issue, *Bonsai!!*, was a big hit. People still remember it.

Scenario Analysis: J106 Marders Not Martyrs by Matt Shostak – Here my bias again shows up, although this time it's not so much about mathematics as it is for computer programming. I really enjoyed working on the computer simulation that was the heart of this article from issue 12.2. For the same reason, I am fond of the *Toe to Toe* series of articles in other issues.

Advanced Logistics Leader by Jeff Toreki and Matt Shostak – This was really fun to write. There's often a lot of inspiration at the club lunches, and The Big Tease is very good at generating some funny ideas for our humor issues.

Owlcon AAR and Scenario Analysis: AP42 "Frontiers & Pioneers" by Nick Drinkwater – I really enjoy reading what Nick has to write. His after action reports truly give you a good feel for the game as he played it, and he has a very entertaining style. It's hard to pick just one but here I chose one of the most recent, because combined with Rick Reinesch's deft touch on the graphics, the story of the game really takes on some life. You can find this one in issue 14.1.

Twelve Angry Men by Dan Preston – I don't know what we'd do without Dan for the humor issues. His submissions often have me literally laughing out loud. He and I share a love of Monty Python and I just really enjoy his sense of humor. I could have picked a lot of things he's submitted for the humor issues, but here I've found one representative sample from *Bonbon*.

Scenario Analysis in General – I'm not going to try to pick a particular scenario analysis. We've had many excellent examples in the pages of *Banzai* over the years, from various authors. To me, they are the heart and soul of the newsletter. They are the articles I enjoy reading the most, and they are the ones I most enjoy writing, too.

I could go on and on, but I should stop somewhere. What are your favorite parts about *Banzai*?

There are far too many people who deserve thanks for their contributions to this newsletter over the years to try to mention each by name here. This isn't the Oscars. Just look through the article index on the club web page and see the long list of contributors throughout its history, both inside and outside of Texas. If you've helped us get this newsletter published in any way over the years, you have my hearty thanks. I could not, however, fail to mention Sam Tyson and Rick Reinesch, whose contributions to this magazine have been tremendous. Sam carried the load with regard to layout and publishing for quite some time, and in recent years Rick has stepped in to help spread the work around and has turned our graphics up a notch. I've learned to lean heavily on these two guys. If you like this publication, then take a moment to thank them for their hard work getting it to you in such a polished form.

Turning Fifty

Sam Tyson



It has been a lot of fun over the years "working" on *Banzai!!* Matt started this long before the days of easily spread information, and, in fact, it was through an issue of *Banzai!!* that I found the great group of guys in Austin that play ASL. I came across an early issue (probably Issue 1.2) in 1997 at King's Hobby. It was a simple publication, but it did its job of sharing ASL content and camaraderie with the local community.

Matt continued to be the player/coach/manager through the early years, with Mike Austin taking primary compilation duties for the Volume 3 issues. I took over as primary editor in April of 1999, and have been involved in almost every issue since. Wow - that has been 10 years already. Things like that just fly by when you're having fun.

Somewhere along the way I volunteered to build and host the club web site. In the early days it had club announcements and players could look at the ladder results. Having all of that information under my control gave me plenty of chances to explore new features and functions for the web site. Even today, the web site is still changing. I have to admit I use it as a development project and learning center for tools and techniques involved in web design.

New technology also led to the creation of the *Banzai!! Pipeline*, an online blog for other content generated by the club members. I envisioned that it would become a *Banzai!!* replacement, but the feedback from the club and other readers kept the newsletter in its original form. Though the style has changed a little bit over the years, you can still print it out and sneak it into the office to read.

Rick has taken over a lot of the work in the past few issues. It is an awesome sign and a great tradition that people step in to help out. *Banzai!!* has always been well received by the entire ASL community, not just in our little corner of the world. With the help of folks willing to volunteer their time, and content from everybody, we can keep it going for life!

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, the San Antonio guys on the third Saturday of every month, and the Houston group on the fourth Saturday of every month. To stay informed of upcoming club events, stop by our club website, www.texas-asl.com or better yet join our email group. You can post a message at central-texas-asl@yahoogroups.com or you can point your favorite browser to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central-texas-asl> and take a look. For those still not connected, give Matt, Rick, or Sam a call for club information.



Make sure to check out the discussion of the Texas Team Tournament in Episode 16 of the 2 Half-Squads Podcast. Jeff and Dave always do a great job. Please give them a listen!

<http://the2halfsquads.podbean.com/>

Banzai!!



When

Friday, December 11, 2009 at 2:00 PM
 - to -
 Sunday, December 13, 2009 at 10:00 PM (CT)

Where

Homewood Suites Hotel
 23320 Highway 59
 Houston, TX 77339

Website

<http://magcon.eventbrite.com/>

The *Banzai!!* Staff

Editor in Chief	Matt Shostak (512) 280-8414 mshostakster@gmail.com
Managing Editor and Keeper of the Game Tracker	Sam Tyson (980) 428-4113 styson@gmail.com
Copy Editor	Rick Reinesch (512) 828-4451 ctasl@aol.com
Contributing Authors	Matt Shostak, Sam Tyson, Rick Reinesch, Zeb Doyle, Walter Eardley
Publishing Schedule	Whenever we feel like it!
Club Information	Matt Shostak or Rick Reinesch
Club Web Site	www.texas-asl.com/

Copyright © 2009 by the Texas ASL Club
 All Rights Reserved.

You may reproduce this newsletter (*in entirety only*) for free distribution. Permission to reproduce individual articles must be obtained from the authors.

ASL and all of its components, including module names, are copyrighted and trademarked by Hasbro.

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!