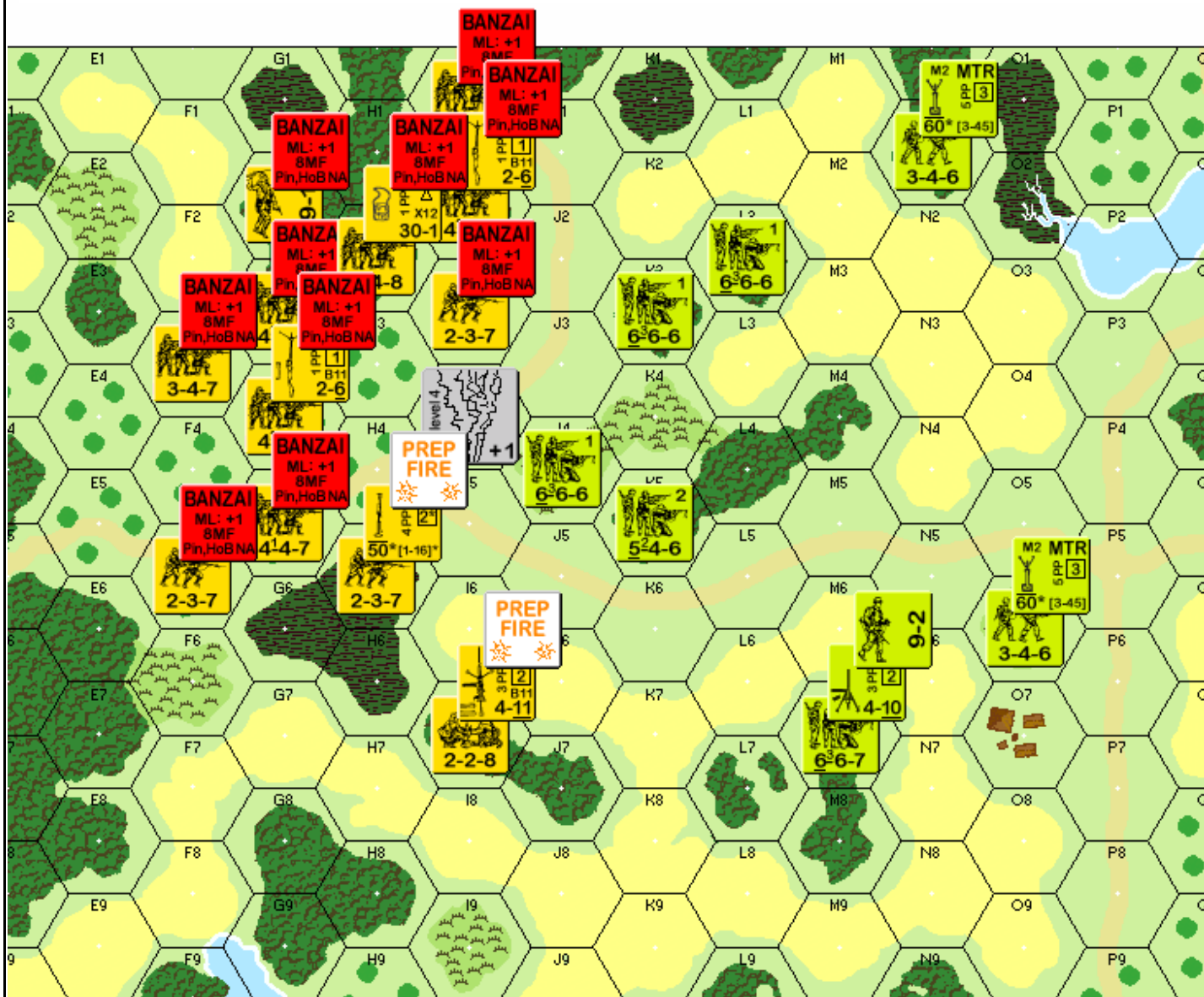


BANZAI!!!



The Newsletter of the Texas ASL Club

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Editor's Foxhole



Rick Reinesch

In pulling together a publication like *Banzai!!* it is always a challenge to come up with interesting articles. The concern being that we will present topics that are already well known to the reader and therefore of little interest. But with the introduction of the Starter Kits in recent years, there have been a number of folks that have been newly introduced to the game, or maybe are contemplating stepping up to full ASL. For those of us that have been around the game for awhile, it is easy to forget that these new players don't have the same depth of experience with ASL, and digging up those well worn topics can provide great benefit to these new players. These folks are as important to the game (perhaps more so) than the old veterans. So with that in mind we have taken an approach in this issue of *Banzai!!* with an eye toward the newer players. We have provided some great advice and tips for you to begin to improve your game.

Basic Tactics



Matt Shostak with Dade Cariaga, Tom Repetti, and Tim Hunsdorfer

(We scoured the archives of the message boards of the interwebs and found this old post that addresses the theme of this issue. – Eds.)

I have seen several messages lately from newbies asking for generic tactical advice. Even one of my regular face to face opponents is often asking for the same type of thing. So I thought I'd throw out some of my wisdom, garnered through about 140 or so hard-fought games. A much better treatment

of this subject is given by the noteworthy Mike McGrath in a recent copy of the *General*. I asked Dade Cariaga, Tom Repetti, and Tim Hunsdorfer to look over my thoughts and give me some feedback. So their ideas are represented here as well. In fact, after incorporating their ideas, the size of this post about doubled. I hope you find it of some use.

General Tactical Tips

This list could probably be a mile long, since tactical tips seem endless. They may seem obvious to most of the readers of this group, but they are worth repeating. I will limit it to just the three most important ones, in my opinion.

1. Gain concealment as much as possible. Even when it looks like you won't need it, such as when you have a unit that is well out of the fighting, DO IT ANYWAY. It is a good habit to get into.

2. Learn to skulk. This was probably my single most valuable ASL lesson, brought home to me in a big way by Mike Seningen in one of my first games. You will use this technique incredibly often.

What is skulking, you ask? At its most basic, it is assault moving a unit back and out of LOS of the enemy, then advancing it forward again in the advance phase. It sure cuts down on how much fire the unit is subjected to. Basically, you are trading the value of firing the unit that turn for the value of ensuring that it is alive and in place at the beginning of the next turn. Taken to its highest art form, skulking involves moving unconcealed front line units back, and leaving them back, while second line concealed units advance forward to man the positions again. The ones that fell back then gain concealment and are ready to do the same thing next turn. It also provides the opportunity for the defensive player to play a "shell game" with his units to confuse the attacker.

3. Don't move in stacks. This one has been beaten to death also.

It should be mentioned that there are exceptions to this rule. Sometimes you simply must get your troops there as fast as possible, and the leader bonus is crucial. But remember the dangers, and make **dang** sure there are no -2 shots with your stack 's name on them.

Subtler Tips

1. Deception and intelligence. Try to give your opponent as little, or even misleading(!) information about your own force, while learning as much as you can about his. This little head game begins before the first dice roll, with the setup. If

both sides start on board, so you can't count on concealing all of your units automatically, put your leaders on the bottoms of their respective stacks. This is because the opposing player cannot inspect the stack until the game begins, and even then only for stacks that he has LOS to. He can therefore only see the top unit. No need to tell him where your best guy is so he can put his sniper close to him. Try to hide your best weapons too. Have the leaders possess the machine guns at first, with a squad stacked on top of them. Transfer in the first rally phase. It can be useful to keep your opponent guessing about which group has the HMG and which has the MMG. Consider deploying a squad, and stacking the two half-squads together under concealment. Maybe your opponent will think there is a SW in there. Maybe your opponent counts counters. Consider *not* using all of your given ? counters, just to throw him off.

By the same token, gain as much information about your opponent's force as possible. Count the counters. It may pay off.

Once the game has started, try to make your dummies look like real units and vice-versa. Beginners often tend to strip concealment at every opportunity, thus giving away some information. Consider letting your opponent keep his concealment once in a while when moving around in your line of sight. He may decide that the unit is a dummy and get careless. Then whack him.

You can play all sorts of mind games with your dummies, and we heartily encourage you to experiment. Consider using dummies to encourage your opponent to attack into your strength, rather than your weakness. You could put most of your dummies on one side, giving the illusion of strength, while your main line of resistance, augmented by any HIP you may have, is on the other side. If your opponent guesses wrong, he could be in for a big surprise.

Also, when one of your units loses concealment, move him out of LOS and into a hex containing a dummy stack. When he regains concealment, you can move him out and keep your opponent guessing as to which stack is the dummy and which is "live." A sort of dummy stack shell game, if you will.

2. Fire discipline and rules-of-thumb. Before the game begins, you must have a plan, containing some very broad rules of engagement. If you are the defender with a weak force, and you generally can't win firefights with the opposition, you might want to tell yourself beforehand, "I will only fire at point blank range or when I get a negative modifier shot." Such rules of engagement, of course, will vary with the scenario, but you get the idea. It can help you from getting carried away during the game.

Also, don't take the first shot that presents itself if your opponent still has a lot of units that have yet to move.

Groggnards usually feint with a squad or HS at the beginning of movement to draw fire, then pursue their real objective with relative impunity once a First Fire marker is placed on the defender. As an example, in a recent game of *Valhalla Bound* (vs. Carey), my (Dade's) infantry held their fire against infantry targets, no matter how tempting. This made Carey reluctant to move his armor, fearing PFs. At the end of his move, my infantry fired at the opposing infantry if they weren't marked with Final Fire. I gave up the FFNAM modifier, but it was worth it to hold his tanks off for fear of getting 'fausted.

Make a strong effort to understand first/final fire. New players often fire too early at the enemy's weaker decoy units. It's often better to hold your fire and wait for the better target; remember your opponent is trying to get you to fire at his lesser moves. Remember that units marked with a First Fire counter can still Final Fire at adjacent enemy units in the DFPh. Resid, resid, resid. Fire lanes. They are SO important.

3. Be meticulous. Hey, we're talking about details, right? Get in the habit of remembering your SAN, and calling it out every time your opponent rolls it. I'd bet that snipers are missed in nearly every ASL game that gets played. Remember and call out your opponent's SAN, too. It's good sportsmanship, and he'll start to do the same for you.

Sportsmanship is the be-all, end-all to this game.

4. Set rough intermediate goals. Understanding the pace of a scenario is one of the most difficult things for beginners and experienced players alike. One thing that can help is to try to determine roughly how your forces should be doing at the midpoint of the scenario, and shoot for that goal early on. It can help give you an idea whether you are ahead of schedule or behind.

5. Never give up. This may seem obvious, but it's a rule that I have a hard time following myself. Why is it a big deal? First of all, you will never experience one of those "miracle wins" if you always give up when things look bad. You will only be able to read about them. Second, it is important to know what it is like in the endgame portion of a scenario. A large portion of my games have resulted in concessions before the final turn; many, in my opinion, before all hope was lost. If you rarely play a game to conclusion, you will be at a disadvantage whenever you play someone who regularly does.

Luck in this game is **so** weird that most situations can be instantly turned around by a lucky shot or sniper kill.

6. Leaders are for rallying, not for directing fire (EXC: -2 leaders or better). This one may be subject to debate, but I am coming around to the school of thought that even -1 leaders should generally be busy rallying troops, not directing fire.

Most players, including me, tend to want that extra -1 modifier, so they stack squads with an 8-1 or 9-1. But the dangers of stacking, and loss of rally capability, may very well outweigh the advantage of having an extra -1 DRM to a few attacks per turn.

This is where my colleagues disagreed with me, pointing out the importance of avoiding cowering, and the necessity of the extra modifier on attacks. All of us agree that it depends on the situation. I guess if you can form a strong opinion on this issue, you are no longer a beginner.

7. SMOKE, SMOKE, SMOKE. Infantry smoke. Vehicle smoke. Mortar smoke. You cannot win some scenarios without it. It is vital.

8. Generally I try to make my opponent shoot at me with as many half-FP situations as possible. I grow concealment when I can. I Dash when I can. I make him hit me with Advancing Fire.

9. Plan out your rout paths and rout havens. You need to try to find spots where your boys will get out of the enemy's line of fire so they can lose those DM markers and get a good chance to rally. On the other side of the coin, keep broken enemy units under DM and out of the game. Kill them for failure to rout - it's so much easier than getting a KIA or double-breaks on the IFT.

10. When trying to figure the odds of a unit breaking, remember that firing at a ML 8 unit on the 8 column of the IFT with a 0 modifier has a roughly 50% chance of breaking the unit. Adjust up or down by 10% for the first DRMs either way. That is, an 8(+4) vs an 8 ML unit has a roughly 10% chance of breaking it. Since one column shift on the IFT is the equivalent of one DRM, that 8(+4) vs the ML8 unit is the same as a 6(+3), a 4(+2), a 2(+1), or a 1(+0). Or a 12(+5), etc.

Also, since a difference of one morale level does the same thing, that 8(+4) vs the ML8 unit is the same as an 8(+5) vs an ML7 unit or an 8(+3) vs a ML9 unit. 8(+0) vs ML8, 4(-1) vs ML7, 20(+1) vs ML10, all have 50% chance of breaking the unit.

11. Learn to love the DFPh. That is where you hurt the enemy and set up your next turn's move. He is using his turn to get himself prepared for your next Prep Fire.

12. Use half-squads to do the dirty work like drawing enemy fire, probing for hidden or concealed enemy units, etc. Searching with half-squads can be a powerful tool.

13. Avoid/Take advantage of negative modifiers. FFMO, with the FFNAM is a nasty combination. Very nasty. A 4FP squad effectively doubles his firepower firing at a FFMO/FFNAM target. If you get a chance to take this shot, you'll rarely find an exception to the rule that you take the

shot. Air bursts are bad as well. You've got a 60mm mortar shooting 4FP-1 shots with a 3 ROF (the equivalent of a HMG). Sure, he has to hit, but with a -2 acquisition (which he'll probably get in the first fire phase) makes a hit pretty damned likely. The corollary, of course, is avoiding negative modifiers like the plague. If your opponent has a -2 leader, there's not much you can do about that, but FFMO/FFNAM, air bursts and hazardous movement are headaches you can do without. Use smoke. Stay in cover. Assault move. Do what it takes, but don't let your opponent amplify his FP by taking negative modifier shots.

14. Remember the bell curve. Rolling two dice for almost every ASL action produces a bell curve of likelihood. Are you more likely to roll a 5 or a 6? Good squad leaders know and remember that you are much more likely to roll a 6. SS squads are so tough because they pass a 1MC better than 50% of the time. Americans and Italians are weenies because that 1MC will break them 75% of the time. Should you shoot that 8FP shot first, or the 4FP? If you know the likelihood of the results, you'll know.

15. Ask your opponent why he did something you don't understand. Most players will be happy to give you pointers during the course of the game.

16. Remember your rout paths. It's been said a million times, but having your leaders in a position to rally broken troops, and having your troops in a position where they can legally rout back to your leaders is the mark of a good squad leader.

Exit Stage Right

Dan Preston



Leaving the map to satisfy Victory Conditions has been a common concept since the early days of *Squad Leader*. ASL has continued the concept, defining VP for each unit exited, and in some cases further defining where and how such units may exit. This article will further address the methods of leaving the playing area, specifically; what, when, how and why.

What may leave the map? Basically, good order units capable of sufficient movement may exit. According to A2.6:

Exit: Units may leave the mapboard using normal MP/Ph/APh capabilities from any mapboard edge hex or half-hex as if they are entering an imaginary off-board hex which is the mirror image of the one they currently occupy. Bypass can be claimed to exit a hex (such as 2X0) only if the unit has one additional MP/MF in excess of that needed for bypass. The

mapboard may not be left during the RtPh. Units which leave the mapboard [EXC: dropping parachutists] may not return.

When may units leave the mapboard? According to the above rules section, barring a contradictory SSR, the mapboard may not be left during the RtPh, so broken units may not exit. This also eliminates a theoretical Good Order leader routing with broken units. The mapboard may also be left during the APh. Assuming sufficient MF remaining, this is restricted to infantry. Infantry riding most sorts of conveyance are restricted to the MPh. So, infantry riding a wagon, motorcycles, cavalry, etc., may only exit in the MPh. Skiers may advance off. Infantry pushing a Gun do so in the MPh, so although the pushing infantry may advance off, the Gun may not. Boats and amphibians leaving the mapboard in the APh do so only due to current (B21.121). This is the only time that a vehicle may move during the APh.

How may units leave the mapboard? According to the above rules section (A2.6), any unit exiting must do so as if the theoretical hex entered is a mirror image of the hex being traversed. Most of the time, this allows the unit leaving the board to expend 1 MP/MF for the open ground rate or even 1/2 MP if the hex being entered is a road hex. Certain artificial modifiers come into effect also. For example, an Infantry unit attempting to exit a woods hex at night must add an additional +1 MF to the mirror image woods hex that they are attempting to Move/Advance into (E1.51). If this is more movement expenditure than the unit has, or it happens to be CX, it may not exit. A wounded SMC under these circumstances would have to either make a Minimum Move (A4.134) or Advance vs. Difficult Terrain (A4.72) to leave play, then become CX. Not a high price to pay, since the leader in question is already safely off board. If the task at hand becomes a footrace to exit, a defender might fire Smoke into one of the hexes to be traversed, making that hex cost one additional MF/MP to enter. If a scenario is coming down to the wire, that one extra MP/MF expenditure might actually prevent that unit from exiting the board.

Why may units leave the mapboard? This question is the crux of this article. Briefly, a unit will typically leave the mapboard for one of two reasons: to satisfy Victory Conditions or to escape capture/destruction. This article will address both points, as well as some other helpful information concerning getting units off the board.

First, exiting a certain amount of VP off the board is a common component of the Victory Conditions of many scenarios. For units that are "in the clear", this is a function of simple arithmetic. The moving player simply counts up the point value of the units possibly within range of the board edge, figures out how many MP/MF each has remaining, tallies up their point values, traces the fastest way off the

board, and decides whether or not he has enough to satisfy the Victory Conditions. Unfortunately, real life, much less ASL, is never so straightforward.

Let's assume that the moving player is in the process of fighting his way off board, and it is the last MPh/APh of the scenario. Here is a partial list of the units that absolutely will not exit as of the beginning of the Movement Phase:

- Units which Prep Fire, unless they are in a position to Advance off.
- Units which were still broken or disrupted at the end of the Rally Phase and not adjacent to the board edge.
- Units which cannot exit because they possess insufficient movement.
- Units which are blocked by impassable terrain.
- Units which are immobilized or unable to move for one reason or another, i.e. shocked, bogged, TI, etc.
- Units in Melee, unless they successfully Withdraw off the board edge.
- Units under Recall, unless the board edge is considered friendly.

During the Movement Phase, an almost unlimited variety of things, good and bad, can happen to the moving player. Therefore, here is another partial list of the units which absolutely will not exit before the end of the Movement Phase:

- Units which become broken or disrupted.
- Units which become pinned.
- Units which become berserk in LOS of known enemy units (unless guarding prisoners).
- Units which become shocked, stunned or immobilized.
- Units which lose an excessive amount of movement capability during the MPh, i.e. stall, hung up on Wire, etc.

Of course, these are only a few of the circumstances which prevent units onboard from making good their escape. Miracles and tragedies happen in ASL with every throw of the dice, and a defending unit looking to prevent that last unit from getting away is just as likely to roll a 2 as a 12. Some more possible results are these: A unit making a run for it might possibly run into a HIP unit in that last hex from freedom and be prevented from exiting simply by having insufficient MFs to go around. If that board edge hex is

concealment terrain, such as woods, the fleeing unit may trip over a HIP fortification, like wire or panjis. In the case of prisoners, a guarding unit which exits the mapboard is not considered eliminated (A20.53). Also, prisoners escorted off the board in such a manner are still worth double VP at game end. They also will not escape, turn against their occasionally broken guards, man nearby abandoned weapons, or do other odd things which might turn a lost game into a miraculously won game. Units which are off the board are out for the duration. Conversely, units which physically have enough MP remaining to exit always have a chance to make a contribution to victory, no matter how small. When it comes right down to it, that last 6+1 leader is still worth 1 VP if he gets away. And incidentally, that conscript squad which exits is worth the same as that elite assault engineer squad for VP.

Last and least, consider when to exit units regardless of the Victory Conditions. Sometimes, units are allowed to exit certain board edges but doing so does not satisfy any of the Victory Conditions of the scenario in question. One might ask why it would be necessary to withdraw units in such a situation. One circumstance might involve weak units like trucks and other transport that might be destroyed if left on board. Allowing exit along a friendly board edge might also save certain units that are weak as far as the battle is concerned, but worth substantial points to one's opponent if destroyed or captured. And finally, to quote the last sentence of A26.2:

Unless they are under Recall, Guards escorting prisoners, Paratroops/Gliders landing offboard, or satisfying their Victory Conditions/a SSR by such an exit, units which leave the mapboard are considered eliminated for purposes of Victory Conditions.

That being the case, imagine now that some unit or other has gotten itself trapped against the board edge, and hostile forces are closing in. Let us assume for the moment that it is our erstwhile 6+1 leader and two conscript squads. Let us further suppose that this group has an ELR of 1 or 2. Not the stuff of legends, but good order units nonetheless. If this force were eliminated, the total VP cost would be 5. Now, assume that this same group was captured. At game end, this group of prisoners would be worth 10 CVP. Now, assume that the game is down to the last few points. If massively powerful enemy units are closing in, is it safe to assume that this group is effectively doomed? Probably. Is it also safe to assume that the other player could capture most if not all of them? Also probably so. If this is the case, one might be tempted to simply run them off the nearby board edge and consider them eliminated. In a tight spot like I just described, losing only 5 points instead of 10 might mean the difference between a win and a loss.

One might also find the route off board blocked by enemy units. There are some tricks available to blow through them to freedom. If it is a concealed stack that the moving player suspects are phonies, simply move right through them. If the moving units will not make it off the board except by this hex, and it is the last turn, he would be remiss not to try. Similarly, if the defending hex is one unit, and it happens to be an SMC, the moving player may execute an Infantry Overrun (A4.15) and eliminate the offending unit on the run and keep going. If the moving unit happens to be an AFV, one might Overrun (D7) the defending unit, or else drive straight through without slowing down. Very effective if the infantry unit is weak and/or broken, or something generally ineffective to your AFV, like a halftrack, or an AFV with a broken MA. Tracked vehicles have one more trick up their sleeves. If the fastest route off the board is say, one or two MPs further than your vehicle has remaining, Excessive Speed Breakdown (D2.5) is an option; very effective if you are either feeling lucky or very desperate. And one last thing concerning AFVs and other armed vehicles. This is one factor that all experienced ASL players already know, but for the sake of completeness, I'm going to mention it anyway. A vehicle with a broken MA is worth only one less VP if exited. And the dr to fix the gun is just as likely as the dr to disable it. Unless there is no other choice, leave the MA broken, and drive off. Recalled vehicles are worth 0.

There is one more trick (read: sleaze tactic) which could be used to squeak one more hex movement in the CCPh. That is Ambush Withdrawal (A11.41). If the moving player successfully advances into a hex containing an enemy unit and rolls a successful Ambush dr, he is allowed to advance right back out again without firing a shot. If the opposing unit happens to be in a hex ADJACENT to the board edge, your units can advance in, and then right off the mapboard, if you can pull it off. Particularly effective if your units happen to be stealthy, concealed, or both.

In conclusion, although legends are made of armies thundering forward and joining the battle in a great clash of arms, leaving to fight another day is but a footnote in history. But the better part of valor is valor nonetheless. Some ASL scenarios will be won or lost based upon some cardboard warriors triumphantly marching off the board, and others will be won or lost by the same cardboard warriors getting clear of the turmoil. Whichever the case, leaving the mapboard is an integral part of the game, and all ASL players get their share sooner or later. Better understanding the nuts and bolts of doing so will eventually win the game for some, and watching the last few winning points exit the board will likewise be an ordeal for others.

Tactical Tip

Rick Reinesch



According to A4.431 and D6.31, support weapons may be freely transferred between PRC and Infantry/Cavalry in the same hex during any RPh or at the start of the moving player's APh. This may be a tactical solution to two different problems. The first problem is Russian MMGs and HMGs that cannot be dismantled and take up too much room to accompany riders because the portage total on an AFV for riders is only 14 PP. Squads are a full 10 PP, and the Russians, with a few rare exceptions, may not deploy into half-squads. Second problem occurs because reinforcements moving up as PRC typically fall short of the action because unloading costs a quarter of the vehicle's MP. So how do these sections help with these issues? A leader can possess the weapon as a rider (and of course he would want to avoid enemy fire as much as possible). He may enter as reinforcements as a Passenger/Rider in possession of the SW, or also as a Rider/Passenger he could have the SW transferred to him during the RPh. The same PRC may then move up to the front to the maximum extent possible for the AFV and stop in the same hex with friendly Infantry/Cavalry. The newly arrived support weapons are then handed off in the APh to friendly troops in the same hex. The PRC cannot unload until the following MPh, but the SWs are ready for action the next turn.

ASL Noobie Top Ten



The top ten things newbies should try to do each time they play *Advanced Squad Leader*

Greg Schmittgens

10. Try to have all but one of your infantry leaders survive. Leaders are the key to ASL. The bottom line is this: without leaders, all broken units are basically useless. Oh, sure, you might get one back per turn (on Self-Rally), and broken units can deny some control, for a while. But, basically, if you don't have any leaders around for rally, you're gonna lose. Setting the goal at one leader lost per scenario is artificial, but it will keep your focus.

9. Try to last through two-thirds of the scenario turns before the winner is mathematically certain. Accept the fact that you probably will not win. If you learn to set up well and do not do any stupid things early, you should be able to hold on for a while in a well-balanced scenario. The thing you have to

learn is how to avoid things like a gaping defensive hole or an overstuffed point of attack.

8. Try to use at least one special weapon per scenario. By "special weapon", I mean other than basic use of inherent firepower, MA or MGs. Place smoke, fire a Panzerfaust, sustain fire an MG, intensive fire a Gun. Usually, doing these things won't be decisive in the eventual outcome of a scenario, especially the type of scenarios most newbies cut their teeth on. But, one day, it will be. If you've used these options before, you'll understand the risks and benefits.

7. Try to advance into close combat at least once per scenario. Granted, this may not be consistent with the overall goal of the scenario (i.e. Victory Conditions). But I think your game will improve when you learn how to safely get close to an enemy unit, and when you learn that being ADJACENT is good for more than point blank fire.

6. Try to leave residual firepower at least once per scenario. Sometimes, a little residual firepower is just enough to throw off an attacker's schedule. You need to learn how effective residual FP can be. Then you can make an intelligent choice between a MPh shot leaving a little residual FP or a point blank shot during the DFPh.

5. Try to take a shot along a questionable LOS (one that has to be checked) at least once per scenario. Every shot won't be a clear one across a street or against an ADJACENT unit. I think you should train your eye to see LOS in unusual places. The only way to do this is to try one that looks close and check it.

4. Try to destroy one vehicle (when present). Like number 7 above, this goal may not be consistent with the scenario Victory Conditions. But you need to learn how to use the tools at your disposal to deal with the steel beasts. You won't chew up tanks like Prokhorovka, but each one killed will be another lesson learned.

3. Try to double time a unit at least once per scenario. It's easy to fall into the trap that Infantry has 4 MPs, 6 MPs with a leader. Period. Becoming CX is a mixed blessing and curse. You need to learn to appreciate both.

2. Try to assault move a unit at least once per scenario. Similar to number 3 above. Sometimes, the pace of a scenario doesn't require a headlong sprint. You should learn to appreciate the relative safety of an assault move, when the scenario allows.

And the number one thing newbies should try to do each time they play *Advanced Squad Leader*:

1. Try to alternate each game between attacking and defending. I understand why many players urge the newbies to play the defensive side in a scenario. It's easier to be a

defender; there are fewer variables to consider, and it is (usually) up to the attacker to set the tempo. But I think the best way for you to learn how to set up a good defense is to try to attack somebody else's good defense.

This Happened To Me

In a recent playtest, the Japanese had one spunky 1-3-7 HS that did not know the meaning of the word "quit". First these guys were part of a Banzai charge that took out an American 3-4-6 HS in CC. Then, next turn they picked up a dropped US DC, ran through all kinds of DFF attacks to reach a Sherman which also fired at them with everything it had, and still these little pests were able to not only survive but when they placed the DC they got *optimum* placement. The resulting DR was...you guessed it...snakes. The Sherman went up in a blaze of flame and smoke. Who needs them stinking DC Heroes anyway?

Then, this same pesky HS decided it needed to get into HtH CC with a US 6-6-6 squad...at 1-6 odds. They gained Ambush, declared HtH, and rolled...you guessed it...snakes!

But wait, there's more! These guys were not done yet. Next turn they entered a trench, recovered a US 60mm mortar, and proceeded to drop several rounds of "made in the USA" HE on a US crew with a .50cal in the jungle about six hexes distant. On their third shot, guess what they rolled? Snakes! 1KIA. At this point, the American commander had had enough. He promptly took three squads away from cave clearing duties, including one armed with a FT, to take out this pesky HS that had caused so much damage. They finally broke on an AFP shot, were cut off from any Rout paths, and went to meet their ancestors. These guys must have had an extra bowl of Wheaties cereal for breakfast. – David Roth

Rules Tip

Rick Reinesch



The situation of how one should handle snake eyes during Close Combat has popped up a couple of times during play lately and it sent folks scrambling to the ASLRB to try and figure out what happens to the simultaneous nature of CC when this occurs.

A snakes eyes CC DR does not make the CC sequential. Sequential CC only occurs as one of the subclauses of A11.3.

So for a non-sequential CC (A11.12), what the CC snakes DR (or a boxcars DR for that matter) does is momentarily suspend the simultaneous nature of CC.

This is why in non-sequential CC, the ATTACKER should resolve all of his previously declared CC attacks before the DEFENDER makes any of his CC resolution DRs.

For example, a German 2-4-8 HS is in CC with a Russian 4-3-6 squad. The German player is the ATTACKER in this instance and decides to attempt to capture the Russian Conscript. The Russian player as the DEFENDER decides he will attack the German HS at 2:1 odds.

From the point of view of the ATTACKER, the correct sequence would be:

- The German player as the ATTACKER declares a Capture attempt at 1:2 odds with a -1 DRM for a Capture attempt on the Conscript
- The Russian player as the DEFENDER declares a 2:1 normal CC attack
- The ATTACKER makes his CC DR and rolls snake eyes, so the Capture attempt is (at this point) successful. The snakes also results in a roll for Leader Creation (assume that a leader is created)
- The ATTACKER must decide at this point whether to withdraw from CC immediately. If he does, then he takes the captured Conscript with him. If the ATTACKER decides not to withdraw, the DEFENDER gets to make his previously declared attack (although with reconfigured odds due to the leader created by the ATTACKER) (A11.22, A18.12)
- The ATTACKER decides to stay, so the DEFENDER now attacks at 1:1 odds. A DEFENDER's DR of 3 kills your 2-3-8 HS and newly created leader
- And so by A20.221, the capture attempt was ineffectual, and the 4-2-6 squad survives intact and not captured.

Player Profile: Dan Preston

Banzai: Tell us a little bit about your gaming background. How long have you been gaming? What was your first game? Are there any particular games that stood out over the years?

DP: My gaming career started way back in the 1970s. I don't remember the exact year, but my good friend Pudge told me about a new game that he had discovered. It was called *Panzerblitz*, and it was off to the races after that. We would play with *The World at War* on in the background, and those were some of my first memories of war game nirvana. It went on like that for some time, and then *Panzer Leader* came out. It was essentially the same game, except that the Western Allies were in the fight. Then, in 1977, *Squad Leader* was released, and our former favorites faded into fond memory. I invited my friend Ross over to play towards the end of the PB/PL days, and he transitioned into SL with Pudge and me. *Cross of Iron*, *Crescendo of Doom*, and *GI: Anvil of Victory* followed thereafter. We would start playing on Friday evening and wrap things up just in time for *Doctor Who* on Sunday evening. Sometimes we would play through non-stop. Two would play while the third dug through scenarios or set up the next game against the winner. We began to get hungry for new scenarios (I won't even discuss some of the DYO horrors we concocted) and began trying to convert some of the PB/PL scenarios to the SL format. Some worked, some did not, but one stands out. One Ardennes Offensive scenario called *Elsenborn Ridge* was borrowed from the *Panzer Leader* scenarios, fudged out with our limited (at that time) SL boards and counters, Pudge played the 12th SS Panzer Division, Ross played the 277th Volksgrenadiers, and I played the beleaguered US 2nd Infantry Division. The result was spectacular. It was the most nail-biting three-person game I have ever played, even now. I have since tried to convert the scenario to ASL rules, but it never really worked; the rules and dynamics are too different.

Banzai: When and how did you discover ASL?

DP: ASL was in the works for many years, but my gaming buddies had gone to different corners of the world, and I went into the Air Force in 1985. I had not been playing very much, but I still thought about SL a lot. I ended up in the UK, at RAF Upper Heyford in the summer of 1985. During one of my first trips to Oxford, I discovered *Advanced Squad Leader* and *Beyond Valor* at one of the games/comics shops. They also had a number of mounted boards laying out for sale. I ended up buying everything I could get my hands on and laying down the Pounds. No one at Heyford played SL, unfortunately, and ASL was brand new, so I spent those first two years drooling over all my goodies and dreaming of playing. I came back to the States in 1987, and Pudge and I would still play from time to time, but the weekend marathons were over. I joined CTASL in 2001, and Carl Kusch and I had the San Antonio club going for a while, then he went overseas. Scott Bell and I hooked up at the 2008 tournament, and we have been playing ever since.

Banzai: What nationality do you enjoy playing the most?

DP: I used to be huge on the Americans. The firepower and range of the squads was just killer, even if the morale is sometimes low. I have been playing the Russians lately. With the Russians, you adapt a real knife-fighting mindset. You don't mind losing a lot of stuff if you accomplish the mission. And with the Russians, you can lose lots of assets and still have more than your opponent.

Banzai: Describe your favorite kind of scenario. What kind of scenario do you find less enjoyable?

DP: My favorite kind of scenario is a nice balanced combined arms contest that is not too big and not too long. All-infantry scenarios are fun, too. My least favorite type of scenario is the all or mostly armor slugfest, or really huge battles. Not that the monsters aren't fun to play, I just don't have the time to play them out anymore.

Banzai: What would you say are your ASL strengths and weaknesses?

DP: I enjoy defending, especially when I have space to trade for time. I still have a hard time figuring out residual firepower. I should take some time to carefully read the rules and get it straight in my head. Unfortunately, residual firepower and fire lanes don't come up that often in play. Otherwise, simple repetition would make them easier to remember off the top of one's head.

Banzai: What is the best part of ASL, and what is the worst?

DP: The best part of ASL, apart from the camaraderie, is the mental exercise of matching wits with the guy across the table. Each side has its own strengths, and the other guy is maneuvering and calculating as you are. It is a great way to work off the tension of every day life. At the end of a really tense game, I am exhausted but completely relaxed. The worst part of the game, by far is the freeze. I hate the freeze. I am not using that word as a euphemism. If you want to freeze my guys with an AFV, go ahead and crash into the hex. This "going into bypass and staying in motion" so my infantry can't shoot out is the silliest, gamiest, most unrealistic nonsense in the system. It's a loophole, plain and simple. It is, however, a part of the game, and I have learned to deal with it.

Banzai: What are you most looking forward to with regard to ASL?

DP: I am looking forward to the 2012 Texas Team Tournament. Rick Reinesch is presenting the 20th Anniversary Scenario Pack, and I have some scenario designs up for consideration. I have been looking for a venue for my scenario designs since 2004, and if only one makes it into the pack, it will be hugely satisfying. [Eds: *Expect to see more than one of Dan's designs in our anniversary pack*]

Banzai: What's your favorite game piece in ASL and why?

DP: I have always had a soft spot for the German SPW 251/10. Take an ordinary halftrack, and put a 37L anti-tank gun on it. Add to this the continued capability of towing an M#10 gun (a 50mm PaK 38, for example). Toss in an onboard ATR or late war Panzerschreck that is inherent in the vehicle and costs no additional portage points. Throw in a leader that costs 0PP to take along; he can grab the extra cookie on the way out the door. Put this vehicle with a couple more halftracks filled with squads and find a nice place to set up. In the early war, you just set up an infantry strongpoint with three anti-tank weapons ready for action.

Banzai: You're playing the Russians in a 1941 scenario, facing a German combined arms attack featuring several AFVs. Would you rather have a KV-2 or a platoon of two BT-7 M37s and two BT-7As?

DP: I would take the more numerous BT tanks. The KV-2 is a fire-breathing monster and a heavy hitter in the early war. However, it has a notoriously slow rate of fire and glacier slow red movement. In such circumstances, a bad roll can turn your monster into a pillbox. With the more numerous light tanks, even with red movement, one can bounce back more easily from bad luck, enemy fire, or even one's own dumb decisions. Plus, the BT tanks are a match for the early war German AFVs and guns. In addition, assuming that you don't throw a track on startup, these tanks have amazing movement points.

Banzai: You get to choose your side in a scenario set in the battle for France in 1940. Both sides have combined arms and a decent allotment of tanks. Would you rather command the French side to use their Char B1-bis, Somuas, and Renault tanks, or the Germans, with their PzIs and PzIIs, and a few PzIVs and Pz38ts?

DP: I would take the Germans. Heavier armor and bigger (sometimes) guns are no match for the flexibility of the German AFV design. Historically, the better German designs

and doctrine won the early blitzkrieg, as they tend to do in the game as well.

Banzai: How do you like PTO scenarios?

DP: I have only played a grand total of four PTO scenarios. It is very different from the ETO scenarios we are all used to. In addition, the Japanese are a strange and tenacious force. I hope to play more in the near future.

Banzai: What was your most enjoyable ASL moment? How about your worst, funniest, coolest, and/or craziest?

DP: My most enjoyable moment is difficult. One must remember games stretching back nearly thirty years. I had two playtests come down to the last dice roll of the final Close Combat phase. I played Rick Reinesch in *Distinguished Company for Lone Canuck*, and Scott Bell in *Beware the Hare* for the upcoming CTASL scenario pack. I lost both games, but any time the final decision comes down to the last possible roll in the last turn, one's money and time for ASL is well spent. I already wrote about my worst year in a previous *Banzai*. I had a whole year that I simply could not roll lower than about an eight. Carl Kusch and I were playing *The Attempt to Relieve Peiper*. I had a skirmish line in the erstwhile hill 538 woods, slowly falling back, but not firing or rolling MCs. I also had a group of an 8-0 leader, one squad and two half squads all broken in hex 2T9, I think. It is one of the woods hexes behind the building/wall/shellhole cluster on Board 2. For two and a half game turns (five Rally Phases) that leader could not self-rally. The first half squad that CXed up the road bagged the whole stack. And when my skirmish line finally ran out of woods and had to fight, I couldn't get a Morale Check or pass one to save my life. My craziest moment came last year, when Pudge and I played *The One Hundredth* twice in an hour. My T-34s, using platoon movement, entered using the road, and the first platoon bogged right as the first tank entered the board. We started again. This time, both platoons made it on board, then bogged where they were. We started a different scenario after that. He used to have a picture of Hitler that he would set up to watch our games. He would pretend to discuss strategy with it between turns. That was too funny. A month ago, I was the Russians against Art Douglas in *Blocking Action at Lipki*. One of Art's PzIIIs got brave and went on the offensive against my advancing armor, and in Bounding Fire, killed both of my BT tanks, kept rate, planged a shot off my KV-2, kept rate, and only stopped firing because he ran out of movement points.

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Banzai: What area of your play would you like to improve on most over the next year?

DP: I really need to branch out and try the Pacific and Desert scenarios. I'm not lazy; I just don't have as much time to play as I want. Therefore, I tend to stick to the tried and true ETO and Russian scenarios. There is a whole world of warfare that I haven't tried, and I intend to change that.

Banzai: Is there an area you think is under-represented in ASL?

DP: I would like to see some Iwo Jima scenarios. I read the book *Legacy of Valor* a while back, and I see some tremendous possibilities for ASL in the battle. Unfortunately, the Japanese spent most of the battle fighting from underground positions, and I think that logistically, it would not be feasible to do in ASL. Also, it would require an entire Chapter B section to cover the unique terrain on the island. I would also like to see more Korea and Indochina scenarios.

Banzai: Spanish Civil War scenarios: overrated or underrated?

DP: I have only seen a couple of these, so I am no judge. I believe that all battles of the era deserve a venue in ASL.

Banzai: Now that *Armies of Oblivion* has been out for a while, have you had a chance to generate some impressions about playing the Axis Minors?

DP: Scott and I have played several Hungarian vs. Russian scenarios lately, and the late war Huns, while lacking firepower most of the time, are some tough cookies defending their homeland. The Romanians are a mixed bag. During the early to mid war, they seem to do all right. Later on, they tend to get pummeled. It is a nice break from seeing the Germans all the time.

Banzai: You play in San Antonio primarily. What are some of the challenges for the San Antonio group, and what successes have you had? What's next for y'all?

DP: We in San Antonio are so far south that the travel time discourages some players, unlike Austin that is more centrally located. Also, a lot of our players attend meetings only occasionally because of other commitments. I try to play every month. We also have a smaller pool of players. Scott Bell is a terrific host. He has lots of room to play and that gigantic table where about four games can be going on simultaneously. It encourages social interaction to hear and

laugh at the other players' outbursts. We have some fairly new players, and hope to encourage them to come and play every month. So far, so good.

Banzai: What advice would you give to players who are just starting out, and what advice would you give to ASL clubs in trying to attract and retain new players?

DP: I support the Starter Kits. Clubs should make the kits available to interested new players and encourage their use. Some people who would otherwise be hardcore wargamers see ASL as a tower of complexity, and shy away from that massive rulebook and associated expense of the game. New players should also watch as the experienced players battle it out. This game is not Xbox. There is no AI to learn to defeat through repetitive play. This game is against a live opponent sitting across the table with his own strategy to defeat you. ASL leaves the most exciting first person shooter in the dust. The Starter Kits give them a taste, and they will want more.

Banzai: Who are your favorite opponents to play and why?

DP: Scott is my favorite opponent by far. We are closely matched in ability. He is more aggressive, and I have more experience. Also, there for a while, he and I were the only members of the San Antonio club that showed up for game day. Eric Gerstenberg is a riot to play. One of our exploits has already been covered in a previous issue. Jeff Toreki and I played *North Bank* a while back, and he kept up a Sean Connery impersonation that was so funny that I almost had to leave the room a couple of times. Zeb Doyle seems very quiet, but he has a dry sense of humor that will catch you off-guard. ASL is fun. Humor breaks the tension. I will play anyone who likes to have fun playing. I even high-fived Art for cleaning out one of my stacks with a KIA. It was funny.

Banzai: What were your worst and best runs of luck?

DP: The aforementioned year of hell stands out, and has been done to death. Don't touch my dice. I will hide them so you can't see them to whammy them. Runs of good luck tend to happen individually, in games or even phases. None come to mind. However, I have vague memories of great runs of luck that didn't last past pizza time.

Banzai: We'll get to your favorite ASL scenarios in another issue, so how about telling us what your other favorite games are?

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DP: I used to play *Talonssoft's East Front* and *West Front*, but that kind of pooped out because the AI is kind of dumb and it cheats. Nothing beats ASL.

Banzai: What are your other interests outside of gaming?

DP: I write about ASL. Don't get me wrong; I'm not obsessed with the game. It interests me, and I write about what interests me. I am currently writing a book in my meager spare time, and it isn't about ASL. Hopefully, I can get it published and retire and write full time. And then I will have more time to play ASL. Okay, maybe I do have a problem. I'm joking.

Banzai: Any final comments to wrap up?

DP: To all players everywhere, keep playing. Support the hobby. Go to tournaments. Encourage new players to try the game. It's a niche hobby, with a small but enthusiastic following. Play when you can, and post your AARs. Write articles about it. Design scenarios, and try to get them published. *Advanced Squad Leader* is a worldwide means of social interaction. Nurture it, and it will continue to flourish. Good luck, and good gaming.

2011 Texas ASL Team Tournament



Rick Reinesch

The planning for this year's tournament is wrapping up nicely and it promises to be just as much fun as in years past, so make those plans now to attend the 19th Annual Texas Team Tournament in Austin, TX, June 23-26, 2011. Last year we had another record attendance with 56 players from points all over the country participating. The website (<http://www.Texas-ASL.com>) has been updated with information on tournament activities, the hotel info and the registration fees. We are constantly updating all that information leading up to the tournament, so make sure to check in regularly for all the latest. Note that the last day to get our great hotel rate is June 7th, so don't delay! And while you are checking out the website, make sure and preregister; you never know what goodies I will come up with for those doing so.

As in previous years, Thursday's games will be informal gaming, with those games only 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. As we did last year we are going to expand the number of folks to three players per team. This made for a great race to the finish with the final team winners not being determined until those final matches on Sunday. The way we score the team award is not based on total wins or losses but on the difference between the two. So a team with 10 wins and 4 losses has a score of 6. But a team that goes 6 and 0 also has a score of 6. This team though would come out ahead of the other team because of a better win percentage overall, but both are certainly in the running. Check the website for all the 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 again be something unique and special, centered this year on the struggle over Ponyri. This is your chance to experience a small part of this titanic battle on the steppes of Russia and see if you can survive and triumph.

In this mini we are featuring the upcoming MMP product **Slaughter at Ponyri**. This fruit of the labors of Pete Shelling and Don Petros has been eagerly anticipated for some time now. We are setting up a Thursday playing for up to 4 players of the large scenario that will be coming in this pack. Here's your chance rub it in that you got to play this baby months before it will be released by MMP, and I'll probably throw in something special to be randomly presented to one of those players that choose to partake. If you are interested in getting in on this unique opportunity, drop by the Texas ASL website and send me an email to let me know. Once I receive the materials from Pete, I'll forward them on to you so that you can be prep'd to hit the ground running that Thursday. Join in and experience something truly unique in the world of ASL.

For the other Thursday mini, we are pleased to be sponsoring a Houston institution again in Austin this year – *Ferocity Fest*. For those that like their play brutal and deadly, this is not to be missed. 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 individuals with the largest number

of points at the end of scenario play will be the winner for each side. It's that simple. We'll be posting the specific scenario(s) as they are determined.

We will kick off all mini play promptly at 9am Thursday, June 23th. 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.

But that's not all for the minis. We will also be sponsoring an SK mini on Saturday. We'll have it as a classic pairing bracket using scenarios from the SKs and SK expansion packs, with one person besting all others and walking away with the prize.

For the regular part of the tourney, remember that above all else we are an OPEN tournament; play what you want against whomever you want, or even as much (or little) as you want.

That being said, there are plenty of prizes to be had. We give out the Major Johnson Award to the player who plays the most ASL over the course of the weekend. We provide awards for the best team over the course of the weekend as determined by the best point differential between wins and losses (as noted above). And then there are awards given to the overall individual champion and runner-up. But even if you aren't in the running for any of those awards, you can still try for the Audie Murphy Award given to the most snakes over the course of the weekend, or there is the Col. Klink for most boxcars. Something new that we are going to try this year is giving an award for close combat victories. But not just simple "I won" points, we are going to give extra points for winning those close combats with style (or brutality, take your pick). It should be fun.

For the past several years we have provided a drawing on Saturday of the tourney for all of the merchandise our sponsors so graciously provide. As in years past we will be holding this drawing at 3:30 Saturday afternoon. I would encourage everyone to head out to our website and check out the listing of these fine folks, and make sure to consider them first when you are making your purchases.

Registration this year is \$36 for all Thursday-Sunday gaming, \$31 for Friday-Sunday; and \$21 for Saturday only and can be done via Paypal through our website. Your entrance fee includes participation in any Mini-Tournaments you desire to enter as well as dibs on all of the great swag we give out. We are at the La Quinta Inn-Round Rock with a fantastic room rate of \$69/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>. Hope to see you in June!

Nothing Noob Under the Sun



Matt Shostak

What hasn't already been said regarding advice to ASL newbies? Over the years there have been lots of articles written on this topic, not to mention message boards posts and whatnot. Yet this issue's theme is to help new players, and with column space to fill what new can be said to the new players among us? As I read such previous advice it struck me that much of it has focused on game tactics rather than other aspects of the game. Here in these pages though, the affable Greg Schmittgens comes from a slightly different angle in his newbie top ten, and I'll try to continue in that spirit by offering some other non-tactical ideas for the new player.

First of all, since new players are starting with a clean slate, it strikes me that it is an opportunity to learn good habits from the beginning. Although this is true generally, there are a couple of slightly confusing areas where it is helpful to get in the habit of doing things the right way. One is when calculating the odds to hit a target with ordnance. It is a natural inclination to want to know what we need to roll to hit. But focusing too much on that can lead to confusion later in some cases. This is best illustrated by example. Say you want to shoot at a tank that is 6 hexes away, and it is moving so it gets a +2 DRM to the roll. If no other modifiers apply, you know that the base hit number is 10, so you need to roll an 8 or less to get a hit. Great, that's all fine and dandy. You roll a 5 and get a hit. Hurray! Now suppose later your opponent moves a 9-1 and 2 squads together through open ground, just 6 hexes away from your gun. Calculating as before, you note that the base hit number at this range is 8, modified by a -2 DRM this time for FFMO/FFNAM. Therefore you need a 10 or less to get a hit. You roll a 5 again, get a hit, resolve it, and move on to the next part of the game, right? This is an all-too-common occurrence – by focusing on the number needed to get a hit, a player can lose focus and not even realize that he did even better than that, he actually got a critical hit. Why is that? Well the base hit number was 8, with a -2 DRM, so the player rolled a 5, and subtracting 2 from that is a 3, which is less than half of the base to hit number, which yields an infantry critical hit. By setting one's mind on the 10 or less needed to hit, a player can be fooled into missing the fact that his final result was low enough to be a critical hit. It's a bummer to miss those kinds of things. This situation works in reverse for positive modifiers. If instead the infantry were in a stone building for a +3 TEM, many players fixate on the fact that a 5 or less will be a hit, and when they roll snake eyes they count it as a

critical hit. But it's not: $2+3=5$ which is not less than half of the base hit number of 8. Hence it is most likely just a normal hit (actually since the original roll was snakes it is a possible critical based on a subsequent roll, but it's not necessarily a critical). The upshot (pardon the pun) of all of this is that it is helpful to get in the habit of focusing on the hit number and the DRMs separately when rolling. In other words, for the first infantry target example, you might say out loud when rolling, "The hit number is 8 with a minus 2 DRM" and then when you roll the 5 actually say out loud "That's 5 minus 2 is 3, which is a hit." Perhaps then it will be more obvious that you've achieved a critical hit.

Another good habit to get into is to be precise in your language regarding area target type vs. area fire. They are not the same thing, but people have a tendency toward informality in speech, and I see this in games as well. Yet in a game the difference sometimes matters, and it will be less confusing for both you and your opponent if you learn to call each type by its proper term.

Being precise with your language extends to other parts of the game as well. It is helpful to both you and your opponents to state very clearly what move you are making or shot you are taking. I've seen many players announce a shot from a stack and start rolling the dice, without declaring whether all, some or none of the units in the stack are firing, indeed without saying what column of the IFT that shot will take place on. Or start rolling dice during the RPh on a stack of broken units, not declaring until after they've rolled that low result which unit they were rolling for. That's not cool. Similarly for ordnance, state the shot clearly including what kind of ammo type is being used. This actually matters for purposes of ammo depletion, especially for guns who have limited ammo types that would be considered automatically used if not declared. For example, if a gun only has HE7 and you take a shot at infantry without declaring the ammo type, it is assumed to be HE. You might not like that if you've just lost your HE ammo on a low-odds shot that you were just taking for purposes of gaining acquisition. Also when moving units, state clearly the movement expenditure as you go. This is helpful in creating a clean game.

We all want good sportsmanship, and being among friends we often allow someone to take back a move or play somewhat out of sequence. I've done that in the past and will probably continue to do so. However, it's still not a great habit to be in. It's better to get accustomed to asking no quarter with regard to mistakes made in the game or playing out of sequence. I realize this is counter-intuitive, especially for newbies, but this habit can be very hard to break once ingrained and it can be a fine line to walk. Moreover, it's the kind of thing where knowing how and when to bend the rules can only really occur if you first know how to strictly adhere

to them. The times when this is most important are regarding the timing of artillery and smoke. There's an important reason in the game why smoke goes before other fire: that is, it can influence that other fire, so it is supposed to go first. Similarly for OBA. So get used to doing this at the proper time and don't ask for any backtracking, at least until you've graduated from newbie status. Backtracking moving units is also problematic. Many times I've seen players start moving a vehicle around, then realize they didn't count up the points properly or else want it somewhere else, and so they just start over. Well, it's possible that such a non-move gained some tactical advantage in recon, even if subconscious. If mines are in play, such a non-move and backtrack gives the moving player knowledge that certain hexes do not contain mines. But more subtly and without perhaps even realizing it, how the defender reacted to this non-move may have given you some hints. So don't do it. And to you veterans reading this, don't use these rules to take advantage of your newbie opponent. He has enough to learn as it is, so give him some helpful reminders when you play.

Make it a habit to learn from the veterans. Most players love to talk about a game after it's over, hashing out the relative merits of various ploys, stratagems, gambits and ideas. Take advantage of the post-game discussion phase to learn something. Don't be afraid to express your own opinions, but at the same time don't dwell too much on whether the dice foiled your brilliant plans. Listen to the veterans; chances are they've learned a thing or two about this game. I have observed new players with confidence not really taking to heart the lessons veterans are trying to impart. Although maintaining some degree of skepticism even of a veteran's advice is healthy, it's often a mistake to not give it a fair hearing.

Don't be overly influenced by your early experiences. It's natural to generalize, but it can be a mistake. A new player burned by small amounts of residual fire in one of his first games may become reflexively leery of it based on that one experience, and therefore miss opportunities that have good odds of success in subsequent games, for example. Similarly, a new player who ran through residual with no ill effect in his early games could become overconfident about it and frequently underestimate its dangers in the rest of his career. I've heard players claim they avoid scenarios with OBA because they always fail with it due to red cards, bad dice, and whatnot. Now OBA is fickle to be sure, but one has to let the law of large numbers work its magic. If you play with OBA often enough, eventually you will experience satisfactory results and not only failures. The same could be said for whatever aspect of the system you're trying to get a handle on.

BANZAI!!!

Lots of articles aimed at new players advise different ways to bite off small chunks of the system to learn so as not to overwhelm the mind. However, each player learns in his own way. In my case I dove right in pretty quickly, because I wanted the full experience with tanks, guns, special weapons, etc. I read voraciously anything and everything I could get my hands on about ASL. If you're a new player I'd simply suggest figuring out what style of learning works best for you, and following that style, whether that means a careful, measured, structured approach, or total immersion, or something in between.

While you shouldn't expect to win very often as a newbie, neither should you convince yourself you're not worthy of beating a veteran. You're just as deserving as the next guy. I think some players defeat themselves before the first roll of the dice because they are playing a so-called top player. Screw that. Play your best, and when you win rest assured that you heartily deserved the victory, even if you diced the pants off the other guy. We've all won and lost games because of the dice.

Lastly, don't forget that the best pound-for-pound weapon in ASL is the 81mm mortar. You'll see for yourself, eventually.

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 Rick 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.

The BANZAI!!! Staff	
Founder and Editor Emeritus	Matt Shostak (512) 899-4560 mshostakster@gmail.com
Managing Editor and Keeper of the Game Tracker	Sam Tyson (980) 428-4113 styson@gmail.com
Editor in Chief and Copy Editor	Rick Reinesch (512) 828-4451 ctasl@aol.com
Contributing Authors	Rick Reinesch, Matt Shostak, Dan Preston, David Roth, Greg Schmittgens, Tim Hundsdorfer, Tom Repetti, Dade Cariaga
Publishing Schedule	Whenever we feel like it!
Club Information	Matt Shostak or Rick Reinesch
Club Web Site	www.texas-asl.com/

Next Issue

- More articles about ASL
- Player Profile

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- Favorite Scenarios
- Club Meeting Recaps
- And much more!