

Banzai!!

The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

Issue #10
October 1996

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

Club Notes and Ladder Standings

Player	Points	Record
Smith	1261	19-7
Shostak	1243	19-5
Seningen	1207	10-7
Hailey	1119	8-4
Esparza	1062	2-0
Purnell	1045	9-5
Tom Woller	1037	1-0
Fritz	1032	1-0
Lavan	1010	2-3
Morgenthaler	978	0-1
O'Quin	974	2-4
Knatcher	972	0-1
Swantek	971	1-2
Toreki	951	0-2
Kirk Woller	940	7-16
Lester	907	0-4
Austin	905	0-3
Gerstenberg	878	5-12
Hively	871	5-14

Recent Results

Smith (Germ) def Hively (Russ) in The Capture of Balta
 Purnell (Germ) def K Woller (Amer) in Panthers in the Mist
 K Woller (Amex) def Purnell (Germ) in Devils in the Graveyard
 K Woller (Germ) def Gerstenberg (Fren) in Le Herisson
 Purnell (Germ) def K Woller (Fren) in Last Defense Line

Correction: Kirk Woller and Bob Purnell informed me that I had omitted a game of theirs, costing Kirk a victory. This issue has corrected that error.

The Mailbox

Your recent smoke articles (*Smoke Gets in Your Eyes* and *Smoking Can Be Hazardous to Your Health*) are great examples of how a newsletter like this can really help new players become better ASL players and enjoy the game more. In fact, they even help more experienced players (like myself) by reinforcing the things which we do right.

Along those lines, I'd like to make a further point about SMOKE! Don't forget about WP grenades, which are available to the U.S. (A24.34), the British (A24.46) in 1945 and the Japanese (G1.17). Infantry units may create WP smoke on a 1/2" counter by announcing the intent beforehand and rolling 1 < their smoke exponent. For the U.S. and for Assault Engineers, this can be an especially useful tactic.

WP grenades can cause a MC per A24.31, but TEM and Leadership modifiers apply, so against dug-in, protected infantry, this is not likely to get a result. But consider, against infantry in orchard, woods or grain (Palms, jungle or kunai), this can be a good tactic.

Instead of SEARCHING that kunai, chuck a WP grenade in that hex and see if someone has to take a MC. Before advancing into CC with that CE or OT vehicle, throw a WP grenade in and make them take a MC. Move adjacent to a broken unit and try to place a WP grenade—just to try and cause casualties. Follow this up with an advancing fire shot, and you've got a murderous combination which can whittle the defender down in a short amount of time.

There is always a tradeoff—you might roll a 6 and be stuck in your hex, etc. But often, making them take a MC is worth the tradeoff—just make sure the unit doesn't get many negative modifiers.

Also, don't forget only the initial placement of the grenades causes a MC. Subsequently moving in does not. However, the penalties for attempting to place WPG uphill can be disastrous. Finally, a word about F.10. The rules covering vehicular smoke grenades are unfortunately vague. VSG may be placed "per A24.11", but F.10 pointedly (or perhaps not) says "smoke" and not "SMOKE". So I am unsure whether vehicles may use WP grenades or not. In any case, it would only be CE AFV which could make the attempt. But a Sherman overrunning my 47L AT gun and chucking in a WP grenade (taking a -2 Morale check himself) would ruin my day. Make sure your regular FtF opponents have worked this out ahead of time.

I'll never forget a string of good luck when my 9-1 and 448 Assault Engineer moved adjacent to the Marine platoon, survived DF, placed a WP grenade and broke the platoon, wreaking much havoc. Don't forget WP grenades, in certain circumstances they can be a great tool. But don't forget the tradeoffs as well.

Tim Hundsdorfer

Wild West Fest After Action Report

Matt Shostak

I flew out to Salt Lake City Tuesday, August 20, for the second annual Wild West Fest. This event, which grew almost spontaneously over the Internet from a small get together to a full-fledged tournament in 1995, promised to be bigger and better this year. Tim Wilson of Lander, WY, was running it, and he picked me up at the airport. What service! Well, after all, he had encouraged me to come out early. The official tournament didn't start until Friday for goodness sakes. But several intrepid gamers would be there early, and I couldn't turn down the opportunity to hang out with the likes of Tim, Dade Cariaga, Mark Nixon, Pete Shelling, and Bill Hayward with the mandate to play lots of ASL. We collected Dade and then picked out a spot with good LOS on a choke point in the Salt Lake Airport to wait for Mark and Pete. Ever crafty, these guys simply delayed their turn of entry until we got bored and went to the hotel. Fine ambushers we'd make. As it turns out, their flight was late in arriving, although the folks at the info desk didn't tell us. Civilian interrogation gave us misleading information. Mark and Pete wound up at the hotel a couple of hours later and the gaming began. Tim had nametags for everyone, each one with a top view picture of an AFV on it. Mine had a Crocodile. Was it a good omen?

Dade and Bill started a game of Mayhem in Manila, from the latest annual, starting a trend that I would see throughout the week, as many scenarios from that issue seemed popular choices among the players. Nixon and Wilson squared off in a scenario I can't remember, and Pete Shelling and I got going in The Long Road, another one from the latest annual. I was rather excited about playing this scenario, mainly because it takes place in the remote locale of Madagascar; French against British. That's one of the things that makes ASL so cool, the ability to go anywhere with it. Pete asked if I had a preference, and I requested the French. He graciously let me have them and we were off. I decided to put my four wire counters in the exit area, three on the exit hexes themselves, and the last one just in front of them. It was the only way I could be sure he would hit them, what with three entry points to choose from. My infantry mostly set up in the gully near the exit, with maybe a single squad as a picket closer to the front. Pete easily overwhelmed the picket squad and started probing for the others (all French start HIP in this scenario). It wasn't long before I was forced to start shooting, and a small firefight erupted. Pete played well and won the firefight, but the wire and the gully did him in. His vehicles (armored cars or trucks, I can't remember), failed their bog rolls in the gully and wire and couldn't get out, which kept him from the victory points needed. 1-0.

That was it for Tuesday night as it was late. Wednesday saw a lot of gaming in the room. Next up for me was Bill Hayward. Tim Wilson suggested Nel Nome Di Roma from *Tactiques* as a good scenario, and we decided to give it a try. Yet another gracious player, Bill asked me if I had a preference, and when I said the Russians, he let me have them. This scenario features an Italian attack on a Russian village (board 10) across some fairly open terrain. There is a lot of mortar fire here, as both sides get a couple of small mortars, a larger one (76 or 82), and OBA (70mm or 80mm). Other than that it's a pretty basic infantry attack. Bill really pressed me with his Italians, and although I picked off a half squad here and there with some airburst shots, I thought he had me on the ropes. He got a squad into a victory building fairly early, and I was naturally concerned that it would be hard to evict them. In this scenario, the Italian attack comes from 3 sides, although not all at once. Not knowing how I could maneuver to meet the coming threats in later turns, I held back some of my infantry in setup. Finally after seeing the success of Bill's early frontal attack,

I figured I had to use my reserves in the front line and move them later when his reinforcements hit my flanks. The Russian radio operator finally got some OBA to hit the Italians just where they were making the most progress in the village, and a Russian squad was able to capture the Italians who had taken the building on the left front. The Italians pressed on and made things tough for the Russians. A sniper picked off one of the Russian leaders early in the game. As the game wore on, it looked like the Russians might have a chance to win based on the CVP cap the Italians are saddled with. Throwing the reserves into the line meant that many of the buildings would be easy pickings for the Italian flankers due to arrive in the mid game, and that therefore if the game came down to building control, the Italians had a good chance to win. There came a point in the mid game when I counted up the Italian casualties, and realized that one more captured squad would put them over the limit, and the victory would be immediate. I saw a chance and decided to take it, going after the broken Italians on the left front. The move succeeded. 2-0.

Next up was Tim Wilson. He suggested Beyond the Pakfronts, the first scenario from ASLUG. I had never played it, but it looked kind of cool. We even got to use cool boards that were blown up to RB size hexes and laminated. Tim also let me choose sides and I took the Russians again (you see how friendly this tournament is?). Beyond the Pakfronts features a fast German attack group of infantry in halftracks, supported by four StuGs, attempting to eliminate a Soviet position near a road junction. It uses very open boards. The victory conditions are a little unusual. The Russians win if at the end of the game they can hit a certain hex in the center rear of the boards with 60FP, with several conditions on what kind of firepower counts for how much, that I won't go into here. Tim's attack was tough, and even though I think he knew that some of my units were dummies, he still minded his P's and Q's and meticulously eliminated them. My guys just fell back to the foxholes in the victory area and hunkered down. He used his halftracks to overrun, encircle, and generally wreak havoc with my infantry. He had bad luck with smoke rolls from a couple of his halftracks when they malf'ed their MA's and subsequently sixed them out and were recalled. Meanwhile his infantry was advancing through the central woods area. When my reinforcements arrived, featuring three T-34s and three lend-lease Lees, the tank battle was joined. Those StuGs were tough. Soon the battlefield was littered with burning wrecks of both sides. After knocking out the T-34 that was anchoring my left, one of his StuGs turned its attention to the victory area, while two halftracks maneuvered into encircling positions behind my entrenched infantry. Fortunately, for me they parked directly in front of my 45LL ATG, which knocked both out, and pivoted to take a shot at the aforementioned StuG. It missed, but got him in the next Prep Fire. That shooting sequence helped immensely, but it was still close. Each of us had infantry in melee with AFVs, the Germans knocking out a T-34, and the Russians waxing two halftracks in the wheat field. Near game end, the Germans brought their OBA down as a smoke mission. With a breeze in effect, soon there was drifting smoke all over the victory area. Ironically, I think this move made it harder for the Germans to win, as it became increasingly difficult to hit any of the Russian tanks that were still alive. On my last turn I simply moved everything I could as close to the victory hex as possible. I think I had about 68 FP. Tim was a great opponent and he's a great guy in general. 3-0.

Game four was against Mark Nixon. It was getting late so Mark said he'd pick out a small scenario. He chose To Clear a Roadblock from the latest Annual. I chose the Germans on the defense, but as I heard him reading the SSRs I was less and less happy with my choice. In this scenario a small German roadblock is attacked by partisans on board 2. The Germans all start either pinned or under a final fire counter, while the partisan attackers are led by a heroic 10-2. Yikes. Mark attacked with confidence and on turn one engaged a 548 squad in a melee that would go on for a

couple of turns. A short time later he decided to throw in the 10-2 and another squad or two to finish the Germans off, but the dice turned on him and the 10-2 was killed. Eventually he dispatched this German squad, but the price was obviously quite high. The rest of the game was a shooting match, with the partisans relentlessly breaking up one German position after another. This is a short scenario, about 5 turns, and it soon became obvious that the partisans would not clear the minefield and the roadblock. They would have to go for the other victory condition, which was to have no unbroken German MMC on the board. This looked achievable. Soon I was down to a single squad in a foxhole on a hilltop. Mark shot but couldn't break him and advanced into CC. I think he caused a CR, which left me with nothing but a 238 in melee. On the German half of turn 5, I could do nothing but sweat out Mark's shots. He took several, the best being a 12+1, but only pinned the 238 while breaking his own squad that was in the melee. I got the lucky victory. When the scenario was over, I asked Mark if he noticed that I never moved a unit the entire time. All I did was hunker down in the foxholes and shoot. My point being that there was no thinking involved on my part in this one, perhaps a big clue as to how I could eke out a win. 4-0, and that was it for Wednesday, as it was late.

Thursday morning I matched up against Dade Cariaga. We chose Acts of Defiance and Dade clobbered me. I never really felt in this game, and although it came down to the last turn, it wasn't nearly as close as that makes it sound. I chose the Russians in this one, and Dade's German attack was bold and aggressive. He moved a half squad up and searched, stripping two of my frontline squads of their concealment. At the time I thought this was a mistake, as it cost him that half squad for dubious gain, but if it was an error, it was the only one Dade made. His first goliath rolled snakes and destroyed the near bridge. I should have taken this as an omen. My first two radio contact rolls failed. I was not too worried about the Hitler youth at all. Although I had heard people advocate using their sewer movement to try to whack a Russian group in hand to hand CC, I thought that it wouldn't work, and that they'd be better employed heading for the bridges to threaten the Russian tanks there with that panzerschreck. Anyway, Dade really hammered the point home and I became convinced of the error of my ways. He took the 247 into CC with a concealed 9-1, LMG, 628 and killed them all. I think I got the 247, but who cares? With no leader in my strongpoint it was relatively easy for the Germans to wipe out those Soviets. My artillery eventually came down in a pretty good spot on the attacking Germans, but it only broke a couple of squads, hardly enough to be a difference-maker. My reinforcements never had a chance getting across the bridge, despite some good smoke from the tanks. They all broke or pinned anyway. I'm not really sure what I did wrong in this scenario, which bothers me a bit. 4-1.

More and more players began arriving by Thursday evening. Bob Oppen, "one of the nicest guys in ASL" was looking for revenge for last year's dicing I gave him in Cold Crocodiles. We picked out Soldiers of Construction as an interesting looking scenario. In it, a bunch of Seabees, represented by 336s, must clear a runway of an airfield on Okinawa without suffering more than 12 CVP. The runway is cluttered with planes, rubble, and shellholes. They are aided in their clearing by three bulldozers, one unarmored, one armored, and one a Sherman tankdozer. They must perform this clearance, of course, while under attack from a small force of second line Japanese. Bob and I agreed to dice for sides and I got the Japanese. Although tempted to launch a turn 1 banzai, I decided instead that my strategy would be to go for a firefight which I thought I could win due to my better morale, better cover, and the hazardous movement of the clearing units. Over time, some of the Americans did indeed fall, and the unarmored bulldozer was knocked out as well. The casualties were mounting, but they still weren't as high as I would have liked, and the tankdozer was almost unstoppable. Late in the game, with most of

the runway cleared, I finally launched a banzai in the hope of causing more casualties, which I did, making the game ever closer. At first we hadn't realized it, but with the dozer wreck on the runway, it wasn't clear, was it? After some consultation between ourselves and a couple other players, we decided that of course it wasn't, and Bob would have to try to clear the wrecked dozer to claim the win. At this point, however, he was already up to 12 CVP. One more and the game was over. We also weren't sure exactly how to clear a wreck with a dozer, since the rules on clearing wrecks in chapter D and the rules on dozers in chapter G seemed inadequate. At any rate, we finally settled on letting the tankdozer roll to clear, with the -5 DRM for being a dozer. Thus Bob needed a 7 on his last movement phase. He rolled an 8. 5-1.

Friday morning I got to meet Tom Huntington, which I had been looking forward to, since he had written a couple of articles for Banzai, and also because of his great work on the expanded ASL index (of which he brought several copies to give away). We decided to play. All my previous games would count for nothing in the Shootout, the official tournament, which started on Friday. So in some sense I was back to 0-0, although I never had any serious delusions about actually winning the tournament anyway. We agreed upon Chance d'une Affaire from a recent General magazine. Tom had a couple of squads break on turn 1 to some long range fire, but no serious damage. On my half of turn 1, the crews of my Panzer IIs crewed their vehicles (they start the game outside the vehicles refueling them, and the tanks are further restricted in how many movement phases in which they can enter a new hex). On turn 2, Tom drove his three FCM tanks up in platoon, right next to the Panzer II with my armor leader. It was a good move, because even at this range, a hit on an FCM was not very likely to kill it. If I got one, it would be no big deal, because the other two would likely kill the panzer and then turn on the other panzer. Well, I had to take the shot anyway. I shot at the first tank: Critical hit! Flaming wreck! ROF! I shot at the second tank: Critical hit! Wreck! ROF! I turned the turret and shot at the last FCM, and did not get a critical hit. But I still killed it. That was the game right there. Tom kept on for another turn or two, but it was all over. When the German reinforcements came on, they didn't need to worry about the French armor like the scenario is designed. All they had to do was bottle up the French infantry. Tom was a great guy to play. I felt a bit sorry for his poor luck, but he was a great sport about it. 6-1 overall, 1-0 in the Shootout.

Later on Friday I had to find another 1-0 player to match up with. I found Mark Evans. He had several PTO scenarios that he wanted to play, but they all looked too cumbersome for me. I was already starting to feel tired, and a bit burned out on ASL after 7 games since Tuesday. I suggested instead In Front of the Storm from the latest annual, since I had noticed several other players enjoying it during the tournament, and they gave it good reviews. The theme was similar to my previous game, in that a French force with well armored tanks would be attacking Germans in 1940. This one, however, required the French to take a two hex bridge, and its two entrance/exit hexes, to win. They have 3 good tanks to help their numerically superior infantry out. The Germans counter with a 37L ATG and a roadblock. They also have a 9-2. This game was a bit weird in how it turned out, but in a lot of respects it was the game I felt I played the best in. The early game saw Evans' French destroy the German units of the far side of the river. My 9-2 directed some MMG fire from his foxhole on my side of the river, but for the first several turns he could not get rate nor even get a result on the IFT. But I stuck to my basic plan, which was to delay with half of my infantry on the far side as much as possible, and use my three foxholes on my side of the bridge to hold, respectively, a LMG, 548, a LMG, 548,8-1, and a 9-2, MMG, 548 all one right after the other. The two LMGs were positioned to be able to throw firelanes across the bridge, but the MMG was a level higher and could not do so. Behind the MMG position was the ATG, but it broke very early and never came back. Although my troops couldn't shoot

straight early on, they were tough. The 9-2 battled hardened to a 10-2 and the 548 squad with him eventually battle hardened as well and became fanatic. Mark's French cleared the far side Germans out fairly easily and looked to be well on schedule, especially considering that the ATG had mal'ed and not come back. He parked his tanks on the far side and decided to shoot for several turns at my foxhole line. He got many results, but never hurt the 10-2 group with more than a pin. With two movement phases left, Mark decided to move his tanks out, and I thought it was over. He would just park them on top of my infantry and his French troops would just waltz across the bridge. His tanks, however, had red MP numbers and he rolled a 12 for startup! One immobilized. The other failed its non-platoon movement task check. Yeehah! I had a chance. His tanks did not have enough movement to get to the far side now, even though he had one turn left. The last turn saw the Frenchmen fling their infantry at the bridge, getting blasted in the MMG's boresighted hex, and taking several residual shots. When his last unit, a squad that had gone fanatic that very rally phase, failed its check while attempting to cross the bridge, it was over. A great game. 7-1 overall, 2-0 in the Shootout. I called it a night as I couldn't find another 2-0 player who was ready for a game.

Saturday morning I played Carey Cardon in Ninety Minute War. It took us a while to get past the scenario selection phase, and we diced for sides. I got the Guamanians, and set up heavily in the victory building, with only a few guys outside. My reasoning was that if they set up too far forward they would be easily overwhelmed and unable to rout. As it turns out Carey lost a full squad to my MMG ambush, when they moved into a boresighted location, point blank. The squad cowered on the roll, however, and was soon dispatched. The game really turned in the Japanese favor when they launched a Banzai at the victory building from close range. The Guamanians took several good -2 shots, but did essentially zero damage, and the Japanese cruised to a relatively easy victory. I managed to prolong the game until the final turn, but it wasn't as close as that sounds. 7-2 overall, 2-1 in the Shootout.

Although I was feeling pretty burned out on ASL, when Tim Wilson came by and asked if anyone was free for a game, I volunteered. Only I found out it wasn't to play Tim, it was to play local ASL player Kenneth Li. I remembered Kenneth from last year's WWF, where he stopped by but didn't play. We decided to go for a short and simple scenario and chose Backblast's Surrender or Die. We diced for sides, and I got the Americans. It was a short and simple game, as Kenneth spent too much time shooting and not enough moving. 8-2 overall, 2-1 in the Shootout.

At that point I figured I was done playing ASL for the weekend. I was tired and I was out of the running in the Shootout. Yet Tom Huntington was looking for a game in the evening and I figured I should play while I can, and that Tom deserved another shot at me for those critical hits in Chance d'une Affaire. We finally decided on Blocking Action at Lipid. Tom maneuvered his tanks well, although we ran into difficulty figuring out how to use platoon movement for tanks of widely varying speeds such as the T-34 and the KV2. At any rate, the first few turns saw the Russian tanks move up carefully on the German left flank, the one with more cover, careful to hide the thin-skinned BTs while exposing only the front armor of their monster tanks. The Russian infantry moved through the woods. Each time the Russian tanks hove into view, my panzers went for motion attempts and blew smoke, then moved out of LOS during their next move. Tom wasn't giving me an edge or a weakness to exploit, and I was afraid that he might simply exit the KV2, the T-34, and one other unit for the victory. At one point he moved his tanks into position in the hedge-lined road, facing down my tanks. I squeaked a LOS from the 28LL ATG to the rear BT. It was close, but clear. The Hailey rule saved me. I rolled to hit: Critical hit! Flaming wreck! Are you serious?! I decided I'd

better shoot at the KV2 next, which was also in LOS. I rolled: Critical hit! Flaming wreck! You just have to be kidding me! Could lightning strike the same player twice? Or was it four times?! I was amazed that I got those critical hits in Chance d'une Affaire, but to do it again against the same opponent was simply unbelievable. Tom resigned, and I can't blame him. In another kind of scenario, this kind of luck wouldn't end it, but in the two we played the tanks are so critical to the success of the attack that having them wiped out like that was nearly impossible to overcome. I really felt bad for Tom, and we agreed to play a real scenario sometime. At least he has the knowledge that he did not lose due to mistakes or inferior tactics. 9-2 overall, 2-1 in the Shootout. That was it for my ASL play for the week.

The Wild West Fest was more than just a bunch of ASL, however. It was a chance to meet a bunch of other like-minded gamers in a nice atmosphere and have a lot of fun, whether it was watching other games, or telling war stories over beers at the microbrewery across the street. I finally met Rodney Kinney, ASL zen master, who used to spar with Mike Seningen right here in Austin once upon a time. I got to renew my friendship with Tom Repetti, Tim Wilson, and Dade Cariaga. I spent some time chatting with Mark Nixon about his various articles, and what we can do to give back something to ASL. Dave Tutlo and Dave Van Kan really do look alike. Brian W. and the enigmatic Dr. Martin Snow each had sets of oversized, laminated boards that were put to good use. Bill Stevens showed off his Monster Pack (of scenarios), of which I procured a copy for our club's use. Cariaga, Wilson, and Nixon were ASL marathoners, playing scenario after scenario, it seemed, almost nonstop. Wilson in particular played at least two monster scenarios that I know of, Preparing the Way and The Bushmasters (which he almost won with the American balance), and how he could do all this while running the tournament and even providing the occasional ride from the airport, I'll never know. Tom Huntington arrived with several free copies of his excellent ASL Index. I saw the complete evolutionary scale of dice containers, from the single-celled bacteria that is free range rolling, to the simple invertebrate known as the inverted dice cup slam, to the woolly mammoth that is the hermetically sealed tupperware container, to the Cro-Magnon dice tower, to the Albert Einstein of dice rolling, the small, efficient, dice glass. ☺ Unfortunately, I also saw a significant amount of use of the heretical IIFT, mostly due, no doubt, to the large Colorado contingent. It scares me that Tom Repetti will be moving there soon. Don't go over to the dark side, Tom! I also saw a frightening list of house rules affixed to someone's ASL notebook. Hey guys, isn't it hard enough to learn the real rules? I would refer such heathens to my editorial in the very first issue of Banzai on the dangers of variantism. ☹

This was a great tournament, topping last year's WWF. It is in a city that usually has reasonable traveling costs from Austin. The hotel rooms were very good, and reasonably priced as well. They were big enough, in fact, that players could and did play games in their rooms when they desired a little less noise or perhaps a cooler temperature than the big game room. The pool and hot tub were put to good use by several players between games, and the irrepressible Cariaga even managed to procure a massage. At least I think that's what the kids are calling it these days. I would heartily recommend WWF 97 to anyone considering going. Thanks to Tim Wilson for running this thing and doing a great job.

Monster Pack is Here

Matt Shostak

At Wild West Fest, I was able to pick up a copy of *War Oboe's* Monster Pack of scenarios. These scenarios are meant to be big, and often played as club events involving several players at once.

Included in the bunch is a 32-board recreation of the landings at Gold Beach! While that one seems a bit unrealistic for our club to tackle at this point, the others look intriguing. Perhaps the biggest one that our club could tackle is The Big One, a team game taking place at Kursk. Play would involve 4 players per team, with one player on each team designated as the overall commander. Each player on a team plays one scenario against an opponent from the other team. All scenarios take place simultaneously, with the outcome of one possibly influencing events in adjacent scenarios. One of the appeals in this game is that it is DYO. The fog of war opportunities are great. Each player gets a certain amount of points to spend, and in addition, the overall commander for each side has additional points to spend on reserves, air, OBA, etc., which he can allocate to his teammates as he sees fit, either before the scenarios commence or even during the scenarios themselves. Each of the scenarios takes 9 turns, and uses about 2 boards. Not short, but not prohibitively long either. This one looks like a bunch of fun, if we can get 8 guys with the right spirit to pull it off. I have the space, and with a little prep time I bet we could knock it off on a long Saturday. I plan on doing it, and soon. More information will be sent out in a separate mailing, scheduled before this newsletter goes out. This event, when and if it ever happens, will be done with a priority on fun above all else. No one will be allowed to take it too seriously.

Learning the Law of the Curved Fire Gun

Tim Hundsdorfer

For most players, their first trip to Chapter C involves light mortars. These weapons are quite basic—included at the platoon or company level in most armies. They are also prolific in ASL scenarios, so prolific, in fact, that ASL players are faced with them within their first three or four playings. The mechanics are pretty simple. Make a to hit roll and then resolve a hit on the IFT (or IIFT).

There are important things to remember. Mortars ALWAYS use the Area Target type (not the same as area fire). You MUST place Area acquisition when using a mortar, so you cannot ‘track’ a unit. The firepower equivalency of a mortar is always halved (except if it scores a critical hit, in which case it is doubled instead of halved).

Lesser players are inclined to discount light mortars for their low firepower to PP ratio—but consider the ROF. Light mortars can be excellent weapons when used against the right target—especially those in tree lines. Some nationalities’ light mortars have special ammo, like s7, IR or WP8. It’s also important to keep in mind that some mortars are much better than others:

Mortar(MM)	ROF	PP	PP	Range	Note
U.S.M2(60)	3	4	5	3-45	IR, WP7 ⁵
U.S.M19(60)	2	4	4	2-18	B11, IR, WP6 ⁵
French(60)	3	4	5	3-42	IR ²⁺
French(50)	2	2	2	2-11	Crew
Japanese(50)	2/1	2	4	1-16	IR, WP6, s7
British(51)	2	2	4	2-11	s7,IR ²⁺
British Air(51)	1	2	3	2-8	B11, s7, IR
German(50)	3	2	5	2-13	
Russian(50)	3	2	4	3-20	
Italian(45)	2	2	4	2-13	B11
Belgian(50)	2	2	3	4-14	B11, no dm
Polish(46)	2	2	4	3-20	B11
Chinese(40)	1	2	2	1-6	B11,ABNA

Mortars which can use smoke are a big plus, as they can fire smoke and keep ROF, although depletion numbers are low enough that this generally isn’t a factor.

The variance in light mortars, along with the relative complexity in the mechanics, makes it a good idea to study them a bit on the side, without the distractions of a scenario. Try this exercise:

Take two sides’ mortars and half squads. Give them any board and let them duel it out until one side is eliminated. Use historical ELRs and a SAN of 4 for the side moving first and 3 for the side moving second. Switch nationalities and/or half squad type and try it with different mortars and crews. Using SAN is very important, as light mortars generate a lot of dice rolling and it’s an important element to remember when using light mortars.

Observe every aspect of firing the mortars. Notice the dynamics of moving them and firing them. Keep in mind air bursts and fire at moving targets. Attempt dismantling and assembling the mortars and other skills which you will use in a scenario. The use of acquisition counters and special ammo is important. You also want to add an extra half-squad and attempt spotted fire.

Writing down what happens, to confer with a more experienced player is an excellent idea. Possibly, one or two newer players can by this exercise while a more experienced player stands by to answer questions. Often during down times at a local tournament, there are people standing around who could help you (or whom you could help) by doing a simple exercise like this.

Things to notice about toting mortars around:

- Dismantling them helps move them around faster, but you lose a phase or two where you could be firing.
- Half squads tote mortars just as fast as full squads. Half-squads have 3PP capacity, just like squads. Leaders can help lug light mortars which are assembled. This is a GREAT use for 6+ls or 7-0s which you intend to leave behind to rally the stragglers.

Things to notice about the “to hit” process:

- Acquisition improves your chances of a hit by about 25%. When you consider a 3 ROF in most cases, acquisition builds up fast. Don’t squander it by firing all over the place. You also lose acquisition when firing your inherent firepower—which is why many squad leaders stack.
- The range to target doesn’t really make much difference on the area target type. The basic to hit actually increases from range 13 to 24.
- Also note that the +2 for smoke is a modifier to the basic to hit number, not the DR. It’s EASIER to place smoke than a regular round.
- Light mortars are one of the only SW which may bore sight— always use bore sighting when allowed. Don’t forget to apply the -1 FFNAM and/or FFMO to your to hit roll—you don’t get to use it later in the resolution of the shot.
- As SW, light mortars can be leader directed. You probably don’t want to have that 9-2 hanging back with your Brixia, but if you have an 8-1 behind to rally troops that need to come back fast, putting him with a mortar gives him something to direct in the meantime.

Things to notice about the resolution of hits:

- Firing at a unit in woods, allowing a -1 airburst modifier, increases your effectiveness by 15% or more, and makes your light mortar almost as good as a MMG (Good ROF, but you have to hit). ☹
- Consider using WP instead of HE. You get a MC AND there is smoke in the hex. ☹
- Remember the firepower of a light mortar critical hit is doubled. Not halved and doubled—doubled. And the TEM applies as a negative modifier. So, if you place a mortar round on a stone bunker with your M2, you get a I6FP-7 attack (from outside the bunker's CA.) ☹

If you think light mortars are worthless—DO THIS EXERCISE. It will convince you otherwise. At least, it will show you that some mortars are less worthless than others. For the initiated veteran, this exercise may seem stupid. But for a newer player, learning the process of light mortar fire is important for playing almost ANY scenario. Even later on, learning the different capabilities of the Japanese light mortar or limitations of the Italian light mortar can be accomplished with this simple exercise.

It's simple, gives you ample opportunity to consult the rule book as necessary, can be done solo, doesn't take a lot of time and WILL improve your play. The TO HIT process of light mortars is easily misunderstood and mistakes are easily made.

Lt. Mortar Flowchart:

101. Setting up
102. Read the ordnance notes for your mortar
103. Good lines of sight?
104. Opportunity for spotted fire?
105. Take into account advantages of special ammo.
106. Bore sight!
107. Plan to take advantage of air bursts.
108. Conceal yourself.
201. Target becomes available.
202. Preliminary estimation of the Basic To Hit.
203. Is the hex acquired?
204. Is the target moving?
205. Is spotted fire necessary?
206. Judge costs/benefits of hitting
207. Calculate the TH
208. Keep track of ROF
209. Sniper!
301. Calculate the FP of the hit
302. Hits are resolved at ½ FP of the mortar's line on the IF
303. Critical hits are resolved at 2x the FP of the mortar's line on the IFT and reverse TEM (except air bursts!)
304. TEM applies, except for Woods, where a -1 air burst applies.
401. Morale Checks/Pin Checks
402. Sniper!

Coming Soon...

Nothing. Not if I don't get some more articles, which primarily come from the readership. Give something back to ASL. Write something for *Banzai*.

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