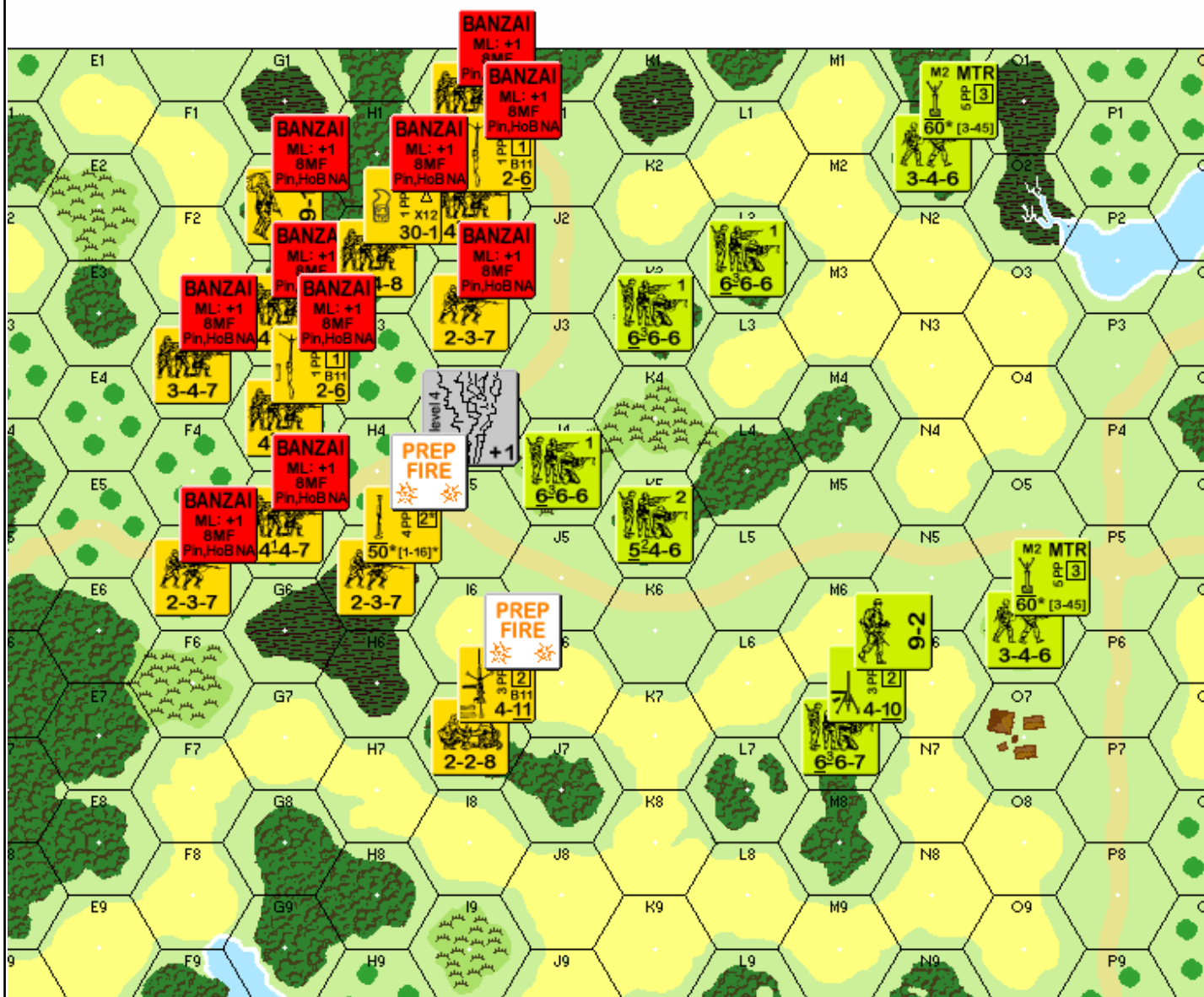


Banzai!!!



The Newsletter of the Texas ASL Club

March, 2009 Volume 14, Number 1

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Editor's Foxhole

Matt Shostak



Welcome to another action-packed issue of the newsletter of Texas ASL. A quick look at the table of contents shows all the nifty goodies we have in store. This is probably the last issue that we'll publish before the Texas ASL Team Tournament, so let me take this opportunity to encourage y'all to join us for a fun-filled weekend of gaming. Rick is probably up to his old tricks again, lining up all kinds of fun and prizes. Read all about it in his article in this issue on page 10. We've had a lot of momentum throughout Texas ASL lately, with several new members joining us, and new venues opening up as possibilities for game days and events. To stay current with all of these club events, you might want to subscribe to our email groups on Yahoo (central-texas-asl and aslhouston). See the Club Notes section on p. 22. Our club website, <http://www.texas-asl.com/> also is chock full of good information, tons of ASL related links, downloads to help you organize your counters and help you with your game, and web masters Rick and Sam keep it all up to date.

Owlcon AAR and Scenario Analysis: AP42 *Frontiers & Pioneers*

Nick Drinkwater

German Player [ELR 4, SAN 2]: Brian Roundhill
Russian Player [ELR 3, SAN 3]: Nick Drinkwater



Pre-Game Thoughts

Brian Roundhill and I both wanted to play each other at this year's Owlcon as somehow we had managed to dodge each other at previous tournaments, despite both of us having a kindred bond from a shared British heritage. For some unknown reason, as well as an uncertain familial background, Brian supports some dodgy English football team called Liverpool, a city where the women are all orange, the men all have perms and a dodgy moustache, and everybody wears shell suits, both in and out of prison / home. Brian, Brian, Brian! How can you not see the truth and accept 'Arry's lilywhite army (Tottenham Hotspur) as the dark horses of English football, the slumbering giant of the Premier League, and the one team in soccer that will inevitably be 'linked' with every player who's ever even been thinking about a transfer?

So overall, in Brian we have someone of questionable national background and even more suspect sporting affinities, but in his defense, I have been told that Brian is one of the game's nicest guys, a genuine rules guru, has a keen handle on how to get the best out of his troops and is someone who is difficult to beat. This should be a big challenge for me and I was going to need to be at my best in all aspects of my game to pull out a win here.

As it was mid-afternoon on the Saturday of Owlcon, we both realized we had a fairly long time available in which to pack in a good-sized scenario. As we're both keen to try something new, we pulled out the freshly released *Action Pack 5* from MMP, and I suggested we give *Frontiers and Pioneers* (AP42) a spin. Big enough to be juicy and non-dicey, some interesting terrain to play on, a challenging victory condition for the German and some funky units to give it a twist. After the two quick games of *Into Vienna Woods* (AP52) with Zeb (*See the article on page 16 of this newsletter – Ed.*), this would be my second expedition into *Action Pack 5* for the weekend.

Board Configuration:

The intent of the design for AP42 is to create a straggly Russian town on the fringes of a choked primeval Russian forest where brush, grain, orchards and woods intermingle to create a very patchwork terrain. Board 37 is used to represent the forest and this will be the board upon which the Germans will enter from the southeast quadrant (on road hexes 37Q10, Y10 or GG5). The town is primarily represented by board 57, one of the new transitional boards that comes with the Action Pack. The village is augmented by three more additional building overlays near the crossroads on board 37 forming the southern side of the hamlet. Of these three overlays, one is a wooden single-hex two-level building, another being a two-hex building

created as a factory by SSR. As Scott Holst noted on an AAR in the online forums, the two-level building in hex 37oP2 can see the German entry hex in 37GG5 and with the MMG at long range, may be able to upset German riders there with the use of residual fire, something the German will need to think about.

All the village buildings are SSRed to wood and these shacks tend to align along the main road through the village, a little like board 49, but in this case the buildings have a little more cover between them (and hence skulking

opportunities) due to the presence of more grain and orchards. Interestingly, the presence of orchard-road hexes (e.g. 57T2) means that it is possible for defenders and attackers to cross from one side of the road to the other with a degree of safety more than is usual. A fourth overlay (OW1) has been added on the north side of board 37 to form a patchy orchard grove that gives an immediate and direct covered access route into the town. Due to the time of year, both grain and orchards are in season and for once it is not a MNW day (moderate, no wind), but a moist one!

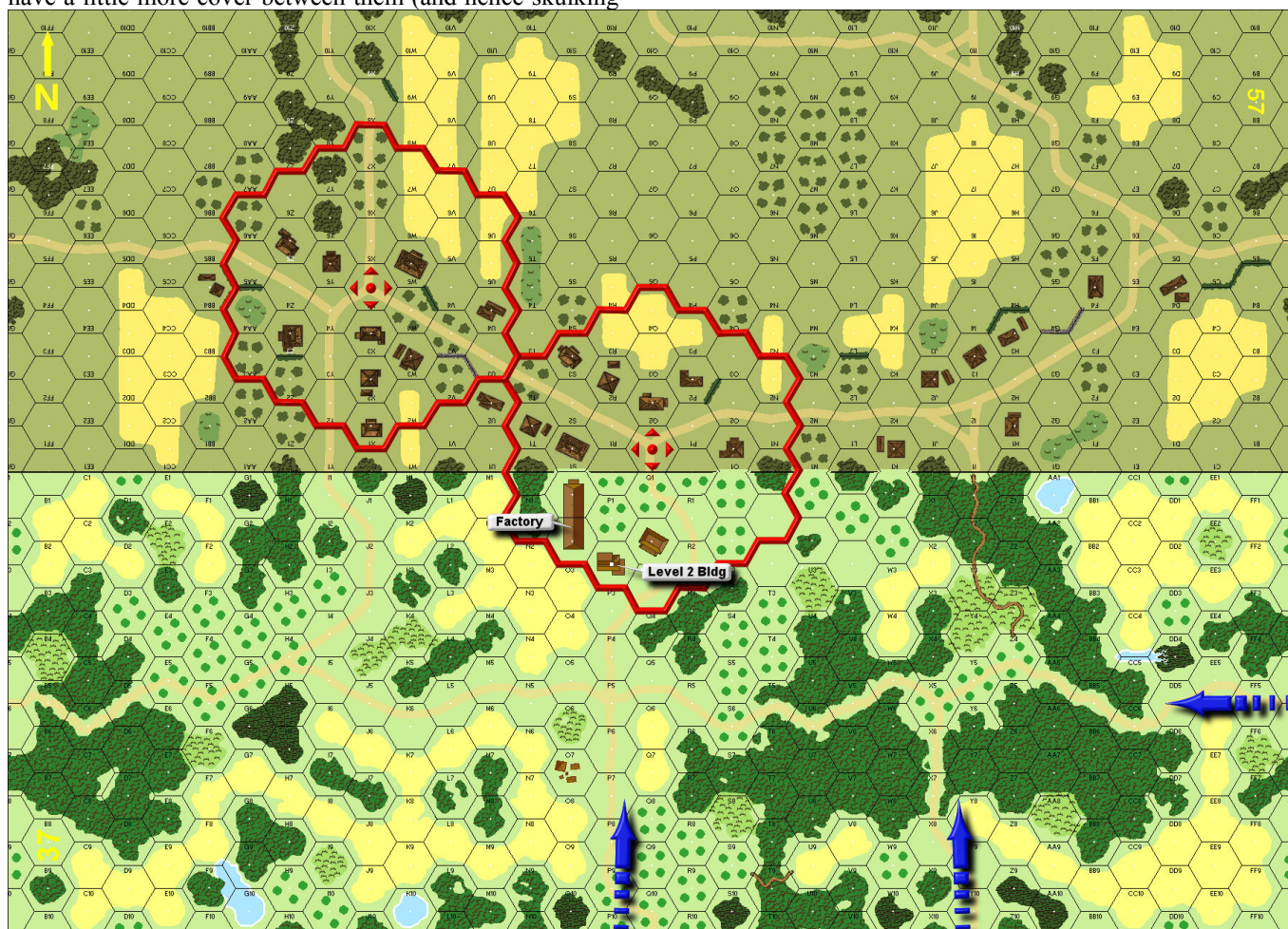


Figure 1: Board configuration for AP42, *Frontiers & Pioneers*. Grain and orchards are in season. By SSR, all buildings are wooden, and 37oP2 is a Level 2 building. Building 37oO1 is a factory. German entry hexes (blue arrows) and Russian victory condition building clusters (red outlines) have been marked.

Victory Conditions:

These have been designed quite subtly by Chas Argent and end up being quite challenging for both sides. In the Russian's favor, there is an instant win CVP cap of 25 in place against the Germans and due to the nature of this scenario, this is quite achievable. Each of the German tanks is worth 5CVP and both the 45Ls of the BT-5s and the T-35

can punch holes in these with ease, and that's not even considering the potential of the KV-1. Clearly the Germans will need to watch out for their armor while there are still any mobile Russian tanks on the prowl, and they will also need to watch out on giving any cheap CVP away due to breaking whilst mounted and falling off motorbikes. German infantry will also need the help of their tanks (the

MkIVC with its S9 and the rest of the armor with SD6) to cross the very open roads in the teeth of some stiff return fire from Russian defenders safely ensconced in generally +2 terrain.

On the flip side of this, the Germans also have achievable VC in that they can get to choose which of the two village three-hex radius clusters they need to clean out of Russian defenders. In most cases, this will almost certainly be the cluster around the 57Q1 crossroads as that is closer to the German avenue of attack. However, the Germans always retain the possibility to change their minds and redirect their attack and send a small platoon on bikes on a mid- to late-game building grab around the back of the main Russian defenders to snag the 57X4 cluster - this means that a Russian squad or so should usually be kept on hand at the rear to stop such tricks. This is definitely an option to keep the Russians honest and just spread the defenses a little bit more. Note that the two victory building clusters are mutually exclusive and there is no overlap - one key building (57U2) which may form part of the Russian end-game defense is 'neutral' being in neither of the clusters, something the Russians should be very aware of when planning turn six and seven moves.

One thing that may be cool for the Russians is to keep the AA Gun HIP till the very end of the game and then run the crew over to whichever building needs extra support for the final German turn seven - get that crew in with the Commissar, or maybe the 9-2, and a rifle squad and things get really interesting. Conversely, the German should be thinking in his turn six just what units he needs to have in place and when to have them ready for any end-game building-rush to achieve his VC. It is likely that in any main assault through the southern and eastern sides of the 57Q1 cluster, that the Russian defenders will have been concentrated into one or two buildings at the back of the cluster (e.g. 57S1, 57S3 and 57T1) by game end; ideally the German should have one flamethrower at least left running at this point to remove this obstacle, together with some tanks to force encirclement penalties.

Russian Defense

Russian Strengths: +2 Terrain, KV-1 with radio, 9-2, commissar, parity on troop numbers, fallback defense

Russian Weaknesses: Weak armor on AFVs, platoon movement restrictions, stretched defense, leader quantities

As noted above, it may be worth mounting the MMG plus a leader in the level 2 location of 37oP2 to interdict the German entry hex of 37GG5. If you do this, it is likely that the German infantry will then only come in on the other two entry points as the Germans do need to sweat the CVP in this one. Time and movement issues mean that the German force is likely to approach from the south and

possibly the east side of the 57Q1 building cluster, so as time is of the essence, it might be worth using the odd isolated squad mixed in with several dummies in areas such as the grain and orchard fringes of 37X2 and 37BB3 to give the German bikers reason to think twice - infantry is at a premium in this game for the Germans as much as it is for the Russians, who start at almost parity with eight squads to the Germans' nine - even a willingness to burn the odd brave Nazi half-squad as concealment testers will hurt the Germans here. On the Russian plus side is the fact that, flamethrowers aside, the moderate German leadership and the lack of German MGs means that most of their defenders will be in +2 terrain for most of this game, and that coupled with an ELR 3 means that Russian conscript generation will be limited as far as a 1941 scenario goes.

One other thing to think about regarding the Russian infantry is their potential for getting access to Molotov cocktails - I tend to shy away from using these as I always seem to invariably end up dousing myself in petrol and immolating myself - it's just one of those ASL things that I do (like failing all residual fire attacks, yes all of them, and always losing in an ambush, no matter how concealed and stealthy I may be and how loud and lax the opponents are). However, if you are lucky to be more blessed than me, then adding the extra four FP against an adjacent German in a road may be quite tasty and worth the risk - you're kicking an eight FP attack up to a 12 FP, and in a game with CVP caps, that can't be bad. I personally would always stay off the bottles in the last two turns; I can so easily see myself breaking a critical squad just at the wrong moment, but then again, if there's an option to kill a German tank with it, then you may just want go for it - it will all come down to the modifiers. *(Your mileage may vary. A timely snake eyes on such an attempt helped Matt Shostak's Russians brew up a German tank in a game against Sam Tyson. The Russians eventually won on the CVP cap. - Ed.)*

Swapping the 8-0 for a Commissar is a complete no-brainer in this scenario as it essential for the Russians to keep squads rallied and recycled in this game - yes, there might not be that many German foes, but there are only eight squads available for the Russians and they need to be fighting hard. For your armor assets, the problem of the BT-5s requiring platoon movement means that you will probably need to have a couple of obvious 5/8th" concealed stacks adjacent to each other, but it may well be worth using four more of your extra 12 "?" counters to pair up with the other tanks to at least create some initial doubt in the German mind as to just where the KV-1 monster really is. With the Russian tanks having armor factors normally in the 1-2 range, it is essential to get in one or two shots first versus the panzers as your thin-skinned cans will not be hanging around long against the 37L and 50 TK numbers of 9 and 11 - plan your moves carefully and make sure the panzers are coming onto your guns, not the other way

around. *(I wouldn't hesitate to use intensive fire with these Russian tin cans if the opportunity to kill a German tank was reasonable, since they won't last long dueling with the German armor anyway. – Ed.)*

For the game with Brian, I placed the BT-5 platoon just to the east of the core of the 57Q1 cluster to watch both the eastern approach through the grain around 37DD3 and also to look after the approach through the orchard groves in the 37oW2 region. The T-35 is a brilliant, solid (if thinly armored) pillbox so this, paired with a dummy 5/8th" counter went directly into the middle of the 57Q1 cluster where, with multiple barrels, it could shred any infantry approaching the woods in 37R0, but also watch out with its rear turrets on any flanking panzers. I wanted it to be firing often and not to have to be worried about moving it and risking failing mechanical checks (like all the Russian tanks) and platoon movement task checks, so I placed it in a position where I knew it could help stiffen the initial core 57Q1 cluster defense.

The ace up the Russian's sleeve, the KV-1 (which has a radio, yaay!) was also paired with a dummy and was positioned at the rear of the 57X4 cluster to be a mobile response force and to counter German moves onto the rear part of the village. The gun on this tank has a kill number of 12 and this will blow holes in all the German tanks fairly easily, and with its awesome armor is safe from anything but really low rolls by any of the German tank guns - it really is a star and needs to be used carefully as you would definitely like it to be around in the end-game to offer a huge CVP threat to any German tank brave enough to be trying to encircle desperate Russian defenders.

The last piece of note is to find a location for the HIP AA gun. There are numerous positions where this could offer value, with some potential places at the back of board 57 for opportunities to get rear shots at flanking German tanks, but I opted to use it as part of the last-stand defenses in the orchard road of 57T2 where it could bolster any final turn holdouts in the 57S3 and 57T1 buildings, shred anything German trying to cross the 57Q1-S2 street, or even provide last turn extra bodies for any particular building that needed them.

One other defensive option I utilized was to use my remaining dummies proactively - those that went into outlying positions were moved back on to the core defenses to soak up shots when it became clear they were going to be bypassed, whilst I held one further dummy back in the core of the town until turn six. More on that anon.

German Attack

German Strengths: Mobility from motorbikes, choice of VC targets, flamethrowers (plural), no platoon movement restrictions, eight-morale troops

German Weaknesses: CVP cap, no numerical superiority, weak armor on AFVs, tough building control VC

The one thing that is going to prey on the German's mind in this scenario is the CVP cap. At 25 points, it looks pretty generous at first glance, but while this is a good German armored force, it is not an invincible one. Normally, you'd look to thrash the Russian tanks with their archaic transmissions, thin armor and ludicrous platoon movement...and yet...there's that darn KV-1. It's an absolute bugger to kill and a hit on any of your tanks from that beast and it's lights out. Most of your shots will be bouncing off the thing and turret side shots are even less effective. It could be that in a standard situation you'd like to use your tanks in the final turn for a nice bit of VBM freezing to remove the obstacles posed by any last-turn Russian diehards, but here that may just not be an option due to the issue of a CVP cap. So a bit of finesse is going to be required. If you can spot an opportunity to get the beast isolated early, then it may be worth the sacrifice to swarm the thing and try and get it from behind with an adjacent 50mm shot from one of the MkIIIs, but even that has problems - remember you still only kill on a 5! The other Russian tanks are much easier to bag and should pose few problems - and while they do have a tasty gun on them in the 45L, as long as you keep the modifiers to your advantage by staying CE and planning moves etc, they should be eminently killable. Note that destroying the T-35 mammoth is a little harder than it first looks - you will almost certainly kill it with any of your shots, but the presence of that 45L rear turret means that it will invariably get one good shot off against you in return. Watch out for that!

Apart from all this fancy armor, as always the game will be won or lost based on the performance of your infantry. You have been given a nice elite company to do this job along with some average leadership, but you are definitely light on machine guns for once. Also, numbers only favor you very slightly here by the odd squad, so you don't want to get too wasteful - reconnaissance by fire rather than by twitching, groaning half-squad is what's needed. You will need your infantry in this game to capture and secure the dispersed real estate of the building clusters so husband the infantry, keep them rallied through good rally point selection and let your superior morale do the talking. Being issued with two flamethrowers is an excellent thrill, but you must try and keep at least one of them functioning till the last turn to destroy any final Russian strongpoints. Again, lack of machine gun firepower here is hurting you as your defensive fire and advancing fire shots are all likely to be 2+2, 4+2 or 8+2 shots. No guarantees there at all that you will hurt the Russians, so keep a flamethrower handy for when you need it the most. In this game, the German armor with their MG support of 8 and 11FP will be your best providers of 'oomph' and enforcers of encirclement and

FTR, but as discussed above, they have their own issues to worry about, too, so don't necessarily expect them to be on tap/on demand.

The one other thing to consider as the Germans is the power of the motorbike. Assuming that the main part of your force has nicely tied down all the main Russian assets in the 57Q1 cluster, there may easily be an opportunity in the mid-game (turn 3-4) to jump on the bikes and then zoom into the 57X4 cluster and start tagging buildings. This may be especially true if you have been keeping an eye on the

Russian squad numbers and if the AA Gun has revealed itself and it looks like the cluster has been left lightly defended or undefended. It may be that you are able to turn this scenario around and force the Russian to come and get you out of their houses with its nice +2 terrain - that would be sweet and mean that you are very much in the driver's seat. Even if ultimately such a gambit fails, you will have stretched the Russian defense at a critical moment and you will quite possibly be in a place to do what the armor may not be able to achieve: enforcing FTR and encirclements on the 57Q1 cluster defenders. Win-win either way.

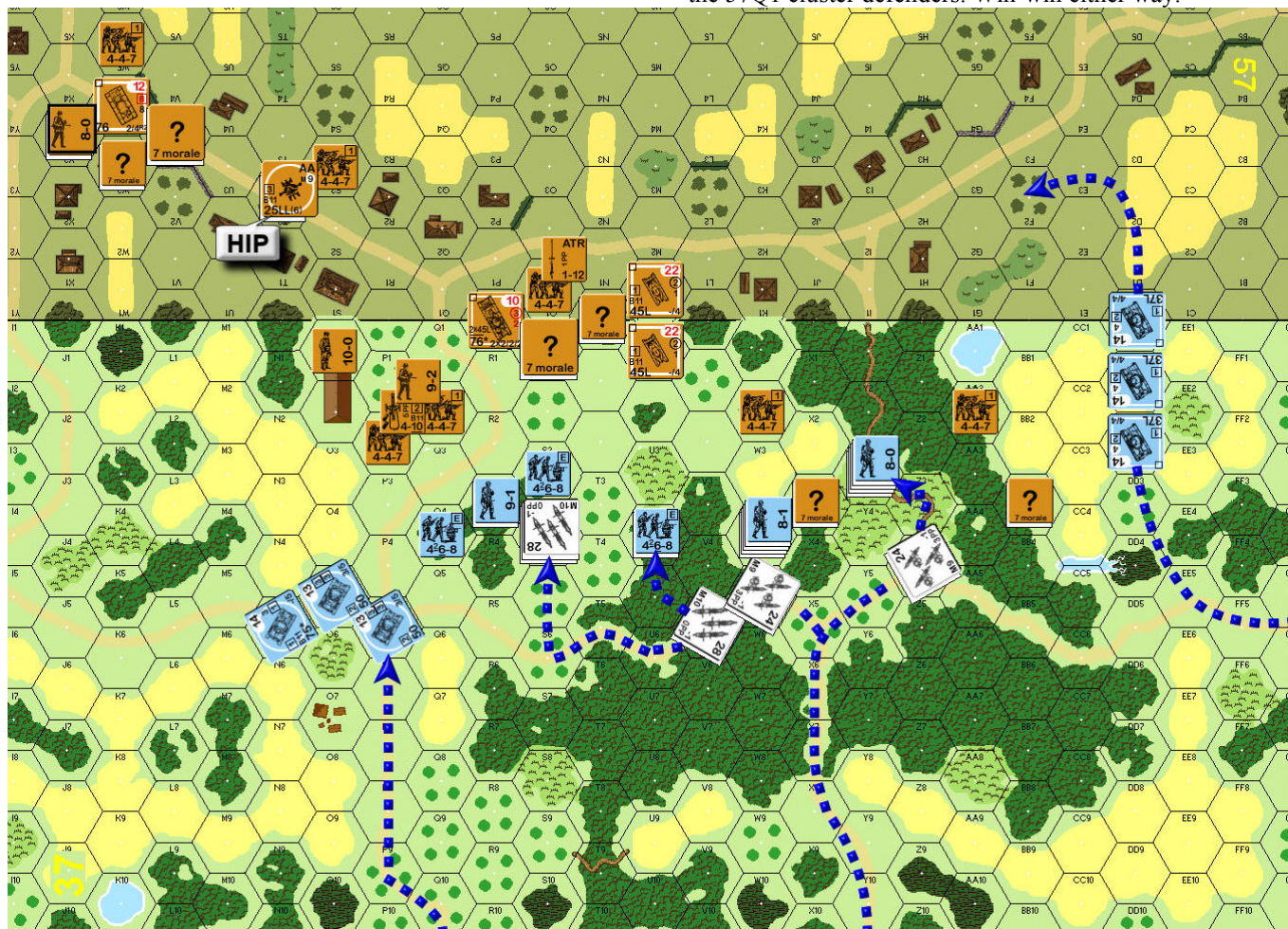


Figure 2: The opening moves. Russian tanks, all concealed, have been paired with 5/8ths dummies where needed. The AA Gun (HIP) is placed at the meeting point of the two clusters to provide firepower and bodies if required for the end-game. Dummy “?” stacks in 37X3, 37T0 and 37BB3 provided a picket line, supported by concealed 4-4-7 squads in 37AA2 and 37oW2 . Additional concealed 4-4-7 squads started in 57O1 (with ATR), 57S3, 57X3, 57W5, 37oQ2 and 37oP2 (with the 9-2). One more dummy stack is placed in the main cluster in 57W3 – this stack finished off one of Brian’s flamethrowers in Turn 6. Brian’s main avenues of attack have all been marked.

Early-game action - jostling for position

Brian used all his entry options to launch a big and nasty assault with his bikers through the wood and orchard terrain

immediately to the south and southeast of the village around 37W4 to 37Q4. Like the pro he is, he didn't offer me any opportunities to get in any cheap shots against mounted infantry anywhere. I like to think my careful disposition and

the steady fire discipline of my thin outer screen helped ingrain some caution into his initial attack, but I may be taking too much credit there! His Pz-38 platoon entered from the 37Y5 road and started to push on due east through the 57C2 grain fields at the board seam - their only opposition for the first couple of turns was a couple of isolated dummies. But Brian was caution personified. Their first real opponents were going to be my BT-5 platoon in turn 3.

His other three tanks came on from the south and then parked themselves in the 37O5 area where they could sit and ping away at my 9-2, 4-4-7 and MMG with smoke and impunity and support Brian's main infantry push across the 37R2-Q3 road and into the overlay big wooden buildings. I largely skulked in response to these moves and my 9-2 group soon found itself swathed in German smoke, and so

was forced to move one hex to the left (37oQ2). German turn two assaults kicked in but sturdy work from my 4-4-7 squad shoved the first German interlopers back across the road. Then, disaster! My MMG-manning 4-4-7 broke, even with leader help, and was forced to run and drop the gun into the hands of my waiting 9-2. Seeing this big gap in the defenses, Brian assault moved a squad into the road adjacent (37R2). Calmly, the 9-2 fired up the barrel and shredded the impudent Huns with snakes, and then with rate broke a squad and leader behind them in 37R3. I then pulled off the "?" from my waiting T-35 in 37R0 and with 76*, 45L and MG action, gave the buggers some more. Go land battleship, go! Not much infantry survived from this pounding and Brian had to 'gae back and think agin', as they used to very infrequently say in Scotland after their extremely rare wins against the English.

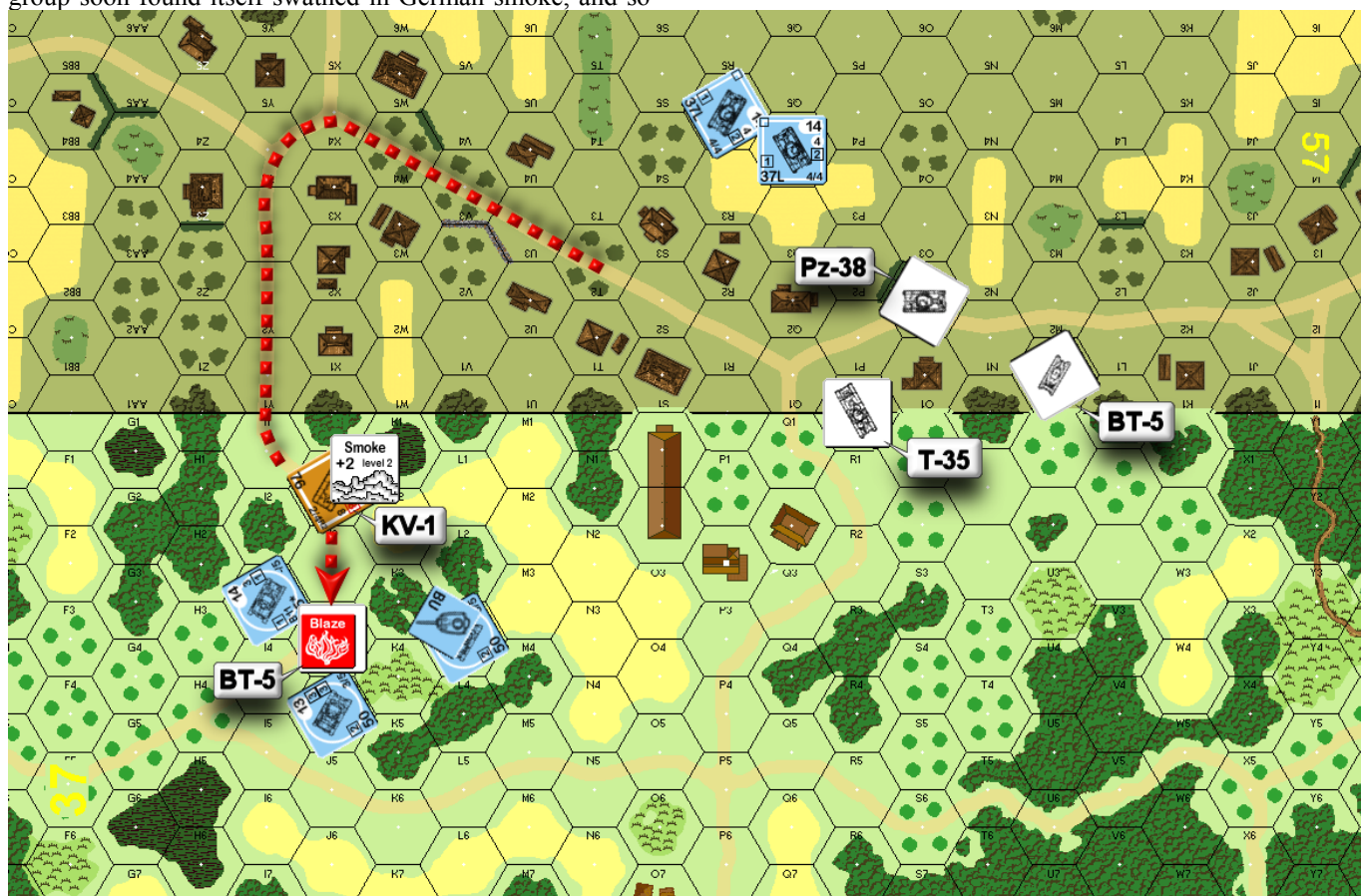


Figure 3: My mad minute with my armor. My KV-1 sorties out to kick some Panzer butt, but ends up smoked in 37J1. My BT-5 sallies through the village to assist him (red dashed line), but ends up smoking in 37J3. What was I thinking? The one silver lining is that I do ultimately manage to destroy the MkIVC. The two remaining Pz-38s were in 57O2 and 57Q4 respectively. Destroyed vehicles are marked with star symbols. No infantry counters have been marked in this view.

In support of the crossroad assault, Brian was also infiltrating more troops through the 37oU1 orchard plantation where one of my BT-5s in 57M1 was forced to

drop concealment and give them some attention. Some fast and furious defensive fire eliminated a flamethrower-toting squad but their fearsome weapon of death was picked up by

a follow-up squad. The problem was that this incident had slightly shown my hand and now Brian was aware of what the mysterious two "?" near the 57M1/L1 road really were and could start planning the BT-5's imminent demise through the use of his Pz-38 platoon.

Mid-game action - dueling with dinosaurs

The middle part of the game was dominated by a slow and gritty defense of the 57Q1 cluster by my 9-2 and his cohorts, allied to a rinse, wash and spin recycling by the Commissar safely tucked away in 37oO1. This, despite starting badly through the breakdown and then abandonment of the MMG, made Brian's central thrust a slow crawl at some expense to him as I kept chipping away at his infantry and was soon 8CVP to the good. The real highlight to this phase however, was another example of me mishandling my armor assets. Not for the first time, I might add.

The first problem I had was how to deal with his encroaching Pz-38 platoon against my parked BT-5 platoon. He maneuvered his tanks expertly, leaving me low-odds defensive fire shots which I scuffed. In my movement phase the following turn the first BT-5 went up in flames, but I was able to extricate the other from under the barrels of the three Pz-38s and retreat back to a more defensible position in the center of the village. In response, Brian fired up his Pz-38 platoon to try and catch my parked T-35 from behind, and with the size modifier of the beast, he had every chance of doing it. The good thing about the T-35 however, are those awesome rear turrets, and so the rear turret 45L, having missed on his first shot and survived Brian's bounding fire, found an intensive fire four/three hit-kill combination to leave Brian's first Pz-38 in flames. (*This appears to be in error. The T-35 may not use intensive fire with the 45L guns, according to the vehicle notes. – Ed.*) Go land battleship, go! However, Brian then reciprocated this with the surviving return shot from his next Pz-38 and the adventure of the good ship Potemkin was finally over. However, I had now pushed Brian halfway over his CVP cap to 13 overall so I was definitely still in the game. I just missed snagging another Pz-38 from a concealed squad in a street fighting opportunity when looking for a four on the DR. Missing it was a pity, but my intentions were good!

At 5 CVP a pop, Brian now had to be a little bit cagier with his armor, and seeing this, I thought it time to go and unleash the full majesty of the KV-1 in a guns-blazing armored sortie. I was particularly worried about his MkIIIs and MkIVC for their MG and HE potential against my dwindling infantry, and I saw that Brian had left them a little exposed when he decided to push them down the 37J3-57Y2 forest road with no infantry support. The power of the concept of having radios in Russian tanks came to bear and I was quickly into the German aggressors. Sadly I missed with my advancing fire shot and Brian was able to

get one last smoke shell from his MkIVC to shroud me before his other tanks tried to scatter. However, even smelling somewhat smoky, I was confident I was going to get at least one of his panzers and possibly set to take a second, when I played my *really* dumbass move. For some reason I thought I needed a second tank in there to offer both flank support to the KV-1, and also to ensure I'd whack a second Panzer, so I motored my sole surviving BT-5 up to the enemy position. Very stupid move as all I was able to achieve was another incinerated Russian tank crew and the loss of a key weapon that I would need in the turn six and seven end-game. This move was even more stupid as the KV-1 was fully capable of looking after itself as the armor on that thing is almost impregnable. Sigh. Live and learn I guess.

Anyway, in the next German turn, despite the smoke and my buttoned-up status, I duly blew a hole in the MkIV, but the crew got out this time: only 3 CVP but Brian was now at 16 CVP and I reckoned the KV-1 was good for at least one more German tank, too. OK, so let's go and get some more Huns! Errr, mechanical breakdown check - boxcars - immobilization! Un-frickin-believable. Stuck in the woods and isolated, with no ability to make any real impact on the game at all now. Disheartening.

End-game finale - a fight to the finish

This final AFV problem happened to me in Turn 4, and I knew then that I was in real trouble. Brian still had four MG-laden tanks that could now move with near impunity and cut rout paths and force encirclement from the back of the village. The cack-handed move with the BT-5 and the unlucky roll with the KV-1 meant there was nothing I could now do about it. However, I was determined to push on hard and see just how far I could stretch this game and see if there was something sneaky I could do to fake out a win.

As well as my core defenders, I had one or two isolated defenders and dummies still working their way back to the village into positions where they might be able to snag back a building. Brian's rearmost flamethrower made short work of this, but he did roll a '6' with it to burn out a dummy stack which he thought was real - shame it wasn't a ten! At the same time, his 9-1 and lead squads were continuing to push my stout defenders back one house at a time, but the Commissar kept doing his business. Even better, Brian then rolled a beautiful, wonderful 11 from his second flamethrower on my sole surviving dummy in 37N0 (this in turn six) which was a huge bonus, and secretly something I was quite proud of in that I'd been able to keep faking it that long. I knew I was now unlikely to win this by beating the CVP cap, but I could still just eke out the win by retaining either 57T1 or 57S3, and of course my HIP gun crew was still sitting in 57T2 ready to jump out at the last moment. I was still hopeful at this point, when in turn six German defensive fire my 9-2 rolled an '11' on a IMC. Nightmare!

Brian had just encircled me and so my valiant leader and a squad were eliminated for FTR and I was now reduced to a single victory building (57S3) in the 57Q1 cluster. I should have moved my Commissar to that hex at this point, but I

opted to use him to rally another squad in the neutral building, 57U2, where they could provide more covering defensive fire in turn seven at the encroaching German assault squads.

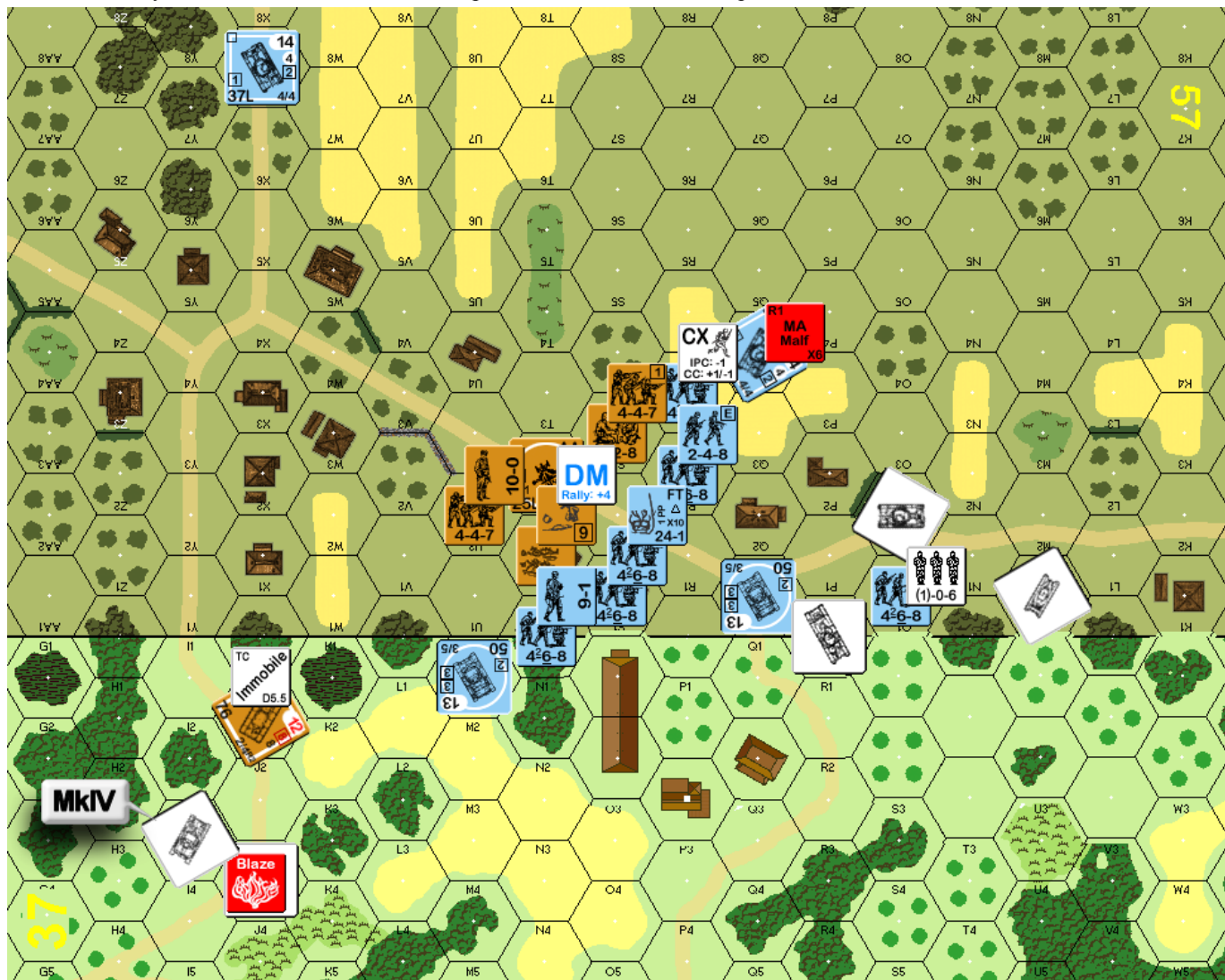


Figure 4: End-game summary. A 4-6-8 with a squad of Russian prisoners is in 57O1. The hopelessness of the position where my KV-1 immobilized is clear for all to see. My 9-2 and 447 with him were both eliminated in Russian turn 6 for FTR due to the presence of the encircling Pz38. The Commissar has just rallied the 447 at the beginning of German turn 7. My gun crew has abandoned their AA Gun and has jumped into 57S3 to form part of the last stand there. If the two 57S3 units had survived the 12-flat flamethrower shot from 57S1, they would have been fighting at 3-2 odds vs. a CX unit in the final CC phase. If the Russians had successfully ambushed the CX Germans, they then could have moved into 57R2 for the win. They didn't, so it was all moot.

So we moved into German turn seven, the last turn of the scenario. The unveiling of my HIP gun crew the turn before had done no material damage to the Germans, but now left a squad and a crew in my last winnable location (57S3). Brian was either going to have to break them from heavy fire or come into CC and wipe them out the hard way. He maneuvered every unit he could into the area, some I shot

down, some pinned, and some broke. Ultimately, I was facing a CX 4-6-8 squad, a normal squad and a half-squad in CC: odds of 10-6 or 3-2 plus the CX penalty and possibility of ambush for me, so actually still a fair to even shot at a very hard fought victory. I noted with interest that being in melee I would still win the game as it was building control and not good order status which was the key decider

here. However, before any of that happened, I had to withstand the advancing fire phase, and, yes, you guessed it, take my licks from the one surviving flamethrower at a two-hex range: a 12-flat shot. Brian warmed it up, (please roll a 10!), took aim (please roll an 11!), fired (please roll a 12!)....**six!** Plus-two morale check for me to pass...and... here's where I missed the commissar, and rolled a ten and a seven. Both broken and surrendered.

Game over, a German win in the bottom of the seventh. Well played, Brian.

Summary

Awesome game, excellent scenario, really fun opponent. I would definitely play this one again. With the victory conditions, it may appear slightly pro-Soviet, but both sides have plenty of toys and fun stuff to influence this and both sides need to be played very well to get the result. I made a couple of big mistakes, especially with the dumb BT-5 move, but it was the crucial breakdown of the KV-1 in the literal middle of nowhere that was really the big game changer here. With it in place, Brian's encircling options would have been much more limited and my 9-2 and squad would have escaped to the Commissar to fight in the last turn. With it in place, my chances of killing at least one more German tank would have been very good and then Brian would have been at 21CVP and would have had to have been very cautious, even in the last-turn close combat phase, too. He could have ended up taking the last building but losing everything due to loss of a couple of squads. The KV-1 was just such a key piece for me to lose. But despite that, I was really pleased with most of the rest of my play. I had done everything I could on the infantry front, I'd faked Brian nicely with dummies and most of my key units had had a key part to play in the defense and caused some damage to the German invaders, but it was just not quite enough.

So, grab this scenario and play it if you get the chance. It took us about 5.5 hours to get it done which I thought was pretty good going. There is a ton of fun stuff about this scenario, but most of all, it's just a joy to play with the T-35, and those two flamethrowers are just so awesome! Give it a go!

2009 Texas ASL Team Tournament



Rick Reinesch

I hope everyone is getting their vacation days together and dropping those strong hints as to what they want for Father's Day. Of course, I'm talking about making that trip

to Austin to play a ton of ASL the end of June. The planning for this year's tournament is well underway and promises to be just as much fun as last year, so make those plans now to attend the 17th Annual Texas Team Tournament in Austin, TX, June 25-28, 2009. Last year we had 42 players from points all over the country participating. The website has been updated with the latest and greatest information on tournament activities, the hotel info and the registration fees. Make sure and preregister; you never know what goodies I will come up with for those doing so.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Player Profile: Walter Eardley

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?

Walter Eardley: *In my 8th grade drafting class a group of us finished our projects early. We started playing D&D, but when some kid wandered into a sewer dressed in homemade chain mail and died after he got lost, the teacher told us we could not play D&D anymore. The next day one guy brought PanzerBlitz and we started playing these 4 way free-for-all DYO games. That was 1979. I have been gaming ever since.*

Banzai: When and how did you discover ASL?

WE: *I played a little SL with some of my drafting group in 8th and 9th grade. At some point, I purchased SL, CoI and CoD. After my good friend who also liked to play war games moved away at the end of 9th grade, I did not play any more the rest of high school or college. Fast forward to*

sometime in 1994. One day I was looking at this nifty new website I found called Yahoo. While looking for a list about darts, I found a site about ASL from a guy in California. I subscribed to the ASLML and purchased the RB and BV from Boulder Games. I was hooked again from day one. Josh Seaman and Jay Harms walked me through my first FtF games. I will be forever in their debt for helping me learn the game.

Banzai: What nationality do you enjoy playing the most?

WE: *I really like the British/Commonwealth. They have good leadership, nice OBA and funky vehicles. They fought on all fronts from the very beginning. I think they are well represented in the ASL System.*

Banzai: How do you take your coffee?

WE: *I actually do not drink regular coffee. I like espresso with dessert occasionally.*

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

WE: *I like PTO infantry meeting engagements. An excellent example is Eastern Gate. I am less fond of late war heavy metal clashes. If it features tanks which are one hit equals a kill then I am probably not interested.*

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

WE: *My strength is probably defending on city boards. My weakness is definitely combined arms assaults. I always tend to get my tanks destroyed.*

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

WE: *The best part of ASL is the people I play against. The worst parts are Chapters G and F. I say this because I really like PTO and would probably like DTO but it is hard for many people to see past the rules sections. So much of those chapters are overly complicated and truly just chrome. For example, why is a cave not just a pillbox with a hidden area connected to other caves? It could have been much simpler.*

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

WE: Right now I am looking forward to the map bundle. I am tired of lugging all those mounted boards around. I am also looking forward to the Texas Team Tournament in June.

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

WE: I am going to go with a stack consisting of a German 8-1 with LMG/5-4-8 and LMG/5-4-8. These guys can take on pretty much any task on the offensive or defensive side of the scenario with a reasonable chance of succeeding. They are 16 FP out to range 4. They have assault fire so even if they move they will be at least on the 6 column (16 at point blank). They have decent infantry smoke. If the 8-1 buys the farm, they shrug it off and move forward. With 8-morale, they have a good chance of passing a MC. You can add in a DC or FT for some extra punch. I always like seeing the possibility to build a stack like this on a scenario card.

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?

WE: I'll take the KV-2 please. I have very bad memories of trying to kill those over the years.

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?

WE: This type of scenario is right up my alley. I really enjoy playing the early war scenarios on any front. I would probably lean toward the Germans. Either way it would be tactically challenging I am sure.

Banzai: How do you like PTO scenarios?

WE: PTO is my favorite theater. So many people take one look at Chapter G and think playing PTO includes a lot of extra chrome making it totally different from ETO when in fact the basic game changes very little. For a new player, there are a lot more "infantry only or just a gun or two" type scenarios than in any other theater. The vast majority of the scenarios do not involve seaborne assault or caves or landing craft. The Japanese are so much fun to play as well.

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

WE: My most enjoyable moment was dropping DCs off of Edison's Ridge on the heads of Jay's Japanese trying to banzai up the slope. It was probably the best ambush I have ever pulled against anyone. It worked to perfection. The best part was pointing out to Jay that I was high enough up that I was not affected by the blast. It was the only time I have ever seen him truly rattled.

My craziest moment was the last turn of the last CG date. Jay and Tom were trying to exit Japanese off the board for the win. I had a 5-5-8 which Final Protective Fired about 6 times before finally running out of targets. He did his job but Jay was still able to exit enough guys for the win. Typical Jay.

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

WE: Like most players, I would really like to work on combined arms in open country. This is a serious weak point in my game.

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

WE: I would like to see more scenarios featuring the Chinese. They fought the Japanese for so many years, there must be more scenarios out there waiting to be designed.

Banzai: Spanish Civil War scenarios: overrated or underrated?

WE: I guess underrated. I think I have played one Spanish Civil War scenario in my entire time playing 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?

WE: For all the hoopla over this module, I was really pretty apathetic about its release. I did not think I needed some Hungarian truck which had a production run of 40 to make my ASL experience complete. I kinda like playing the "Major Armies" over the "Minor Armies" be it Allies or Axis.

Banzai: You've been very active in promoting ASL in the Houston area. What are some of the challenges for the

Houston group, and what successes have you had? What's next for the Houston group?

WE: *There have been several challenges facing the Houston group. The main ones are distance and consistency. We tend to have pockets of players in specific areas of the city. Travel between those pockets could be as much as an hour and a half. This tends to foster isolationism and fractures the group. We recently introduced a 4th Saturday Game Day which I am hoping will help bind the group and offer more consistent opportunities to play. One major success is the growth of Owlcon and the exposure the game receives through this event. I also think we do an excellent job mentoring new players. I would offer a special hats off to Tom Gillis for his continued fostering of new folks.*

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?

WE: *For new players, I am a huge fan of the Starter Kits. They condense the rules to a manageable level and offer skill level appropriate scenarios to play. Their first FtF games should be against experienced players to help guide them with the mechanics of play. In a perfect world, they would then get to play some other people who are new to the game. This way they will not only be playing someone who is near their skill level so there is a chance for a win but also both players will need to refer to the rules for things they might not fully understand. I would also encourage new players to attend a tournament. There is nothing like playing ASL three or four days straight to cement the rules in your brain.*

For clubs, make sure your group is new player friendly. If you host a tournament, make sure there are designated SK sessions and make sure the marketing collateral includes "All skill levels welcome!" If there are general gaming conventions in your area, run a SK session or ASL session and be prepared to pass out flyers with ASL information. Our game is not as flashy as others but it is a lot of fun.

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

WE: *There are so many great guys out there. In no particular order, Tom Gillis because he has so much fun playing and I own him (zing!). Bill Dorre for his enthusiasm and love of the game. Zeb, Matt Shostak, Mike Seningen, Randy S. and Jeff T because I learn so much each time we play. Matt Schwoebel because we are so evenly matched. Burstinflames because he is a PTO fanatic and a nut in general. Anyone named Roy. Rob "Bridge Scenario" Burton. Jay "My Nemesis" Harms. Nick, Ken and Stephane*

the original ISTL Boys. Brian Roundhill. Allen King before he left us. Steve "Is the coffee ready yet Tom?" Miller. I know I am missing some.

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

WE: *I can't really think of any off the top of my head.*

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

WE: *Board games include Settlers of Catan and Heroscape. Jay and I are currently locked in an epic struggle via email of War in the Pacific for the PC.*

Banzai: What are your other interests outside of gaming?

WE: *I recently purchased a remote control airplane which I am having a lot of fun crashing and rebuilding. We also recently purchased an embroidery machine. I have really enjoyed digitizing things to stitch out on t-shirts and jackets.*

Banzai: Any final comments to wrap up?

WE: *I want to give a plug for the upcoming Texas Team Tournament June 25th to the 28th, 2009. The Austin crew puts on a great event. I encourage anyone, especially new players, to try to make this event. You will have fun.*

Style Points



I was playing Bill Dorre in *The Lost Band of Edmontons* and had been having pretty good luck early in the game. He had driven a Panzer IV with a 9-2, HMG, and 4-6-7 as riders, and had stopped in a key position at a road crossroads on his right flank. Since things had been going well, I decided to try to be clever, so I sallied forth with a frisky Carrier C. As it came into the German tank's view, Bill decided to turn the turret and fire a 4+3 IFT shot at the carrier. The carrier survived unscathed, but turning the turret forced the riders to bail out. The 9-2 went heroic, but the squad broke and also malfunctioned the HMG. So far, so good. The carrier pressed its luck, pushing forward straight at the tank, although the way the road wound allowed it to dash into and out of the tank's line of sight. When it got adjacent, the tank fired and missed. The carrier then entered the tank's hex, and the heroic 9-2 fired a 2+1, getting a Stun result. Rats! Oh, well, it was a good run and

it managed to break a squad. In the rout phase the leader decided to go with the broken squad, which was forced to rout. In the next movement phase, the tank started up to move away, but the stunned carrier could still fire because carriers are always crew exposed. The plucky Brits calmly loaded their inherent PIAT, and put the projectile right through the rear turret of the Mark IV, which burst into flames. – *Matt Shostak*

Rules Tip

Rick Reinesch



Remember that once a Gun has been marked with a First Fire counter during the Attacker's MPh, you can fire the Gun again during the Attacker's MPh using Intensive Fire at any target in range (unless the Gun is designated "No IF").

Now, if a Gun starts the DFPh already marked with a First Fire counter, it may Intensive Fire, but only at same hex or adjacent hex targets. [A8.4 and A8.41]

If a Gun starts the DFPh with no marking, it can fire as long as it keeps ROF [A8.41]. If it loses ROF, it is marked with a Final Fire marker and by A8.4, is not then eligible to Intensive Fire.

Even if a non-vehicular Gun has already been marked with an Intensive Fire marker, it is entitled to the possibility of one more Intensive Fire shot at a target in its own hex if it is about to be OVR. The exception to this is unless the Gun has a "No IF" listing on the back of its counter. There are some restrictions on firing: the Gun must change its CA until it covers the hexside entered by the overrunning vehicle, and if a Gun has already fired from woods/building/rubble/bocage it is not allowed to change its CA and so may not be able to meet the previous condition. Note that the Original To Hit DR of the firing Gun also acts as a NMC versus its own manning Infantry. [C5.64]

So Many Scenarios...

Have you ever had certain scenarios that just held your interest for some reason? You know, the ones that you find yourself spending the most time looking at when you break out a new scenario pack? Or perhaps one that you never got to play but always wanted to? Maybe there's a scenario that you have played but it still grabs you? We at Banzai!!

asked our usual suspects to name one or two that are on their 'gotta play' lists and why. Here is what they said.

Dan Preston



Slamming of the Door (A7) - One scenario that has always intrigued me is *Slamming of the Door* (A7). I had been interested in this particular scenario since the SL version was featured in a series replay way back in *The General* years ago. It has apparently been updated in *Beyond Valor*, but I am not aware of the changes that have been made. I also had the opportunity to be the Russians on the attack in last year's tournament, and it is a good-sized tournament style scenario with good action on only two boards.

I also took the opportunity to check the ROAR on this action, and the Russians have the edge in wins over the Germans (at the time of this writing by a ratio of 51:27). I don't take the ROAR that seriously unless the record is terribly lopsided, and I usually prefer to defend. I also love a challenge, especially when it involves defending against the odds.

The action concerns the Germans advancing against Leningrad in 1941, and having to deal with a sudden Russian counterattack against their overextended flank. In what appears to be a precursor to the action on the eastern front in the following years, a small formation of Germans has to fend off a clumsy but far larger force of Russians, supported by armor. The outnumbered Germans have to rely on their flexibility and mortar support, and pray for relief from nearby mechanized forces to rescue them. The German commander had better hope that those StuGs hurry up, or there will be nothing left by the time they get there. This, in my opinion, is a fascinating action.

Matt Shostak



Up Inferno Hill (AP48) - I really dig Kursk scenarios, because they usually pack a lot of hard hitting combined arms action in situations where each side is very capable of hurting the other. Moreover, these actions often take place in open countryside and/or small villages, which is ideal for the kind of maneuver that I like. Here the attraction is largely based on the muscular orders of battle. The Grossdeutschland forces arrive on motorcycles, with several StuGs and halftracks in support. But they also get a flame throwing PzIII, and two of those rare early Panthers, the PzVD, that might offer a post-modern reinterpretation of the term *flammpanzer* if they gack their startup rolls. The heroic defenders of Mother Russia prepared their defensive position with some mines, a few trenches and some wire, an antitank gun, and a dug-in T-34. The infantry even have a

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flamethrower of their own, and they've stocked up on Molotov cocktails too. Several other T-34s make an appearance, along with a couple of SU-122s. I like scenarios that start with some wrecks already on the board. Chas Smith's Orsha scenarios often had this feature, and we see it here too in this fine looking effort from designer Dave Lamb. Although at first glance this may look like a large scenario, upon closer inspection I think it is definitely more in the mid-size category. It's only 7.5 turns, with 12 attacking squads against 9 squads to start. The German mission here is couched in terms that amount to capturing key parts of the hilltops. What's more, the board 58 hill looks rather like a drumlin, which should allow many opportunities to banter with the loquacious Nick Drinkwater, and what could be more fun than that?

Insult to Injury (AP47) – Here we have another Kursk fracas from *Action Pack 5*, this one designed by the esteemed Pete Shelling. Clocking in at only 6.5 turns, with fewer fortifications, it looks slightly smaller than its counterpart *Up Inferno Hill*. This contest is a struggle between elements of the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler and the 9th Guards Airborne Division for possession of village crossroads in flat terrain. The SS get quite an assortment of AFVs, featuring two Tigers and a couple of those halftracks with the 81mm mortars onboard, plus a few StuG IIIGs, PzIIJs, PzIVHs, and even a PzIIIN. The Soviets have a few guns of their own, and also counter with the ubiquitous T-34M43, along with some pesky T-70s and a few still-formidable KV-1S tanks. Their infantry also came to this scrimmage supplied with Molotov cocktails. Without playing a scenario, there's always some guesswork involved when trying to decide what might be its best features, but that's part of the fun. For this encounter, it appears to me that the victory conditions shape the game into a swirling melee. It's a contest for victory points, and VP are awarded for building control, but also for mobile AFVs with functioning main armament within certain zones. Therefore it seems that both sides will have great incentive to push their tanks to the same areas, which ought to make things quite hairy. The aftermath section of the card states, "For the rest of the day fighting raged in the village and the fields nearby, with neither side ever sure who was encircling whom." I think the victory conditions strive to recreate that kind of action, and if they do, it should be a really fun scenario for both players.

Sowchos 79 (U28) – Of all the scenarios in the *Turning the Tide* pack, this is the one that immediately jumped out at me. It has that nostalgia factor because it was a favorite of mine from *Cross of Iron* way back when, although I didn't have any regular opponents in those days and had to try it solitaire. This is truly old-school ASL: ten turns, with action spread out across 4 boards. Bring your lunch. The Russians start with a large, if somewhat vanilla, force of infantry in the board 3 village, and over on adjacent board 4

they have a company of infantry and a gun aboard a convoy of trucks. The Germans start with a company-sized force of infantry (also rather vanilla), supported by a Marder, radio, and a gun, in the woods of board 5 next to the village. The real excitement comes from the reinforcements. Away behind the board 2 hill, the Germans bring on a powerful and well-led tank and infantry force in the first two turns. This group presumably has to figure out how to crush the Russian column before it gets to the village, and then reorient itself for properly supporting the village assault in the middle and late stages of the game. How many tanks should head for the hilltops, and how many should push toward the column and the village? Bearing on these decisions are the composition and timing of the Russian reinforcements, three very stout groups of T-34s and KVs entering the village area on turns 4, 5, and 8. It looks like a rollicking good time for both players.

Rick Reinesch



Insult to Injury (AP47) -- I was looking though the new *Action Pack* and one of the scenarios in particular caught my eye - AP47 *Insult to Injury*. First off, it is a large combined arms fight, my favorite kind of scenario, and a Kursk scenario to boot. From a force standpoint, one always has to like a scenario with Tigers, with their ability to dominate the battlefield. However, both sides receive a number AFVs that have a decent chance of killing their opponent, including the Tigers, and both sides receive armor leaders. This scenario is definitely not the irresistible force meeting the immovable object. It will require nuance and skill more than straight-ahead brute force to achieve victory. In most cases, even if hit you stand a chance of surviving. Both infantry forces are elite, so morale should be less of an issue. In addition, it is long enough to provide time to recover from mistakes.

What made this scenario stand out for me, though, were some intangibles. Both forces are elite, so with the increased depletion values, there is a greater likelihood that plans depending on aspects like the availability of Smoke have a greater chance of occurring as you intend. The scenario takes place in 1943, which means that both sides' AFVs have a decent chance at special ammo, a factor that can keep the other side on his best game if he knows that his opponent has an increased capability of destroying his units. Both sides receive reinforcements that can provide additional help where needed. In addition, the victory conditions create enough uncertainty to keep each opponent guessing as to intent, and any certainty of success should not be evident until well into the scenario.

So how did it play out? In many ways exactly how I had hoped it would. This is a very good scenario with a little of everything and a lot of replay value.

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Zeb Doyle



With so many great scenarios out there, I'll bring up a pair of fun PTO slugfests created by *Dispatches From The Bunker*. Both these beauties are freely available for download at <http://www.aslbunker.com/> (along with a bunch of other high-quality ASL material), making it just about physically impossible to get more ASL bang for your buck anywhere!

The first scenario is **DB006 In the Best Traditions of the Cavalry Service** and is an early-war action featuring the famous Philippine Scouts cavalry in a desperate delaying action. These guys are fanatic 6-6-7s with great leadership, but they have a very tough task protecting a retreating wagon train loaded with wounded from the ravages of bicycle and truck-mounted Japanese troopers supported by eight various tanks. Both sides have fantastic maneuverability, but horses and bicycles are very vulnerable to fire, forcing many tough decisions for both sides about just which risks are worth taking. My playing against Eric Gerstenberg came down to a 50-cal HMG manning to knock out a pair of Chi-Ro tanks just before they could smash up the retreating wagon train.

The other scenario I'd like to mention is **DB011 Dropping Like Flies**. A bit more conventional, it's a late-war city fight with some very dug-in Japanese butting heads with the Americans in Luzon. This is a dream situation for anyone who likes to prepare nasty defenses with tricks and traps, as the Nipponese get access to every tool in their arsenal, along with mines, pillboxes, tunnels, and lots of other goodies. The Americans aren't left out though, with OBA, FTs and DC, armor support, and great smoke capabilities. This is a real test for both sides in the art of urban warfare. Roy Casagrande was my opponent in this one, and his Americans were grinding me down pretty well before his own OBA rubble a building, opening up an LOS from his 9-2/2x 6-6-7/2x HMG stack to an upper-level Japanese 3-4-7 way over on the flank. That didn't seem like a big deal until my HIP 4-4-8 threw his DC into Roy's big stack, broke everyone, and the 3-4-7 killed them all for FTR. Game over, man, game over!

Obviously, these scenarios won't be to everyone's taste. They are overlay-heavy, meaty, and even a small mistake can end up being extremely costly. In DB011 in particular, the American player must be very familiar with all the Japanese options. ROAR validates this 'high-commitment required' with only nine total playings between the two scenarios. However, if high-stakes PTO action is to your taste, put these both on your play list ASAP. And remember, you can't beat the price!

Owlcon AAR: AP 52 Into Vienna Woods - The Truth



Nick Drinkwater

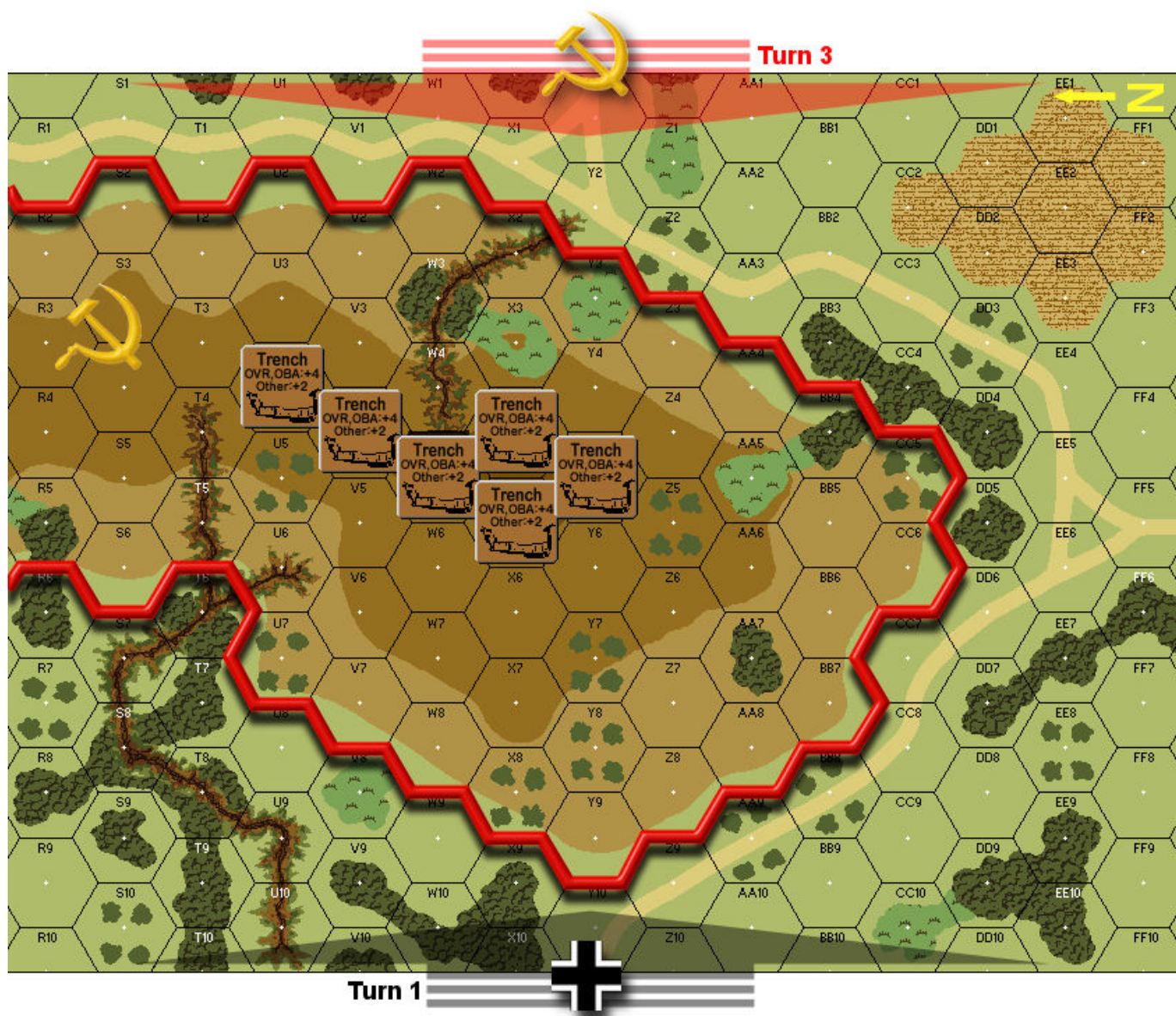
[Editor's Note: This article is in response to a scenario AAR posted by Zeb Doyle of Nick and Zeb's playing of AP52 "Into Vienna Woods" on the Texas ASL blog "Banzai Pipeline". The original posting can be read in its entirety at <http://banzaipipeline.blogspot.com/2009/02/zebs-owlcon-aar-part-1.html>]

Recently on the Houston and Austin list-servs, Zeb Doyle put out his very alternative history of what he believed happened in our two recent playings of AP52 *Into Vienna Woods*. Rather than my usual AAR offering on this one, I thought I'd construct a suitably informed reply to Mr. Doyle's almost Aesopian AAR of our recent playings of said scenario. I will then leave you, dear reader, to make your own mind up as to what really happened.

*ZD: After the game with Walter [Tac 53 *Pyrrhic Victory*], Nick Drinkwater, our resident Brit, wanted a piece of me in something small and fast, and pulled out AP52 *Into Vienna Woods*.*

ND: Mr. Doyle. With the greatest respect sir, even on my hungriest days I would never really want a "piece of you" - you're way too pasty-looking, thin and Irish for my taste. More of a case of me wanting to take down the reigning Owlcon champion in his prime for the second year in a row and show him that he is a mere mortal after all. Also note that we were time limited to 3-4 hours at most before we needed to run off to the Owlcon tournament proper, so there was no time for some big armored clash where you could 'educate me'.

ZD: This is a late-war battle with eleven SS squads, lots of machine guns, and a 10-2 storming the new board 58 hill. The defending Soviets are totally outmatched initially, with five 5-2-7 squads, two LMGs, and six trenches that have to go in level three hexes, but they get ten 4-5-8s, an SU-85, and an SU-76 on turn three as a bit of a counter-attack force. When the dust settles at the end of game turn six, the SS have to control all six level three hill hexes for the win.



The scenario playing area of board 58 – the five level three hexes form the VC locations and each contains a trench at start. German turn 1 entry is from the relatively well covered western (bottom) board edge. In contrast, the Russian turn 3 entry is from the east (top) side where covered approaches are somewhat sparse. Russian setup for the scenario is at level 1 hill hexes or higher.

ND: For once, and making a nice change, Mr. Doyle is factually correct - it is all as he relates. SANs are interesting in this scenario (each at 5) which could be something to fret over for either side, but somewhat implausibly for April 1945, the SS still have ELR of 5 and are all 6-5-8s - clearly there was something still good left at the bottom of the recently-scraped fascist barrel.

ZD: Obviously, the Germans have to rush on map and establish defensive positions as quickly as possible and then

deal with any surviving 5-2-7s while fending off the turn three Soviet assault. It's an interesting but fairly straightforward situation and Nick (who clearly wasn't exposed to Margaret Thatcher enough as a child) eagerly chose to play the Communists.

ND: Well, actually we diced for this one and I ended up with the Soviets, but as you see below as you read on, it is clear that Mr. Doyle doesn't let inconvenient things (like the facts), get in the way of a good yarn.

ZD: His defense consisted of scattering his sparse troops around the periphery of the hill, with most units far enough apart to be non-supporting. Back on the level three heights, a large stack was pretty obviously his only leader stacked with a squad and an LMG.

ND: Admittedly not one of my greatest setups. I became too focused on giving my turn 3 units time to get onboard

safely and hence trying to delay the SS at the source as much as possible, so opted for level one crest line positions to try and interdict entry moves. I had not fully realized the implications of a massed SS amoeba-like rush combined with their quality assault fire. Leaving the 8-0 leader in the hill-top stack was very silly.



Nick's initial Russian setup for AP52 *Into the Vienna Woods*, AKA, "How to Lose an ASL Scenario in two moves", by N. Drinkwater. The soon-to-be-dead Russian leader stack is in X5. Several soon-to-be-dead real units and dummies are in the level one hexes.

ZD: All-in-all, the Soviets didn't look too formidable, and my boys in black came pouring aggressively onto the map. Lots of orchards and SSR'd-in pine woods and alpine hills create a surprising number of blind hexes in this one, and although Nick was able to KIA a half-squad with a lucky roll, most of my troops were in excellent position at the end of the movement phase. In the advancing fire phase, I introduced Nick's big level three stack to Mr. 10-2 and his assault firing friends and knocked the Soviet 8-0/5-2-7/LMG out of the game.

ND: Mr. Doyle's definitions of what he does or does not consider a "lucky" roll are interesting. I wiped out a SS half-squad when they were moving in the open with a 2-2 shot with a three - more fool them for doing stupid things and no luck involved. In reply, Mr. Doyle rolled a 6FP flat shot in the advancing fire phase with his 10-2 against a 5-2-7, 8-0 and LMG in a level three trench. Mr. Doyle's luck in the resulting sequence should be examined carefully: IFT result: snakes. Random selection as to which Russian unit gets killed, leader or squad? Yahtzee three - both do. Roll for random SW destruction: roll a 1 - LMG removed. So, clearly, no luck for the SS at all there then.

ZD: With his only leader gone and most of his remaining units in position to take fire as they fell back, Nick opted to stay and shoot it out in his turn one prep fire phase.

ND: With seven-morale troops and now no leader at all onboard to rally anyone, and only interdiction checks from self-breaking to look forward to, there was no real choice here. I also could have skulked but Mr. Doyle had squads at level one already so I was thinking the only benefit to me would have been to reduce a point blank shot to a two hex range - of course I'd forgotten the implications of the alpine hills rule and I would actually have been out of line of sight for those shots. With my mistaken logic that I would still be facing some pretty heavy fire attacks anyway, I opted to stay and fire and hope to break up some of the SS fire groups. It was a gamble. It failed. I paid the price.

ZD: He broke a few squads, but it turns out that a few 8+0s at 8 morale troops don't hurt as much as a LOT of 12+0 shots coming back at his 7 morale men. Turns two and three were essentially mop-up time for me, and only a 6-5-8 breaking on a 2+0 from Nick's last unbroken unit saved his entire remaining force from being captured.

ND: Again, surprisingly, factually correct from Mr. Doyle.

ZD: That left the turn three Soviet reinforcements in the position of crossing a lot of open ground under the fire of

my 10-2 and machine guns and after another half turn of slaughter, Nick tossed in the towel.

ND: All true. But we should expand some more. With the SS completely in place on the hilltop apart from the very last trench hex in the line (U4), there was no easy way for me to get onboard as the Russian approaches to this hill were all completely devoid of any cover and wide open. Mr. Doyle was assisted in this easy defense by scoring another snakes against my armored assaulting platoon at 10- hex range or so. Again, obviously no luck involved here at all then. My one toe-hold on the trench line went down in a flurry of big shots and it was over.

ZD: He quickly proceeded to full-on "Moaning Minnie" mode, offering up all kinds of blather about how the scenario was a dog and he was diced and his circadian rhythms were at ebb tide and so forth. Since our entire game had lasted about the time it took you to read this, and everyone else was busy still playing, I told Nick to man up, turn the board around, and give the SS a try. He tried to demur, but eventually gave in.

ND: Never, never ever get into a situation where Mr. Doyle has to appear against you as a witness for the prosecution - you'll be on your back, tied to a bed with a needle in your arm faster than a Scotsman can put his wallet away when someone says "the round is on me". The word "diced" was not mentioned once, and I fully admit I had flawed my setup. There was no demurring involved - I quickly grabbed the board and turned it round, eager to see if our vaunted two-time Owlcon champion could also find a way to win as the Russians.

ZD: This time, the Soviets were hunkered up in a nice conservative set-up with almost everyone in those level three trenches.

ND: Even for someone of the questionably myopic character of Mr. Doyle, it was blindingly obvious that there was only one other defense worth trying. Even a first-grader could have worked that one out. It's a relief to see that Mr. Doyle has successfully advanced to second grade.

ZD: Nick copied my attack pretty shamelessly, but I was able to use some really sophisticated tactics, like "skulking" and "using leaders to rally people" and stuff, and by turn three the SS were just barely starting to grab their first trenches and several 5-2-7s were still alive and kicking. That allowed me to get my turn three reinforcements right up onto the hill in great shape, only having to sacrifice the SU-85 to lock down a single 6-5-8 on my left flank.

ND: As for "copying his attack pretty shamelessly", like Mr. Doyle, I had one half-board to enter eleven squads from and some obvious no-go open ground entry hexes to avoid. The only way to avoid "copying his attack shamelessly" would have been to **not** stack any squads with the negative leaders, **not** combine the negative leaders with big machine guns, **not** walk through the orchard and woods cover but run through the open ground, and to **not** send troops around the north side of the hill to find another way up. Bizarrely enough, I also passed second grade successfully (or its British equivalent), so yes, I "copied shamelessly" if that is how Mr. Doyle would like to view this. Note also that I find it helps a defense if you are not facing six-flat snake eyes shots in the first half-turn of the first game - Mr. Doyle did not face any attacks like that. Any fool can skulk and rally. And as it turned out, any fool did.

[ZD follow up comment: So you didn't do that...what does that make you? ☺]

ZD: Nick could see the tide starting to turn against him and managed to knock me out of several more trenches in his turn four. At this point, he had five of the six trenches, but only a very limited LOS to the last one.

ND: This is hex U4 and its only easy approach is from the neighboring trench in V4. Ascending into it from the gully in U5 is particularly difficult. With alpine hills in effect, it is particularly difficult to get good LOS's from other hilltop trenches.

ZD: For all practical purposes, he'd have to channel his attack through a key single adjacent trench [V4] to take the last VC location. That was looking tough as he only had two movement phases remaining, had just a 9-1 and a 6-5-8 in his key hex [W5], and was facing my 9-1, three 4-5-8s, and two LMGs. Faced with this interesting tactical problem, Nick responded by whingeing louder than ever.

ND: Again, Mr. Doyle is reverting to type and falling back into Charles Dickens full-on story-telling mode. I cannot remember any whingeing - I was slightly behind at this point due to Mr. Doyle's egregious luck in not having to suffer any snakes-yahtzee-one combinations, but as the SS, I was confident I could shrug off the worst of Mr. Doyle's paltry fire attacks and easily take the missing trench from his valiant but limited proles.

ZD: In the Soviet turn four prep fire phase, I unloaded a 30+1 from my last trench into Nick's adjacent men. He managed to have his 9-1 go heroic and the 6-5-8 pass a three morale check, and his return 12+1 broke everybody I had.

ND: At last some good fortune for me. Generating the hero was a bonus, but a measly 3-check with the SS? No problems there - why the disappointment or surprise? Not getting his usual outrageous luck in this situation was probably the more disappointing aspect of this for Mr. Doyle.

"Telegram for Mr. Doyle. Telegram for Mr. Doyle:" The dice don't always do exactly what you'd like, on demand STOP Welcome to the real world STOP Where the rest of us abide STOP

ZD: That was disappointing, but I tossed three more squads in during my APh. That brought up Nick's turn five, and he hit me with another devastating 12+1 that shattered two more squads.

ND: To be honest, in the flurry of end-game high firepower shots, I've forgotten some of the details. I certainly whacked a bunch of Russians in the small W3 woods and also blasted a bunch in hexes adjacent to trenches. I don't remember rolling particularly well, but is it really any surprise that they were shattered, when they'd been left exposed to be shot at? By 6-5-8 SS troops. Adjacent. With machine guns. And a -1 leader. D'oh!

ZD: In the movement phase, he brought in his 10-2/6-5-8/MMG group, everyone survived my 12+2 defensive fire, and they cleared out my last squad in advancing fire and advanced into the sixth trench.

ND: We were playing the SS. They pass two morale checks with ease, especially when their base morale is boosted to ten. Mr. Doyle - please cast your mind back the single hour to when you played the SS. Remember all those opening one- and two-checks you passed? With ease?

ZD: That made me a little sad, but I still had a decent chance to restore the situation in the next half turn. That last trench was pretty well surrounded by Russians, putting Nick's SS in 'they break, they die' land, and in my prep fire phase I managed to encircle Nick's stack and smack it with a 24FP attack, several 8FP attacks, and two hits from the SU-76. The SS never flinched though and completely cleaned my clock in defensive fire ending any hopes for a Soviet victory.

ND: And it was here that the sterling qualities of the SS allied to my outstanding, superior tactical grasp of the situation came shining through. I analyzed the situation in depth, considered all the tactical opportunities available to me, and then made the critical decision to pick up all my best units individually and assault move them into the

single victory location, where I then successfully rolled low enough to win the game. This was clearly a shining example of performing well under pressure and was obviously the focus of my esteemed Russian opponent's envy across the table. I think, and I'm sure he'll agree, that I taught the ex-champion some lessons with that particular move. One improvement I see he needs to make in his game is the "roll low enough when needed" aspect of his play.

You just had to be there to witness the finesse I demonstrated in this crucial phase of the battle - an example to all. So ultimately an outstanding victory for the German against the mindless Russian horde, and most importantly, Mr. Zeb "Owlcon Champion no-longer" Doyle had temporarily been dethroned.

ZD: Overall, I think AP52 "Into Vienna Woods" is a fun little scenario, although lopsided luck early will quickly turn it into a blowout as the SS may either quickly take the trenches in force or just never get there. It could be a good transition from the Starter Kit into full-bore ASL as well, since there's lots of interesting line of sight issues. The two vehicles, one open-topped and one with lots of special ammo, might fit that transitional category as well.

ND: This is a good summary of the game - it is an excellent transition scenario that will give both players an opportunity to try and succeed at the second most difficult situation in the game, the assault over open ground (though retreats under fire are still harder). It feels a little like "Death at Carentan, on a hillock" in the structure and timing of the scenario. The beauty of this is that even the slowest of players could get this one played in 3-4 hours. After the 90 minute blowout of the first game, we completed the longer version in a shade under three hours before I emerged triumphant and victorious, which of course my brilliant play had thoroughly deserved. Clearly my initial Russian setup was not the way to go, but unsurprisingly, using Mr. Doyle's more conservative approach (i.e. lacking in adventure), this one will probably come down to a "who-blinks-first-hex-of-death-trial-by-firepower" special - again the SS with better firepower and their morale benefits may have the slight edge on that.

ZD: Anyway, I thought I'd seen Nick excited before, but after his win, he was giddier than a fat girl catching a wedding bouquet. I interrupted his little dance of joy by telling him to enjoy it while he could; I was going to crush him the following day in our much awaited, much anticipated Drinkwater-Doyle duel, a face-off we'd been trash-talking about for weeks on our mailing list. Sporting fans around the world will be saddened to hear that Nick wanted to savor that post-win glow for as long as possible. He got super whiny and pouty, exactly like a stripper

having to tell her sugar daddy that another guy got her pregnant, and he said he didn't want to play me in the morning. I thought about offering the balance or something, but I'd already called him out once that day and the whole pouting thing was really awkward.

When Ken from Calgary intervened and offered to take Nick's place, I decided that would be for the best and so the Drinkwater Duel was called off. The fact that I'd now be playing a Canadian makes it a pretty typical case of a former colony bailing out the overly jingoistic John Bull from another mess of his own making, I think.

ND: When the handshake came across the table from Mr. Doyle, I could visibly watch his shoulders sag and the age lines crease up at the corner of his eyes and mouth as the full enormity of his defeat struck home. In an instant he had aged ten years. The light had gone out in his eyes and you could clearly see that something inside his very soul had died at that moment of despair. His unbroken streak was finished, as dead as a particularly squashed armadillo road kill on I-10. What he was he going to tell his superiors when he returned to Austin - that he'd lost to someone, an *Englishman* of all things, from *Houston*, of all places? What would Commissar Shostak think of him now? What would Captain Seningen say in the mess? Even now, he could see Commander Reinesch reporting back to Austin HQ on the full extent of his failure. Oh, the shame of it. Blindfolds and a last cigarette for him!

Anyway, he mumbled some comments about "well played" and "let's play the Duel" game tomorrow, but I knew from the very hollowness of his words that he really didn't mean it. It was so clear that he was now scared of further embarrassment, so to save his blushes, I deferred and told him as gently as possible that I would probably need to play one of the other Owlcon attendees instead of playing him for a third time. Outwardly he expressed disappointment and understanding, but inwardly I could just sense the relief from the pressure that he would not have to taste the bitter tears of defeat again that weekend.

ZD: After that minor spot of unpleasantness, I thought it best to pack up my stuff and get over to Owlcon ASAP, where I found that I was playing Brian Roundhill in AP41 *The Meatgrinder*. Great, another bloody Brit.

ND: And so readers, there we will leave this tale of despair. The perfect game was finished; the run was at an end. Defeated by a Brit of all things and bitter and disappointed with it. Even his masquerading in the uniform of a clearly victorious nation like the French had not seen him keep his record spotless. Sad really, to see how far some people will fall.



A pasty-looking, thin Irishman, pretending to be French, thinks about his options on how to overwhelm the thin brown line. After taking the necessary two seconds required for this, he eats the salad.

Tactical Tip

Dan Preston



Any time a player needs to remove a unit or stack of units from the board to examine the contents, restack, or check a LOS, it is a good idea to say aloud the board coordinates. That way, in congested situations, the stack ends up back where it belongs and not in some other hex.

This Happened to Me

I was playing Eric Gerstenberg in *The Prelude to Spring*, where the Russians get one of those vaunted .50 cal MGs, and the German MGs are all LMGs and MMGs. I only got rate on the HMG about once, and every time Eric fired at me, he invariably got rate. Fed up, I finally shouted, "Stop getting rate!" He shouted back, "Stop passing your morale checks!" Everyone in earshot instantly busted out laughing. It was great. — Dan Preston

"Shhhhh. Be vewy vewy quiet. We're hunting Tigers, heh-heh-heh!", so said Cpl Hylerovich of the Red Army, after wiping a small runnel of Solichnya from the corner of his mouth with a grubby hand. Stacked and concealed with a squad of Stalin's finest in the hamlet of buildings on board 56, Cpl Hylerovich had watched with blurry-eyed

apprehension as the tide of battle with Herr General Rick Reinesch's SS in AP47 *Insult To Injury* approached.

However, fortified to the gills, he announced to the gods of ASL that he was going to do something really stupid. After being hollered at to "Stop drinking the ordnance!", his squad reluctantly stoppered their Molotov cocktails of Ever-Clearski and prepared for action. Herr General Reinesch grinned wolfishly in anticipation and sipped his schnapps.

Very close by, a T34-M43 and a Tiger I were engaged in a duel to the death. During the Prep Fire phase, the T34's crew managed to find an APCR round in the detritus of bottles on the tank's floor. The shot gouged a deep furrow in the Tiger's mantlet but did not penetrate. However, spalling in the interior stunned the crew.

Seeing his opportunity Cpl Hylerovich led his squad in a move that landed them adjacent to the Tiger at its rear. In the ensuing Advancing Fire he ordered his squad to light their Molotovs. Grumbling at the prospect of losing so much good courage, they nonetheless complied, defying the 50% odds against such a thing. Cpl Hylerovich shouted "Hurl!" and the flaming bottles arced through the smoky air, hitting the Tiger and shattering upon the grates over the Tiger's motor. A pregnant pause followed, as the flaming Ever-Clearski engulfed the engine compartment. With a satisfying *whoosh* the Tiger caught fire and died, adding its pillar of smoke to the score of other flaming wrecks strewn across the battlefield.

Elated, Cpl Hylerovich passed his bottle of Stoly around to his men. Hearing the growl of another Tiger in the area, he led his men after it. (A-hunting we will go, a-hunting we will go, a-hunting we will go, to kill a wong-toothed Tiger.) However, this big cat proved to be a different matter altogether, pivoting to face the doughty leader and squad. With the manifest threat of an 88L enema, Cpl Hylerovich chose common sense and beat a hasty retreat. — John Hyler

Club Notes

Biweekly Lunch Gathering

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

Game Days

The Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas/Ft. Worth groups have remained active, hosting various gatherings for club members to get together and knock cardboard heads. If you missed any of these you missed a lot of fun. It's like a tournament atmosphere for a day. The Austin group meets

on the first Saturday of every month. The DFW group has been meeting on the second, and the San Antonio guys on the third Saturday of every month. To stay informed of upcoming club events, stop by our club website, www.texas-asl.com 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

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

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Next Issue

- More articles about ASL
- Player Profile
- Favorite Scenarios
- Club Meeting Recaps

And much more!