

Banzai!!

The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

Issue #2.3

April 1997

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

Club Notes and Ladder Standings

Player	Points	Record
Smith	1289	24-9
Seningen	1274	15-8
Shostak	1261	29-8
Kirk Woller	1088	13-20
Lavan	1059	3-3
Hailey	1055	9-7
Esparza	1049	3-1
Purnell	1045	9-5
Phelps	1038	1-0
Tom Woller	1037	1-0
O'Quin	1026	5-6
Hively	1011	8-16
Morgenthaler	978	0-1
Bonham	966	0-1
Fritz	963	2-3
Gerstenberg	934	7-16
Swantek	916	1-4
Knatcher	909	0-4
Milder	908	1-6
Lester	907	0-4
Toreki	906	0-5
Austin	905	0-3

Recent Results

O'Quin (Germ) def Milder (Russ) in Bread Factory #2
 Shostak (Germ) def Swantek (Russ) in Breakout
 Gerstenberg (Germ) def Hailey (Amer) in Return to Luxembourg
 Smith (Germ) def K Woller (Amer) in Morgan's Stand
 Milder (Amer) def Swantek (Germ) in Brief Breakfast
 Smith (Russ) def Shostak (Germ) in Forest Strongpoint
 Shostak (Russ) def Knatcher (Germ) in Preparing the Way

If you'd like information about our club, please call Matt at 280-8414 or Mike at 288-3778.

For the fifth year in a row, the Austin ASL Club will be running an ASL tournament, this time set for June 20-22 (Friday night – Sunday). The event will be held at the Georgetown Rec Center in Georgetown. If you have any questions about this tournament, please contact David Hailey at 512-869-1267.

This is an event that you will not want to miss. In the course of one weekend, you will get the chance to play a half dozen games or so, against a variety of players. How long would it take you to do that otherwise? Although the trophies are nice, the focus of the tournament is on fun, so it's a pretty laid back environment. It is a very friendly atmosphere and new players are welcome. The unique team aspect promotes camaraderie, and moreover, keeps interest levels high as players who are out of the running for individual honors still can have an influence on the team standings.

All club members are strongly encouraged to attend. If you want ASL to get better in the central Texas area, it is up to you to do something about it. Here is a golden opportunity. Most of the hard work is done for you, chiefly by David Hailey. All you have to do is show up and have fun. What could be easier? Start making plans now.

From the Weekender (I'm Out There On the Weak End)

Greg Swantek

The Austin ASL Club had a meeting recently at Matt Shostak's place (thanks once again to him and his patient wife Paula) and yours truly so graciously put in an appearance, if only to make the other players look good. The first scenario in which I was involved came from a group of scenarios intended for the deluxe boards (which can be quite deceptive in terms of gauging distance, but more on that later). The group of scenarios bore the name "Broque de Furniteure," which is French for "big hexes." Having demonstrated my mastery of the French language, I proceeded to demonstrate my ability to lose a scenario in record time (but of course it wasn't my fault). I played Matt in "Breakout" or "Breakthrough" or something like that. The situation was that the Germans basically had to run away across 2 1/2 boards while the Russians had to stop them. I had never played the scenario before, but as luck would have it I chose the proper place to enter my Russki reinforcements. As lack of skill would have it, I did the wrong thing with them. My flamethrower T-34 advanced boldly along the road (with a squad of Guards riding, natch) until it came to an intersection. The vehicle commander, good communist as he was, stopped to think what Uncle Joe Stalin would do in such a situation. To the right was the board edge, with 1.5VP exit hexes that needed to be protected. To the left was a big stack o' Krauts in the middle of the street, just begging to be brutalized by, say, a flamethrower tank. To paraphrase Comrade Hawthorne, I decided to "Go left, young man," as any move to the right was frowned upon by the guys with the green epaulets. Furthermore, the Germans still had a huge distance to go in order to get off the board edge. I mean, look at all that space!

Well, after duly brutalizing said stack o' Krauts, Matt simply CXed his way right across all that deceptive space and won the scenario without having to do much of any fighting at all ("Stack o' Krauts" is a registered trademark of WeakCo., Inc., all rights reserved). I was able to shoot up a bunch of his guys, especially his blocking force, but it was all for naught. I fell to 1-3 on the ladder, all because of doctrinaire leftist ideology. It wasn't my fault.

I decided to regain my honour (note the snooty British spelling) by helming the mighty SS against the Americans in a Bulge scenario entitled "Wet

**Austin's 5th Annual Club Tournament Set
For June 20-22.**

Breakfast” or “Cold Breakfast” or “Carnation Instant Breakfast” or something like that. It was foggy and snowy, and the American paratroopers were huddled in the buildings, even though they had a bunch of nice, cozy foxholes. The German force was from the 4th regiment “Der Fuehrer” of the 2nd SS “Das Reich” division. As a WWII reenactor, I portray a panzergrenadier from this very unit. So, in requisite geekoid fashion, I named the leaders in the OB after members of our reenactor group. It so happened that the 8-1 leader became fellow reenactor and ASL club member Thomas Salazar. I only mention this because this craven coward cost me the scenario.

The Americans were not allowed free movement until in sight of the Germans. I carefully worked my way through the woods, out of sight, until I could bring my whole force to bear on the two buildings adjacent to the woods on the Amis’ right flank. I took these two buildings and an adjacent trench in the top half of turn three in a six turn scenario, but suffered two broken leaders and three broken squads (nearly half my force). One of the leaders was the 8-0, the other was the Salazar 8-1, who found himself stacked with the three broken squads possessing two light machineguns. Both leaders failed their subsequent DM rally attempt, which can be expected. What couldn’t be expected was that the 8-1 leader would fail a total of seven rally attempts, only two of which were DM. I suppose I should have attempted to self-rally one of the squads before the leader check on a couple of occasions, but the way I was rolling, it wouldn’t have mattered, and might have led to one of the squads casualty reducing instead of the 8-0 leader dying (yes, boxcars on a rally attempt).

Meanwhile, while Salazar was huddling cravenly in the woods (“I don’t want to fight, I want my Mommy”) the battle raged on the edge of the village. Despite missing nearly half their number, at the high tide of Nazi aggression I had control of seven of the requisite nine victory hexes. Andy Milder, my opponent, wrested one back during the last half of the last turn. I had fallen to 1-4 on the ladder, perhaps destined for bottom-rung Gerstenbergdom, and it was all that lousy Salazar’s fault. Auf Wiedersehen!

Trench Warfare

Part 1: Pillbox Pointers

Matt Shostak

This is the first in what I hope will be a series of articles dealing with fortifications. How many times have you skipped over a scenario because of the inclusion of too many fortifications? It is my hope that these articles will take some of the stigma away from these things. I claim no great expertise in their use; it might be best to treat these articles as just one man’s look at them.

The pillbox is one of those things that often sway one’s opinion against playing a given scenario. I think that this is largely because players, particularly beginners, are a bit intimidated by the rules governing their use, and also the tactics to employ. Since I am guilty of this myself, I decided to take a look at that rules section and write an article about pillboxes, with the goal of making them less mysterious and intimidating, for myself and (I hope) others. This is not intended as a rules primer on pillboxes. I am sure the readership is fully capable of reading the rules section in a short time. After all, it is only a little over a full page long. It is intended rather as a look at the implications of those rules and at tactics for their use.

Attacker Considerations

Let’s look first at the ways that a pillbox can be destroyed. It’s all neatly wrapped up in a single rule, B30.92. Here’s a list of things that are capable of eliminating a pillbox:

- A demo charge original KIA
- Non-area ordnance fire original KIA
- Indirect fire critical hit of at least 70mm (vs. brown pillbox) or 100mm (vs. grey)
- Falling rubble
- Bombardment
- Dozer

Note that for the first two, the KIA’s # must be at least equal to the TEM of the pillbox that applied to the attack. Demo charges, however, have that KIA number increased by two if placed or set (i.e. not thrown). What does that mean? A demo charge placed through a +3 facing of a pillbox would eliminate it on an original DR of 5 or less. Not bad. It would need an original DR of 3 or less to eliminate a pillbox through its +5 facing. For non-area ordnance, it’s a little harder because it doesn’t get the benefit of that increase in the KIA number. In practice, this means that the smallest ordnance that could eliminate a pillbox through a +3 facing (barring a critical hit) is 120mm, and it would need an original roll of snake eyes to do so. That doesn’t sound so easy. The other methods listed are much less likely to come up during play, so I won’t go into them here. It probably suffices to remember the methods only, and look up the details when necessary.

It appears then that pillboxes are fairly difficult to destroy outright. You rarely have a dozer on hand, and even large calibre guns only have a small chance. Demo charges can often be found, but as we all know it is difficult to get them close enough to do damage.

There is an important distinction, however, between *destroying* and *defeating* a pillbox. The former is certainly just a subcase of the latter. Perhaps then we should look at ways to defeat a pillbox that might not involve destroying it. A few things come immediately to mind:

- Avoid it
- Smoke it in
- Eliminate the occupants

Clearly, a pillbox has a big weakness, and that is that it is blind outside its covered arc. If the pillbox is not placed well, then it can be easily bypassed

by simply moving outside its covered arc. Of course, most opponents will strive to make that difficult to do, but still I would always look at ways to bypass it first, just in case my opponent made a mistake. When possible, this is the easiest way to defeat a pillbox. This can be especially effective against a pillbox containing a gun, because B30.45 prohibits any 5/8 inch counter from entering or leaving a pillbox except as a dm support weapon. Dropping a +3 smoke round right on top of the pillbox would go a long way toward blinding it completely, while OBA smoke is capable of putting a +6 hindrance or more on the occupants, thus completely blinding them. These first two methods, then, appear similar in concept. Eliminating the occupants is altogether different in style. This can be accomplished in a couple of ways:

- Brute force IFT – Use firepower to break, double break, or KIA the occupants.
- Close combat – Occupants of a pillbox suffer a +2 drm for ambush purposes.

There is a nifty rule, B30.35, that allows a firer to ignore the TEM of a pillbox if using AP/APCR/APDS and the basic TK # of that weapon is greater than twice that TEM. Although the HE equivalency is often low, the increased odds of hitting (and possibly getting Infantry Target Type critical hits once acquisition has been gained) are often worth the tradeoff. Consider the implications. If a tank's kill number is high enough, it could park outside the covered arc of the pillbox (where it can't be hit by any antitank gun therein, for example), and yet hammer the occupants repeatedly, without paying the TEM on the To Hit rolls. Although the HE equivalency of 75mm AP is only 2, from 6 or less hexes away, a tank would be hitting the infantry in the pillbox on an 8 or less if CE, 7 or less if buttoned up (provided no hindrances or other modifiers apply of course). After -2 acquisition has been gained, critical hits become relatively easy. An original 5 or less would be a critical hit from such a CE tank.

Probably the best method to defeat a pillbox is some combination of the above, depending on what units are available, the victory conditions (of course!), and the time available. Perhaps a tank could throw a smoke shell on the pillbox, while another tank hammers it with AP from outside its covered arc. Under this cover, infantry assault teams could move up armed with demo charges, and either blow it up or knock it out in CC.

Defender Considerations

Okay, now that we know how pillboxes can be defeated, let's take a look at how they can be used effectively. This boils down to two things: *where to put them* and *what to put in them*. Naturally, victory conditions and terrain are paramount. Since their blind areas are such a big weakness, the first big consideration is to place them with a good field of fire, preferably on areas that your opponent really must traverse. This is much easier to accomplish in rural, open terrain than it is in city fighting. In a rural area, the +3 frontal TEM of the typical pillbox is often the best on the board, whereas in the city it's just another stone building, albeit one with a restricted field of fire. Just *what to put in them* is a tough question, again largely dependent on the tactical situation. One thing seems clear however. Putting a 5/8 inch counter in there should be done only after careful thought, because such a gun cannot be moved out of the pillbox if it really needs to see something outside of the covered arc. Therefore it seems reasonable to avoid putting guns in pillboxes except in special circumstances. If the pillbox is the best terrain available, such as in a rural fight, it might be a good place for your best leader and machinegun. If it is not the best terrain, such as in a city fight, it might be more suited for a lesser unit, since good terrain abounds, and the restricted LOS might not be worth the trouble for your best unit.

There are a few special capabilities of pillboxes that are worth noting also, since they can affect how you use them.

- Rout and Rally – Pillboxes are considered equivalent to a building for rout and rally purposes, and broken units therein are never forced to rout.
- Concealment – Pillboxes are concealment terrain. Although such concealment never halves incoming firepower, nor add the +2 DRM

to incoming To Hit shots, opponents are not allowed to inspect the contents of a pillbox except to verify details of an announced attack.

- Bunkers – Set up in the same hex as a trench, or adjacent to a trench, a pillbox is considered a bunker. This allows units to enter/exit a trench more easily (see B30.8 for details). This capability can be used effectively to enable *skulking* by the occupants. *Skulking* is ASL slang for the tactic of moving (often assault moving) out of enemy LOS during the Movement Phase to avoid being shot at, then advancing back in during the Advance Phase to be ready to defend the same position again during the opponent's turn.

Supporting a pillbox with other units is important as well. Placing units to cover areas outside of the pillbox's covered arc will make it much more effective. Often when given a pillbox in your OB, you are also given several other fortifications. Wire, roadblocks, trenches, and mines can be set up in combination with a pillbox in order to make it more difficult to bypass and/or destroy. Wire and/or mines in the same hex as a pillbox will make it less susceptible to CC or a demo charge. Trenches, as we have noted, can make a pillbox into a bunker. If any tunnels are available in your OB (rare outside the PTO), you can connect tunnel to pillbox to further increase your mobility/flexibility/skulking. Perhaps a future article can bring together considerations for all the various fortifications in a combined defense.

The philosophy of using pillboxes, I think, is to place them in areas that are difficult for the enemy to avoid. At the same time, make each pillbox difficult to destroy so that the enemy will be slowed considerably in his advance. You want to force the enemy to choose between two or more unattractive avenues of attack. He can either deal with the pillbox frontally, with all that entails, or he can try to avoid it and deal with your supporting units.

PTO Considerations

There are some special circumstances that come into play with regard to pillboxes in the Pacific Theatre. There seem to be a lot more of them in PTO scenarios, which I suppose makes sense given the way the Japanese fought. Pillboxes can be much more difficult to bypass in PTO scenarios, because they can remain HIP for much longer (see G.2). This can be offset, however, by the restricted LOS that is often prevalent in the PTO. The Japanese using pillboxes get some special capabilities, such as a free tunnel to go with every pillbox (G1.632).

Wotanstellung

Tim Hundsdoerfer

Hannes "the Wiener" Riener (Hannes is from Vienna, hence my nickname for him - the Wiener) sent me this scenario well over a year ago, and I was intrigued by two things which, while not unique to this scenario, always seem to make up a fun scenario. The first was the use of the T-34 and PzIVF2. The second was the realistic and interesting situation.

The T-34 and PzIVF2 were the workhorses of their respective armies, and while there is something fun about playing with the "toys" of ASL, the use of "basic" equipment creates a scenario where tactics is the focus, not specific units. This, at least in my opinion, heightens replay value and helps players improve their skills.

Wotanstellung also was developed from a very general historical reference notation in the diary of the German High Command about a unit being overrun by a massive Soviet combined arms group. Indeed, the force the Germans have is a snapshot of a Panzerjaeger unit on the run in 1943. A number of 75mm AT guns and their infantry cover, withdrawing in the face of a huge Soviet force of men and machines. It was a situation without a specific or

eyewitness account, but one which **MUST** have occurred on a number of occasions across Russia that summer.

The initial phase of the game, with the German HT and tanks running for their lives (almost always in vain, it seems), is a unique element in the scenario. Some might ask "why?" Why not just let the German set-up? The answer is that there is a spontaneity and haphazard effect to the Germans moving first. Yes, it means you have to look up the rules on unhooking guns, and, as the German, things won't be exactly the way you want them on Russian turn 1. I like the feeling, however, of constructing a hasty defense that you get with *Wotanstellung* and the options this creates.

When I first got *Wotanstellung*, it needed lots of help. The Russian victory conditions were a mash of buildings captured and casualties sustained. Most unrealistic. The Russians used the early model T-34, without radios. The Germans had no teller mines, and the mechanism for calling in the armor support was pretty complicated.

So the victory conditions were re-worded so that the Russians could ignore casualties for the most part, needing only a T-34 with a functioning MA in the victory area. The T-34s were upgraded, but the number diminished. A couple of quick playtests showed the Germans were now in BIG trouble. Vehicular bypass was murder on them, and if the Russian got lucky and killed the German AT Guns (not really all that difficult) the T-34s were largely invulnerable until the PzIVF2s actually arrived on the scene.

That was when I came up with the idea to include Teller mines. Teller mines, by the middle of 1943, were widely known by German units (it's one of the real travesties in ASL that they cannot use AT mines much earlier than 1944). Particularly, Panzerjaeger units were well trained in their use. So, we allow their limited use in *Wotanstellung*. This gave the mighty T-34 a good reason to fear the village - the street fighting attack is downright vicious and swung the tide for the Germans.

We added back in a couple of T-34s. However, this was later reduced and the German armor leader taken away as well, balancing the scenario fairly nicely.

As a side note, we found that although the AT Guns have HEAT, the TK number is actually lower than the AP TK number. Of course, at extreme ranges the TK does not go down, and there is that collateral attack, but really, there is not much reason to use HEAT.

This scenario has a few good memories attached to it: Rubbling the building with the 8-1, LMG, 447 in it by driving a T-34 into the hex, killing them all. Capturing a SdKfz11 in CC and maneuvering it to cut rout paths. Exceptional Speeding my halftrack to gain 4 extra MP and unloading the gun (of course it threw a track!) The AT Gun rate-of-fire machine from HELL. Our playtests swung back and forth wildly, the PzIVF2s turning the tide, only to become overconfident and ending up wrecks! Always play this one out to the end.

Rules clinics:

Unhooking/towing guns
ATMM
Human Wave

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