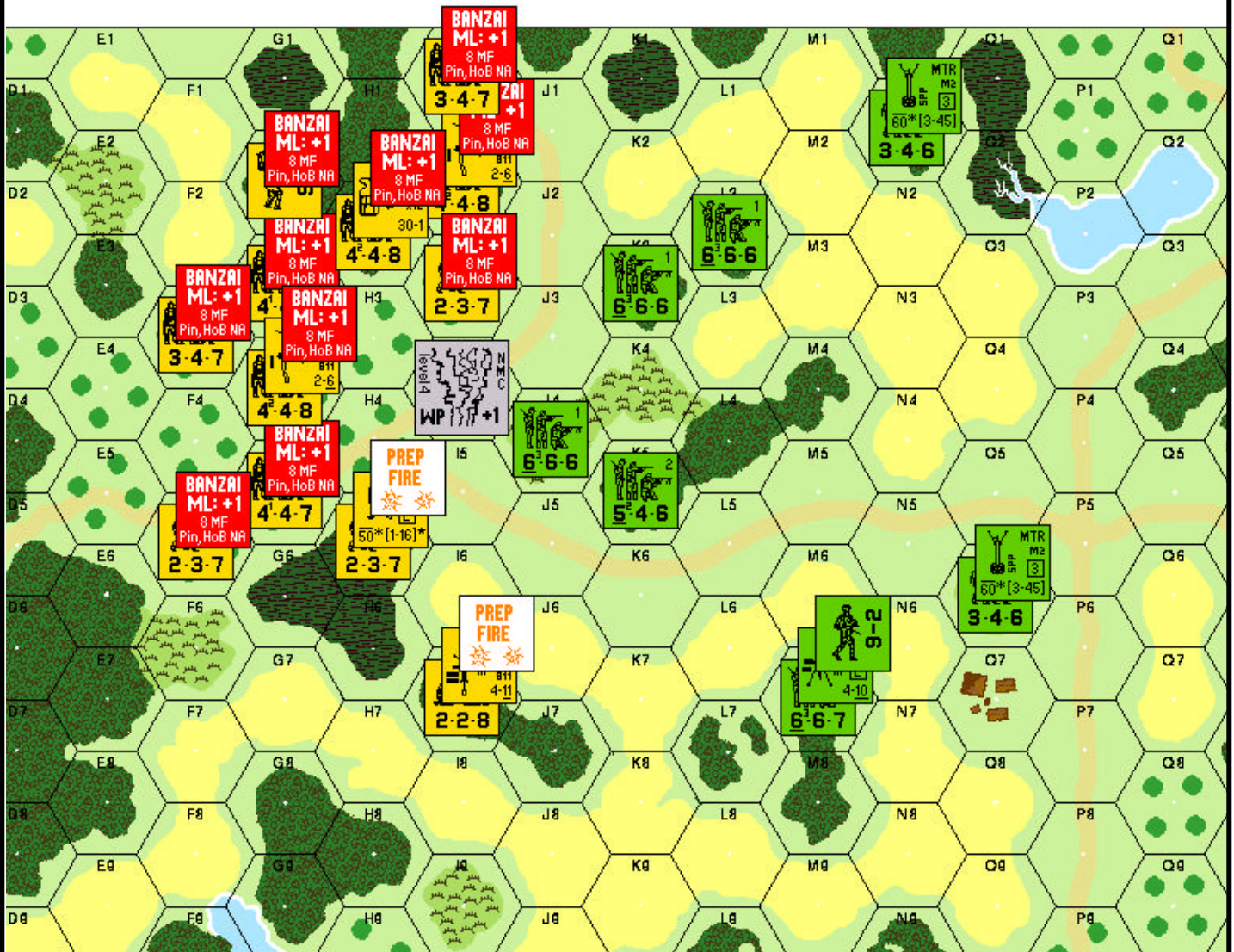


Banzai!!!



The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

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Banzai!!

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Editor's Corner: 2003 Year in Review

Sam Tyson



This has been another great year for Texas ASL. There were over 320 Ladder Games reported last year, for a current total of 1516 played in Ladder history. That means 21% of all Ladder games in our history were played in 2003. It just shows how our membership has increased, and how our enthusiasm for cardboard war has never waned.

Some of the biggest contributing factors are the regular monthly meetings held in the Austin area. On the first Saturday of every month, there are quite a few scenarios being played. Houston ASL has seen a big jump in activity. Maybe it's Roy's craziness or Tom's attitude, but whatever it is, the action has been kicked up a notch! Add in the tournament action every June for 100 games or so, and recently a nice quantity of games was played at Houston's Ferocity Fest. There are many individual games throughout the year as well.

The Texas Team Tournament has grown almost every year under the care and guidance of Mike Seningen, and this year was no exception. The tournament expanded to 4 days instead of 3, and saw a record total of 48 participants over the entire weekend. That is one big furball of ASL!

The Ladder itself has grown up this year, lending itself to all kinds of analysis and amusement. Each player can easily see his playing history, and gain insight into other players and trends as well. Some of the new Ladderites this year are Gregg Lessly, Clinton Howell, David Holmes, Dick Curtis, Victor Behar, and Doug Erwin.

A new honor was endowed this year, the keeper of "The Hat". So far it has remained in Houston, though Austinite Zeb Doyle was in possession for a few hours during Ferocity Fest. Ken Havlinek is the current owner. Maybe one day the

Hat will make its way to Austin, but for now Austinites will just have to be content staring at the Hat tracking web page.

San Antonio has started its own web page this year, and keep trying to spark ASL interest in the big military town. Carl Kusch is the leader of the pack in SA, and does a great job there of keeping things organized. The Band of Nine wants to grow, but meanwhile, they just want to have fun.

The Trap at Targul Frumos (Z19)

Scenario analysis by

Matt Shostak



I'm a big fan of combined arms scenarios, especially those that give both players plenty of things to do and cool units to play with. This scenario, though perhaps a bit hard to find (I think it is now out of print), is great fun to play. Whether you command the Germans as they try to hold on to the board 3 village long enough for their reinforcing column of the 24th Panzer Division to save the day with a counterattack, or lead the Russian assault to take and hold the village against fierce resistance, there is plenty here to keep your mind occupied. This is a classic late-war dustup: T-34/85s and JS-IIIs tangle with a variety of panzers including a Tiger I and a Panther, while infantry get up close and personal with house-to-house fighting, wielding demo charges and flamethrowers.

Russian Advantages: Numbers (initially)

Russian Disadvantages: Morale, radio jamming, difficult victory conditions

At game start, the Russians have a 21-8 edge in squads, and an 8-3 advantage in AFVs. Moreover, the Russian tanks are superior to the German tank destroyers, and the FlakPz IV/37 would be wise to avoid any confrontations with the Soviet armor. Only a third of the Russian squads are elite, however, and the Germans have a couple of antitank guns to help mitigate their armor disadvantage. Radio jamming starting on turn 3 can hamper the mobility and effectiveness of the Russian tanks. The victory conditions are also tough on the Russians. The Germans win by controlling all the buildings in the center of the village, provided they have also earned more CVP than the Russians. But the Germans start the game in control of those buildings, with a force in place to protect them. What this means is that the Russians will be compelled to attack to seize as much real estate in the center of town as possible, and then hold on while the Germans counterattack with their powerful relieving force. This is a really tough job, and it is why I think the Germans have an edge.

German Advantages: Leadership, counterattack force

German Disadvantages: None

The side with a 9-2 starter, and a 10-2 reliever entering mid-game, usually has the leadership edge. The Russians have their own ace with their 9-2, but their 5 leaders and -4 total modifiers for 21 squads is just not as good as the Germans' 7 leaders with -7 total modifiers for 18 squads. The column entering on turn 3 is very powerful. Armed to the teeth and very mobile, it is led by the best tank on the battlefield, the Panther. The Tiger I is no slouch either. The three MkIVs by themselves would have a tough time against the Soviet armor, but in a supporting role for the two stars they do just fine. The Germans appear to have no disadvantages.

The Tale of the Tape

In any armor confrontation I like to know what I'm getting into before I roll the dice. The tanks and tank destroyers seen here should be pretty familiar to most ASL players, and most probably have at least an intuitive grasp of which weapons are favored in a given matchup. Still I find it interesting to crunch the numbers a little bit. A very typical matchup will be the German 75L against the Russian frontal armor: a basic To Kill number of 17 vs. armor factor 11. This means any hit will harm a tank roughly 50% of the time. Lady Luck will play a big role here. I find it much harder to plan with numbers like these. The 75L AT could go on a rate of fire spree and wreck several tanks in one fire phase if given the opportunity. Or shell after shell could bounce off yielding no kills at all. The 50L AT is not much threat to the Russian tanks and therefore will probably be used against infantry. The panzerschreck is possibly the most dangerous antitank weapon in the German arsenal after the Panther. Reasonably accurate out to 3 hexes, it is almost certain to kill any tanks that it hits (TK 27). Panzerfausts are also lethal if they achieve a hit (TK 31), but since this is only May 1944 they are limited to a 1-hex range. The Tiger's gun (basic TK 20) should have little trouble with the Russian armor, although it's not always guaranteed to penetrate, while the Panther's gun (basic TK 23) is even better. The 85L gun sported by most of the Russian tanks is pretty good. Its basic TK of 17 compares favorably with most of the armor it will be facing: frontal armor of the Wehrmacht tanks here ranges from a 6 (PzIV turret) to an 18 (Panther hull). APCR availability is a pretty generous 5 for the T-34/85s and 6 for the SU-85s, and at close range it will boost penetration capability considerably. The 85L is also a good weapon against infantry, hitting on the 16-firepower column when using the infantry target type, and the 8FP column with area targets. The SU-85, however, has limited HE ammo (HE 7). The Stalin tanks boast the very powerful 122L gun, which has a TK of 25. Only the Panther can reasonably hope to survive a direct hit from one of these hammers. The Stalins, however, have limited ammo, no rate of fire, and may not intensive fire. They must choose their shots wisely. Their thick armor (18 front turret, 14 front hull) should be proof against most of the German guns, and may even deflect a shot from the dreaded Panther.

German Defense

Let's take a look at one possible German setup for the purposes of discussion. It is probably not the best, but it should provide a frame of reference for us to address the main issues of the scenario. The Germans should focus their efforts on the center of town. They must make it extremely difficult for the Russians to establish themselves in strength within the victory area. If they can hold the attackers off for 3 or 4 turns, their reinforcements should be able to carry the day. The starting forces have just the tools to do the job, too, if set up wisely. A tight hedgehog is called for, using the principles of reverse slope defense. The core of the defense should be set up such that the Russians cannot easily put fire on them, without first exposing themselves to heavy firepower. Consider hex 3R4. Units in foxholes here are not easily seen from a distance, except from the upper levels of the 3M2 building, or perhaps hill 3W5. Anyone else wanting a peek will have to do so from close range. This is where the 9-2 will anchor his defense, with two 5-4-8 squads and the heavy and medium machine guns. Adjacent targets will be treated to 44 FP shots, with a strong possibility for rate of fire. Supporting them in bypass Q5-R5 is the FlakPz IV/37. Here this vehicle can remain hidden from the Russian tanks, at least for a while, and provide strong fire support for the 9-2 group. Together these units ought to be able to make the R3 building very hot indeed. The tank destroyers go in buildings to try to keep them alive longer. Small targets in stone buildings will be difficult for the Russians to hit, and they can't afford to waste too much time in the initial assault. They also start the game concealed here as per SSR 2. However, being in buildings is risky for these turretless AFVs, because changing covered arc risks bog. Moreover, firing from a building places a CA marker on a Gun (C5.11). The 75L AT goes up on the hill to the left of the main German position (a trap Seningen sprung on me). Here it will be HIP until a Russian unit gains LOS to it, which will probably be immediately after setup, when it will be placed on board concealed. If it survives initial fire from the Soviets, it should have a good field of fire and plenty of targets. The 50L AT could have been placed in a gambit position in 3DD7 (6) to try to get a flank shot on any Russian tank atop hill 498. Even if such a placement results in a wrecked tank up there, is it worth it? The gun would then be out of position. Therefore for this defense I have shown a more conservative placement, anticipating its use at close range against infantry instead. These Germans have a trick up their sleeve in the form of a HIP Set DC given by SSR 3. They are also allowed HIP for one squad equivalent and any MMC setting up with it. I think the best use of this capability is to have the controller of the DC be hidden as well. In this case the ground level of 3M2 contains the Set DC, and its owner is across the street in L4 (kudos to Zeb Doyle for suggesting this spot). A half squad with a PSK is here to grant the HIP capability, but the hero is the one with his hands on the detonator. Since a task check is required to use it, I'd rather have a 9-morale unit do it, and I can see nothing in the rules that prevents a hero from being the owner of a Set DC. If the demo charge explodes, there is a very good chance that it will rubble the hex, eliminating the

stairwell and thereby depriving the Reds of a potential upper-level firebase for dominating the center of town. Any Soviets destroyed in the blast are a bonus. Perhaps this spot is too obvious and won't fool anyone, but it's worth a try. The PSK-toting half squad is also in a reasonably good position to guard this northern flank from Russian armor. The other PSK goes to a HIP half squad as well, all the way over on the other flank in W4. Although they are a bit exposed out there, they might get a decent shot at some armor. Several squads occupy the front line from S3 to T4 under concealment. They will probably get clobbered early, but someone has to man those positions and extract a price in Russian blood for them. The dummy stack in the second level of 3N2 might deceive the enemy a bit. Any attention it can draw away from the victory area is a good thing for the defense. Since both tank destroyers are deployed on the German left, the roadblock is placed on the right side to help slow down enemy armor a bit.

Russian Setup

The Germans have created a pretty tough nut to crack, but with the right leverage the Russians can do the job. It may seem odd to say it in a situation where the defender is sitting right on top of the objective, but I think to be successful the Russians have to "hit 'em where they ain't." Sure, you'll have to close with the defenders and root them out, but you should still strive to do so on your terms, not his. Don't go where he is expecting you to go. Engage his vehicles outside of their covered arcs. Pummel his weak units, stripping away the support from his anchor position, and only then overwhelm it. Although the Russian player will not know where the 75L AT is at first, he must still consider the possibility that it might go on a hilltop where it commands a great field of fire. There is no use exposing a lot of tanks in the open and grant the enemy a target rich environment. Rather, the Russian tanks are placed to make them more difficult to hit, either in buildings or woods, or behind the hills. The SU-85s are in position to lay smoke on the German gun early if necessary, and the one on hill 498 can obscure the machine gun nest in 3R4 by lobbing a smoke round in Q4 or S4. Don't forget to make a hull down dr for this vehicle (D4.22). It may help it survive a bit longer. The tank in 4P1 has the drop on the StuG in 3P4. This contest could go either way. The T-34 will achieve a hit with its first shot on a roll of 6 (10 base, +1 small target, +2 TEM +2 concealment, -1 AL) and a result with AP ammo on a 9 (17 base, minus 8 armor). The T-34/85s have an APCR depletion number of 5, so trying for APCR first would increase the odds considerably. If the StuG survived it could return fire and hit the T-34 on a roll of 6 also, but would need a 6 or less for a result (17 base, minus 11 armor). The Russian assault consists of 4 groups. First are the aforementioned SU-85s, which provide covering fire and smoke. Second, the rifle platoon based at 4V2 has the objective of seizing the 3M2 building and keeping the Germans honest on that flank. Third, the rifle company in the 3T0 area, supported by tanks, will make the frontal assault with the 9-2 leader providing the firebase with the

machine guns. (In the accompanying graphic, the squads are shown above the tanks only for clarity when in the same hex; they are not meant to start as riders.) These guys are capable of launching a human wave on turn 1, but it might be better to wait for the fourth group of elite shock troops assembled in the 3Z4 area to crest hill 522 and flank the Germans. Two more tanks support this group, which is heavily armed with LMGs, demo charges, and a flamethrower. They ought to be able to bring tremendous pressure to bear on the German right flank and rear. Imagine a human wave from the rifle company on turn 2, in conjunction with such heavy pressure from the elite troops, and perhaps even a preparatory smoke round from the SU-85 sitting in overwatch! If timed well it could be devastating to the defense.

Ebb and Flow

The first turn will probably have plenty of action, but things will really heat up in turns 2 and 3, as the Russians desperately try to smash the defense and establish some sort of foothold of their own before the German reinforcements arrive to give them a colossal headache, while the German defenders just as fiercely fight for their lives. The Russians cannot let losses deter them; they must press forward and crush the defense. On turn 2 a couple of Stalin tanks join the fray. They should be kept together to support each other. They provide the best answer to the Panther and the Tiger due to arrive soon. They might do well to head for the walls near the 3M2 building, where they can get in hull down positions before the tanks of the 24th Panzer Division arrive. In general I don't think the Russians should spend a lot of time in the first 3 turns worrying about the German reinforcements, because it's too difficult to predict exactly where they will enter. Certainly some care must be taken to not leave units exposed and vulnerable, but really the best defense against the relief column is to obliterate the German starting force.

German Reinforcements

By German Player Turn 3 the beleaguered troops in the village ought to need some serious help. Fortunately for them, an armored relief column, loaded for bear, is on the way. They are springing the trap on the Russians. They can enter on either or both the north and south edges, so they ought to be able to catch some enemy units unprepared. Moreover radio jamming should just be starting, which might hamper Russian armored movement a little. The Panther and Tiger, along with their MkIV henchmen, should seek out and destroy enemy armor, while the mounted infantry makes a beeline for the town. Take care with the trucks; they can be very useful in getting infantry forward fast, but they are quite easy to knock out. Despite the power of this force, the Germans cannot afford to throw any units away. The relief column has 5 turns to do its job, so it strikes me that they don't have to rush too recklessly. The Russians simply cannot adequately prepare for it. If they concern themselves too much with being ready to face the 24th Panzer Division troops, they will probably not have

done enough damage to the initial German forces. Yet if the Russians really press the assault hard against the defending Germans, they are likely to take a lot of losses, thereby making them much more vulnerable to a strong counterattack.

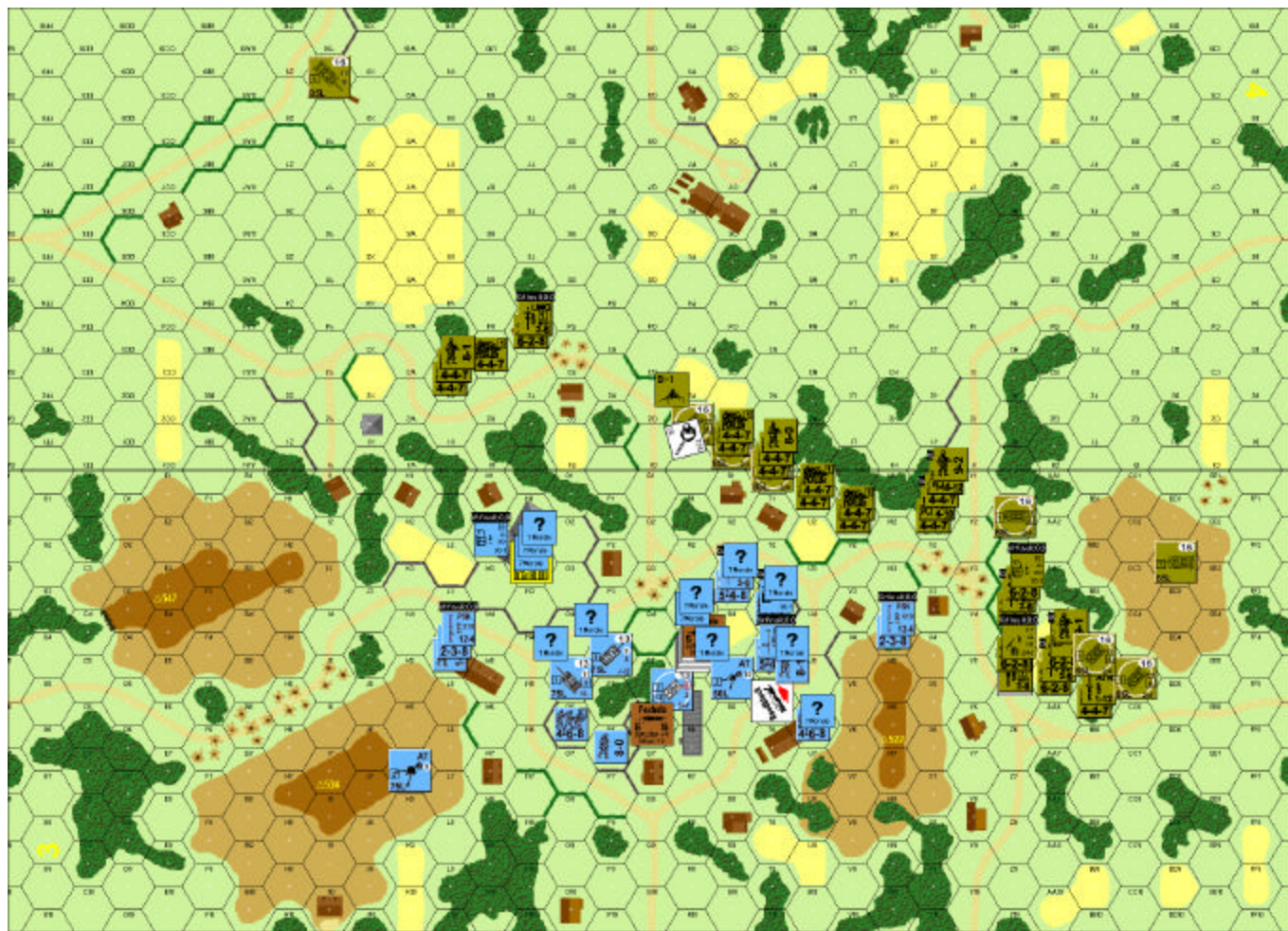
Tactical Tips and Notes

The Russians hope rain doesn't start until after the first couple of turns, because they will probably want to place a few smoke rounds from the SU-85s to kick off the assault. Handheld antitank weapons ought to come into play quite a bit in this scenario, because the Russian tanks will often be operating at close range to the German infantry. The at-start German forces have two PSKs and the relief column brings two more. Demo charges and the flamethrowers can be used against tanks or infantry, and of course there are panzerfausts available as well. But since it is May 1944, the range of the panzerfausts is only 1 hex, making them much less effective. Still, it seems that by the end of the scenario much of the Russian armor will probably be destroyed. Obviously the focus of the scenario will be in the center of town because the victory conditions require the Germans to control all the buildings in that zone, but the second part of the victory conditions should not be forgotten. The Germans must earn more CVP than the Russians also. This might be a key for the Russians. The big cats look tough, but there

should be plenty of opportunity for the Russians to score points. Halftracks and trucks don't withstand a lot of punishment, and the MkIV tanks are unlikely to survive many 85mm direct hits. It might be worthwhile to give the MkIV tanks a higher priority as targets, to strip the big cats of their support and also to score points. Should the Russians save their APCR for the Panther and the Tiger? It will certainly be useful to have some available for that confrontation. However, you can't be sure your tanks will be around that long. If a good opportunity presents itself to use APCR against one of the tank destroyers or even the FlakPz, I'd go for it. Use it before you lose it, and pile up the CVPs! Both sides should keep in mind the possibility of taking prisoners for their extra value. Be aware that if it rains, it will cost more to move up and down hills.

Conclusion

This is one heck of a scenario. Both sides get to do some attacking. Both sides have powerful orders of battle, and come out swinging from the opening bell. There's a little variety too in the form of the Set DC and radio jamming of the Russian AFVs, and it might rain. Both sides require skill to play, although I think the Russian side has less margin for error. Still I'd take either side in this one, and I'd play it over and over again too.



Building an Even Better Beast: Wedding SASL and ASL

Allen King



While I have played board war games since 1962, it was only a year and a half ago that my good friend, Mike Denson, persuaded me to really give ASL a good look. Of course, I was aware that ASL was out there, but I was more than a little reluctant to involve myself in such a detailed, tactical oriented game, when my primary interest was operational land and naval games. But, at Mike's urging, I did try it and now, here I am, writing an article about the game. Good job, Mike. It only cost me about \$1200 and untold hours of rules study, resulting in a whole new group of gamer friends and a lot of game playing joy.

As most would agree, ASL is a wonderfully competitive vehicle and is probably a decent simulator of tactical warfare, *sans* the chaos, noise, fear, smell, gore and distinct possibility of getting oneself killed. However, from the beginning, the game designer that lurks inside Mike raised issues about the validity of the ASL system as a simulation of tactical combat. For instance, why would such a fully developed tactical system grant almost complete knowledge of the battlefield, the enemy order of battle (OB), god-like knowledge of the enemy's and one's own reinforcement schedule, and the infallible command control of each side's soldiers to the players? These were good questions, but I was so busy trying to master the designed system, that there was little time to fret about these perceived faults. So, for a time, Mike pushed to try something new with ASL. I refused on the grounds that I **hate** redesigning good games and I was still learning the rules. But, in time, Mike convinced me to try his homegrown hybrid using a blend of the SASL rules with the regular ASL rules. The effort has proven to be a fun change of pace from scenario play and, in our view, an incremental improvement to an already legendary game system.

So, "what is this new beast?" I hear the hesitant warily asking. Well, to answer that requires that we look at some unique features of the SASL system to acquaint those that are unfamiliar with them. After I have described those few, but important, features we will take a look at how our efforts have married those features to regular ASL, hopefully, turning the whole thing into a more enjoyable and, perhaps, more accurate simulation and better game. In addition, I'll add a few observations regarding adaptation of the SASL concepts to standard ASL scenario play. Finally, I'll show how we created a Campaign Game (CG) using the new system and describe the world of Captains King and Denson beginning in 1939.

For those that are familiar with SASL, you will recall that the real player takes the side of the FRIENDLY player. The ENEMY player may be attacking or defending (and occasionally both) depending on the mission type chosen

from the 20+ mission types available in the game. But, in whatever mode the ENEMY is in, he will always initially appear as a "suspect" or "S?" counter. Only after certain sighting (LOS) criteria are met, depending mostly on distance and movement of the opposite side, will the ENEMY make a dr to determine if that "S?" counter is a mirage (nothing) or if it represents something all too real. No longer do you and your opponent have complete knowledge of what's out there. Whoa, baby, can *that* make a difference.

In addition, even for the FRIENDLY side, command control rules are in effect for SASL, and so are they in the hybrid. No longer do the players have complete control of whether a unit will fire or move. The SASL concepts of command control and "panic" have been wed to the regular rules in the creation of the hybrid game. Command control is the process by which a leader commands all units, including same level or inferior leaders, which are located within two hexes and have a LOS to his position. Of course, the leader must not panic (he must pass a NMC +1) in order to exercise this command control. Should the leader panic, other leaders within two hexes or the individual squads and half squads, may attempt to avoid panic by passing a NMC. Failure does not break them, but they do panic for that player turn. Panic results in the unit doing nothing at all for the player turn. In other words, the panicked unit freezes for a time... just like real life units do sometimes in the confusion and chaos of battle. No more perfect, robotic soldiers here. These guys suddenly have real human like characteristics, lending the system a certain additional level of realism not found in ASL.

The battlefield terrain is known, just as it is in ASL, however, there are some interesting things added by SASL here too. The board setups are quite random and almost never produce anything like the same tactical problem, even for the same mission type. This trait lends itself to an almost inexhaustible replay value for all the missions. Added to that is that there are 20+ missions available, so if one is so inclined, a player could continue running various missions on different battlefields for a very long time. There is a lot of vitality inherent to the system due to this feature.

Connected to this is the SASL concept of variable victory conditions and additional board activation. Depending on the mission, the initial board may exhibit one to three victory point objectives (VPO). Each of these is "valued" only at the end of play. Thus, while the player is encouraged to lock up as many VPOs as possible, he must do so at minimal cost to his assigned force. This alters the play in SASL from that usually found in standard ASL scenarios. The last second rush to the final objective is just not as necessary in the mission-oriented play of SASL. In addition, because the VPO are randomly placed from a table (no stupid placements), the variety of missions is almost limitless. Also, some missions feature the option of possibly adding additional board(s) to the ENEMY board edge. This brings a variable number of new VPO (initially

controlled by the ENEMY) into play while the FRIENDLY player adds 3 VPs just because the new board activated. Whether to risk activation of a new board is a major strategic decision for the FRIENDLY player. These variables add to the fun, but I cannot say they add to the realism of the game over that found in ASL.

Finally, SASL adds the very interesting concept of the Random Event (RE). At the beginning of the game, the players each roll for a RE number (actually a pair of numbers). Should one of these numbers occur when the phasing player makes his weather roll, all sorts of very interesting things can happen. The RE results are almost uniformly favorable to the side that made the roll. The RE comes in a large number of flavors, ranging from something relatively small such as a small minefield affecting one squad to a combined arms flank attack on the weak side of your objective area. Bad...bad...very bad! But, perhaps most telling of all is that REs introduce that missing link of chaos that ASL just doesn't exhibit. One can just never be as sure of things in SASL. REs assure that. But, again, the not so funny thing is that real combat just happens to feature this trait too.

So, all these new elements found currently in SASL just called out to Mike's inner game designer to come forth and "cure" ASL. Well, that game designer did come forth, but we'll let you decide if he cured anything. Now let's take a look at how these new characteristics were grafted into the regular ASL system to create the new hybrid CG.

Frankly, it actually worked out more smoothly than I thought it would. The mission starts as an SASL game, except that the opposing player takes command of the ENEMY forces as they become real units. Until that point, all the normal rules for SASL about activation (in either defensive or attack mode) of S? counters are in place. The FRIENDLY side takes the forces assigned and the game begins. However, just like in real combat, the FRIENDLY side's plan lasts only until first contact with the enemy. Should an S? counter activate and produce troops or, God help you, an AFV, in concealment terrain, then the FRIENDLY player knows only that something is there. That "something" can range from a concealed, conscript half squad to a couple of elite squads with a heavy MG and a 10-2 leader in a 2-5-7 bunker. Obviously, the odds favor less rather than more, but whatever it is, it remains concealed until something happens under the regular ASL rules causing it to lose concealment. The concealment rules are the normal ASL concealment rules; however, one cannot look at the OB card and get a gauge on what is likely in that stack. This can be nerve-racking in the extreme as FRIENDLY forces try to go through or around this force to reach their goal. After a relatively few turns, the ENEMY player often has accumulated a viable force with which to oppose the FRIENDLY side and the battle is on! Leaders panic at the worst of times, vehicles won't shoot when you want them to, and that guy with the DC just itching to blow that enemy squad to Jupiter, won't do a damned thing! Now that makes cowering look like a walk in the park. And, you know what? It may be more realistic.

The other elements listed above, like Random Events and command control extrapolated into regular ASL almost without a hitch. Now, the battlefield that once was a well-ordered field for playing ASL chess looks and feels very different. It does so for a very good reason; it is different. And therein is the fun and charm. We have chaos; there is command control; there is the unexpected, new decisions are thrust upon us, there is even an element of fear... but, no one is going to get killed. They are just going to have a lot of fun.

Fun...hmm, speaking of that, I promised to tell you how we turned this into a CG that makes ASL more competitive and, to us, even more fun. Well, I drew up a list of time periods starting in Poland in early 1939. There are twelve time periods spanning the length of the war. Each is based on a major event. For example, after Poland, there is a mission in the Low Countries, followed by the main battle in France, followed by a mission in Greece and on into Russia. There isn't a mission in N. Africa, but otherwise, the missions list spans the war in the ETO.

Both Mike and I chose to be young German officers assigned a standard 1939 Wehrmacht infantry company. Our squad consisted of 12 first line squads, 2 half squads, 6 crews (SASL uses crews for mortars and ATRs), 3 ATRs, 3 50mm mortars, 4 LMG, 1 MMG and 1 HMG. Starting leadership was per the standard ASL rules (Section H), so it was somewhat variable. As it happened, both of us started with three identical leaders (9-1, 8-1 and an 80). We decided to play the same mission in each time period and then see who had the most points at the end of the entire mission list (12 games each). The SASL rules cover replacements, promotions, weapons replacements and upgrades and all that sort of thing, so that transferred without a hitch. Initial weather and weather changes are determined by the standard ASL rules. We eliminated several SASL rules (like S? being activated by fire) to reduce possibilities for *gaming the system*. The actual mission was chosen by mutual consent. Suddenly, we were ready to start.

Mike played the FRIENDLY player first in a road-clearing mission against a defending Polish foe. The boards and "S?" counters were placed per the SASL rules, and the forces of darkness took the first step in a long and horrifying war of conquest.

Mike lost that first battle in a close one to the Poles. Then it was my turn to try a road clearing game, and the Poles were again triumphant. Hitler didn't promote anyone for that lackluster effort, though Mike did get a fourth leader in a snake eyes self rally, while losing a crew and ATR to enemy action. In my venture against the Poles, I lost a little worse, and had bad luck replacing personnel, so I went into the next game with a couple of infantry squads reduced to second line, a pair hardened to elite and short a full squad. In the next set of missions (Cautious Advance), Mike faced the French and won decisively, dicing my guys mercilessly. I faced the Belgians (there is a chance in most time periods that one will face an ally of the main foe) and also won

easily. That brought us to the third set of missions (Bridgehead) set in the final assault on France in June 1940. Mike faced the French again. Both of us agreed that only good fortune saved him from a likely loss and perhaps the annihilation of a good portion of his company. The French lucked out on a few unit activations and had four tanks descending on his bridgehead. Some of these vehicles would have reached the bridgehead area in a turn. He rolled to end the mission. He needed a "1" to end it, and got it! Just in the nick of time! A sigh of relief rose from Mike and his company as the French commander lost courage and turned his superior force away in withdrawal. Pretty heady stuff, huh?

I have heard it said that this hybrid system plays too much like SASL to have lasting appeal. Perhaps that is true, as the system is initially pure SASL, and only begins to play more like an ASL CG scenario as the ENEMY player begins to activate troops and move them like he would in ASL. However, our view is that SASL includes some things that should have been included in the original game system. For instance, command control would, in our view, make ASL a better system. The same is true for Random Events and crews for certain support weapons currently utilized by regular infantry without penalty. As currently configured, ASL scenario play provides the players too much information. That issue is reduced using the hybrid system. Further, as stated earlier, the SASL feel really begins to transform as the ENEMY player begins to convert those "S?" counters into real shooters and move them at will (unless panicked), rather than according to the rigid SASL fire and movement strictures. The feel that does seem to come though in the hybrid CG system is that of a regular CG reduced to a series of quite manageable mini-CGs. This makes the CG quite playable as each mission plays in the same time as a moderate to long scenario. However, unlike scenario play, force conservation is very important in the hybrid CG game. The officer that treats his troops like this is "just another scenario" will find himself unable to replace all his losses after each mission. This will eventually result in a cumulative force reduction so severe that the company will become extremely vulnerable to total obliteration in subsequent missions.

As to scoring the hybrid game, each mission win is worth a point, each mission loss is worth -1. A commander can decide the situation is hopeless and withdraw his company to save it from annihilation (he who fights and runs away...), but the cost is a steep -2 points. One of the leaders is designated as "oneself". Loss of that leader results in him being regenerated with a very good chance that he will be much less capable (and bragging rights for a month for the opposing player). High scorer wins the CG.

So, we'll battle on for a while and the weapons will gradually get deadlier and deadlier. We'll fight in Russian winters, the rocks of Sicily, the hedgerows of Normandy and all the way back across the Rhine, until death claims our company or the war ends. Come join in the fun. Take your company into combat and experience the real chaos of

battle. Nothing says that one cannot start as a Russian Commissar or a British Tommie. For those that love the PTO, you can take a Japanese or Marine company into the jungles of Guadalcanal (good damned luck!). But, whatever nationality one chooses to lead, I guarantee you that there will be a lot of nail-biting times on the way to your final objective.

Finally, you might like to know if the hybrid rules are adaptable to scenario play. I'd have to say that the answer to that is still very much open. In my opinion, it is not, but it will take playing a relatively large number of control scenarios to see how it all pans out. I am just not willing to spend that much precious game playing time to find out. (Remember, I **hate** redesigning good games ☺).

Even if the hybrid is limited to command control, crews for ATR/mortars, and random events, I just don't think it would work with the current ASL scenarios. It is my view that the current scenarios are carefully designed in lock step with the existing ASL rules. Thus, the time limits imposed on a force to achieve an objective assume the usual near perfect control over one's troops that ASL imposes. To impose command control and have even one turn in which a significant number of your leaders/troops panicked, is to unalterably and fatally disrupt the timetable of the attack in my view.

However, I must admit that it is possible that the addition of the RE might balance this all out. When combined with economical use of one's leaders to minimize panic possibilities, Mike tends to think it would. He might be right. However, the only way to really find out would be to play a lot of control games (same scenario) to see if the results of the hybrid scenario play closely tracked the results for the standard ASL form of the scenario as shown in ROAR results. That is a lot of test games. And, did I tell you that I **hate** game design ☺? In the four or five scenarios Mike has played using the hybrid rules, he has not detected a disconnection caused by the application of the hybrid, but in the one I tried, my troops panicked all over the place, I got no REs to compensate, and I lost badly. Perhaps I would have lost anyway, but I think I had no chance after all that panic occurred. I was just too far behind the time curve. So, perhaps that soured me on the whole scenario adaptation project, but it sure seemed to change the whole possibility of winning that scenario for my side.

But, it might work and I agree with Mike that the whole ASL system should have added these features up front. Then there would be no doubt that the scenarios would have been designed using these rules. The application of the hybrid rules to currently existing scenarios just does not make sense to me. I rather think what one will find is that the scenarios will play wildly differently in each playing. Panic will sometimes be overwhelming to one side. Sometimes, it will be the sudden and timely (or untimely) intervention of a major RE at the critical moment that swings play and sometimes, the scenario will play without much effect from the hybrid rules. For those that try these rules with ASL or who try the hybrid CG described above,

and who might like to delve into the question of applying these rules to scenario play, well, I know just the guy you need to talk to☺.

However, as to the hybrid CG, my hat goes off to Mike. He has thought of a form of ASL that is not only a refreshing and fun change of pace, he has developed something that combines arguably the best of both systems, giving rise to a more realistic simulation of tactical combat. It doesn't get much better than that: more fun as a game and a better simulator of tactical combat. Come on, pick your company and give it a try.

SASL Variant

The following is a summary of rule modifications and exclusions for playing SASL with a real opponent playing the ENEMY player. All rules numbers below refer to chapter S.

Sections 1.0 through 4.0 are used as written.

Section 5.0 - Exclude rules 5.3, 5.32, and 5.5.

Section 6.0 - Exclude all rules in this section except for rules 6.21, 6.211, 6.212, and 6.213.

Section 7.0 - Exclude all rules in this section.

Section 8.0 - Exclude all rules in this section except for rules 8.7 through 8.75, 8.8, and 8.9 through 8.95.

Section 9.0 - 11.0 - Exclude all rules in these sections.

Clarification:

- No ENEMY unit may be activated by FRIENDLY fire.
- The player playing the ENEMY side has complete control over all ENEMY units once they are activated.
- Once activated, an ENEMY unit is immediately subject to all Concealment rules.
- Both ENEMY and FRIENDLY units must use the command rules as written in section 16.
- The ENEMY player uses the ENEMY RE Table for all ENEMY Random Events.

Variant: ASL Standard Scenarios

You could try this with standard ASL scenarios for additional fun and realism:

- **Command:** Both players use the command rules as written in section S16.

- **Random Event:** Both players use the SASL Random Event rules as written in section S2. As there are no specific RE numbers given for standard ASL scenarios, player should agree on a RE number (e.g. 2/3, 3/4, 4/5, 5/6) for each side. For play balance, players may wish to give one side a higher RE number than the other.

After Action Report: SP101 Jura Juggernaut



Matt Shostak

T-bone Taylor and I locked horns on Saturday, November 8 in this new scenario from the Schwerpunkt 9 pack, and had a great game. The action is set on the opening day of Barbarossa, with a German combined arms force attempting to break through Russian lines at the Jura river and exit a substantial force, while also seizing 3 bridges. Boards 49 and 40 combine nicely to depict a town or city on the banks of the river. The German force is powerful, entering in two groups; one in each of the first two turns. The first group contains a mix of tanks, halftracks, and elite rifle squads. The second group consists of a larger group of elite infantry, including a few 5-4-8 assault engineer squads, with a typical assortment of support weapons. The Russians oppose them with a large group of first line squads and a couple of 37L antitank guns, but by SSR they are forced to spread out across the terrain, one MMC per building on board 49. They have armored reinforcements scheduled for turn 3 in the form of four BT-7s and three T-26 tanks. What really make this scenario interesting are the victory conditions, because they force the Germans to carefully allocate their forces and plan their attack throughout the game. The Germans will lose if they don't exit 49 victory points across the river and off the far board edge by the end of turn 4. That's a lot of points. Given that the Russian reinforcing tanks can enter on either of the flanks on turn 3, the Germans might not want to wait until turn 4 to exit most of those 49 points. In addition to that, the Germans must control all 3 bridges at the end of the game. These bridges are spread out pretty evenly, with one on the left, one in the center, and one on the right. It's a tall order, but a fun challenge for the German player. The Russian task may seem simpler, but it's not easy either. At any given point, the Germans have tactical superiority. They have better morale and vehicles, and can achieve concentration of force quite easily against the widely spread Russians.

I took the Germans and T-bone quickly set up a defense. I decided that I should concentrate my force on the northernmost bridge, which was the left one as I faced the board. The right side has a large gully to restrict

movement, seems to have slightly more open field of fire, and across the river has a hill behind the bridge where some squads were entrenched, probably with an MMG. The middle bridge also seemed like a poor choice because it would expose my troops to counterattack from both sides. I moved my forces aggressively forward on the left side, with one tank moving up the center road with the goal of hindering any Russian moves from one side to the other. A few halftracks unloaded their passengers because I felt like I need some infantry to help clear the area. In the early going a couple of tanks malfunctioned their main armaments. Liberal use of vehicular bypass movement to freeze the Russian infantry around the bridge area helped the assault push forward, as the next German wave of infantry launched their attack on the center/left on turn 2. Despite much encirclement and firepower the Russian units by the left bridge were resilient and proved tough to dispatch. By turn 3 I had to make sure I could get the required 49 points off the far side of the board. I was concerned about the Russian tanks due to enter on turn 3. They could appear on this far left flank if they wanted to, or they could enter on my far right. If they chose to get up close and personal here on the left, I was worried that if they scored a couple of kills I would lose the game early. I could have tried to exit 7 halftracks loaded with squads to reach the 49 point total, but I wanted to keep some of that infantry for the ongoing fight to control all the bridges. That meant the rest of the point total had to be made up of tanks. I had a couple with malfunctioned guns that I would have liked to use, but they were too entangled in bypass suppression to be able to get out in time. Hence I had to exit a couple of my better tanks, a PzIII and a PzIV, in addition to all the halftracks and a squad, just hitting the required point total on turn 4. T-bone had decided to bring his tanks on down at the other side of the board to reinforce the other two bridges.

The game now turned to a more conventional assault on the two remaining bridges. I was not optimistic about my chances. I had already lost a good PzIII to his 37L antitank gun in the center. It had been shocked very early, and killed by a Russian squad in a local counterattack. Two other tanks had no useful guns, and my two PzIIs were not a good match against the BT-7s and T-26s. The game was already proving to be one of wild swings of momentum and hot and cold streaks of dice rolling for both sides. T-bone's infantry was incredibly tough under fire, passing lots of morale checks, but they were ineffective when shooting. Not a single German tank was lost in CC reaction fire or CC, despite my very aggressive in-your-face approach, except for the aforementioned tank already under shock.

In the middle rounds, my German tanks avoided any encounters with the Russian tanks, preferring instead to let the powerful German infantry force work its way forward and help clear the way. T-bone had positioned two BT-7s right near the front of the middle bridge, backed up by two more on the other side of the river in a grain field. The three T-26s parked along the north-sound road in the center-right area, dominating that region. My PzIIIs and

PzIVs were certainly superior tanks, but not invincible. I had to respect the 45L guns of the Russian armor. A leader and platoon of infantry finally forced their way into the lumberyard area just to the right of center, and soon trained their antitank rifles on the T-26s parked on the street ahead of them. They managed to kill two of the metal monsters with their ATRs, one destroyed outright, the other shocked and then knocked out in close combat. The third beat a retreat back to the final bridge area on the right, to make a last stand.

Still feeling like I was behind, I finally had to grit my teeth and press the attack in the endgame. Things started well when a PzIII drove up to challenge one the BT-7s guarding the middle bridge. The Russian tank fired without effect, and the panzer in turn drilled it with a nice bounding fire shot. Emboldened by this early success, another PzIII drove forward to face the other BT-7 by the bridge, and won that bounding fire battle as well. The Russians were firing wild, including the two backstop BT-7s on the other side of the river. In the next turn, the second PzIII also nailed one of those. The other got away, hiding for a time by the wall on the other side of the river.

This set the stage for a furious last couple of turns. On the far left, a lone Russian squad threatened that bridge but was cut down by a PzII. In the center, the BT-7 abandoned the middle bridge and repositioned on the hill overlooking the last bridge on the German right. On the near side of the final bridge, in the 4hex stone building, several Russian squads made a last stand, led by their political commissar. Right next to the bridge a Russian leader was entrenched with a squad and heavy machine gun. The last T-26 was only 80 meters from the bridge, and when a PzIII sallied forth to challenge it, the other 37L antitank gun finally made an appearance and immobilized the German tank. Momentum kept shifting back and forth. The Russians looked like they had the edge, but the final assault was frenetic. At one point the Russian heavy machine gun fired a 6+0 on a stack of three rifle squads in the woods nearby, rolled snakes for the 1KIA, and random selection tied for two squads. The other died as well, although I can't remember precisely how. Ouch. A couple of Russian squads were actually on the bridge itself, meaning that they would have to be completely cleared out for the Germans to declare victory. A PzII unbuttoned and raced across the board with just enough movement to reach the far bridge hex. The BT-7 nearby couldn't stop it. It broke its gun, although I can't remember precisely when. Finally small arms fire stopped the German tank one hex short of its goal. But not all was lost, as another PzII that had been suppressing Russian infantry in the stone building scooted past the T-26, which shot wildly and missed. The German tank proceeded down the road to overrun the Russians on the bridge, and broke the squad there, and remained in the hex. I was under the mistaken impression that that meant the Germans would control that hex at the end of the turn. They would control the bridge location, but not the hex itself. Oh, well. But anyway the last desperate German moves could not get close enough to the last bridge hex to

allow German control. So the Russians won a very close contest.

This was a really good game, and I have to give T-bone a lot of credit for a very high level of play. Thanks for a great game, Jeff.

Player Profile: Jay Harms



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?

Jay Harms: The first game I ever played was *Panzer Leader*. This was way back in 6th grade I think, and my father got the game for Christmas. This was around 1982, which means I have been gaming over 20 years now and still haven't kicked the habit. We played *Panzer Leader* for several years and I don't believe I ever beat him, but I got close there at the end. My second game was *Squad Leader*, which I bought with my own hard earned cash. This trend continued through high school with me purchasing several games a year. I remember commandeering the dining room table in our house for weeks at a time with various games I would have set up and would be playing solitaire or with others.

In college I found a group of ASL players that played *Red Barricades* once every other week. That was during my senior year and that got me into ASL again. After college I moved to Ohio and got into a group that played barricades every week. I guess I played about a half dozen RB CGs during that time. In '95 or so I saw the light and moved to Texas where I hooked up with Walter Eardley. The rest is history.

I still have all my games boxed up in the attic now, and think about pulling one down every so often to see if someone wants to take a break from ASL. Yes, I realize that is blasphemy, but there were some good games out here. A couple of favorites were *FirePower*, which covered individual squad firefights in the modern era, and the fleet series (*2nd Fleet*, *6th fleet*, *7th fleet*, etc.), which was modern naval combat. My all time favorite non-ASL game is *Axis and Allies*, a nice "light" wargame that I was able to talk my friends in high school and college to play.

Banzai: When and how did you discover ASL?

JH: I discovered *Squad Leader* and faithfully bought all the modules and scenario packs, so when AH came out with the ASL series, I just kept right on going and bought the rulebook and *Beyond Valor*, needless to say by this time I was completely addicted. They say that the first stage of an addiction is denial, so at least I am past that.

Banzai: What nationality do you enjoy playing the most?

JH: Oh, this is a tough question. I would have to say the Germans since they have so much flexibility in the typical OB. They are usually well led, and in late '43, '44 and '45 have PFs. Their tanks are almost always very capable regardless of the timeframe (early war, late war, east front, west front, etc.). All in all, they provide for a lot of different options during a scenario.

I would like to learn how to play the Americans (ETO) better, as they have a whole different feel to them than other nationalities due to use of smoke, lower morale, liberal OBA, etc. I am sure the Austin crowd is more than willing to teach me some painful lessons with ETO Americans, especially those Chas Smith designed and Austin crowd play tested HOW scenarios. What, Matt/Mike/Jeff/(fill in your favorite Austin Guru), you never played this *Hell on Wheels* scenario? And you want the balance? Sure, let me just pre-send in my loss to the ladder first... hehe.

Banzai: Describe your favorite kind of scenario.

JH: By far my favorite kind of scenarios are the ones where you are given choices on the at-start OBs or given choices on where to enter forces, etc. To me that gives both sides a feel of uncertainty and a little more fog of war in the scenario. Cases in point are the Kursk scenarios in one of the later Journals, the Tarawa scenarios where you can purchase your type of fortifications, or even scenarios where reinforcements can enter at different locations. This is probably why I enjoy the CGs so much.

I also will never say no to a deluxe scenario, or a larger "meat and potatoes" scenario if I have the time.

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

JH: I would say my strengths are night, PTO, and desert scenarios and my weakness is anything on the *Red Barricades* maps... oh wait, I have to be honest don't I? My weakness would have to be the Japanese. That whole not breaking thing is different and calls for different tactics both to use effectively and to defend against. In addition, caves and I don't mix well (yet).

As for strengths, I would have to say city fighting would be my biggest strength, due to the time I played CG after CG of *Red Barricades*. Of course I may have to revisit this after the thrashing Tom Gillis' and Scott Hopkins' Germans are doing to Walter Eardley's and my lonely British in our current CG of *A Bridge Too Far*. There is a certain *feeling of doom* when facing Tigers and Panthers with nothing more than a PIAT and under low ammo. What did the British High command think was in Arnhem? A bunch of old men and boys?

Oh, and one other thing. Another strength of mine is good-natured trash talking and whining... hey no one is perfect.

Banzai: What is the best part of ASL? The worst?

JH: The best part of ASL is the people and playing a good game against an opponent who is having fun also. I would have to say that is more fun than winning. My most memorable games are my losses where I have a blast. John Garlic crushing me with class in a Kursk scenario, or Matt Shostak taking me to school in *With Flame and Shell* with Mr. 9-2 and his entourage of **three** heroes as the professor and his grad students. Ugly, but a lot of fun!

The worst part of ASL in my opinion is all the "chrome" that is in the rulebook. Do I really need all those pages of rules on panjis? What about rice paddies? Or a packhorse? Of course I am nitpicking, the system as a whole is incredibly well thought out.

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

JH: The revamping of the Finns, I mean talk about a story of David vs. Goliath! I want to seem more Finnish scenarios. I also am always looking forward to the next Austin or Houston get-together. The fun, trash talking, whining, etc that always goes on make ASL the great game that it is, and having a half dozen games going on around you, there is never a dull moment.

Banzai: You're attacking in 1944. Would you rather have four T-34/85s, or two JS-II's?

JH: Four T-35/85s for sure. Fausts will kill them both, and most likely the Germans will have AT / tank gun capability to kill off the JS-II's. I would rather have the quantity as it give me more options such as VBM, swarming of a lone tank, etc. In addition, I believe they are smaller targets, and have rate? As well as the capability to IF. Of course this is "no rulebook handy" so I could be wrong.

Banzai: What was your most enjoyable ASL moment? Your worst? Funniest?

JH: The most memorable moment was during a RB CG in Ohio, where as the Germans I was assaulting the last big factories (guttled). It was an incredibly tough nut to crack, so we bought pre-reg 150mm OBA with a spotter plane. I rubbed an interior hex with a big Russian kill stack in it. Check for falling rubble – **yes**, it rubbles another hex, check for falling rubble – **yes**, rubble a third hex. The Russians lost about 7 squads, and an entire portion of the factory on that one OBA. My 8-3-8s just waltzed after that...hehehe.

The worst moment – I don't want to talk about...(shudder), but it has something to do with Walter Eardley tossing DCs

with impunity from two levels up on my banzaing Japanese in *Operation Watchtower* (ugh).

The funniest? – Too many to count. It seems like something crazy happens just about every game. Just last week I was playing Tom Gillis in our ABtF CG, and during the game, he captured my squad, my sniper broke his guard, I passed my CC task check, and killed his guard, I then re-armed and with my 4-3-6 conscript captured a DM'ed 8-3-8, and was finally killed off in melee by a 3-4-8 and leader. Tom and I were either laughing or crying the entire time.

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

JH: I want to learn how to play PTO cave rules, as well as become better with the ETO Americans. Plus I would like to play at least one scenario in the desert and at least one beach landing of some sort. Sort of push my ASL comfort zone, so to speak.

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?

JH: For players just starting out, don't worry about winning or losing, and always ask questions during scenarios. I know I would welcome playing beginners and would be more than happy to explain what I am doing during the scenario, and talk through moves to help ramp up the newbie's learning curve. In particular after a scenario, try and talk through the game and decision points that were made, to get a better understanding of strategy, and why your opponent did certain things. I think *the key* to getting new players involved is to get them up to speed as fast as possible. That means helping with rules, helping with strategy and making each game as fun as possible. Personally I have a old 1st ed. rulebook I loan out to newbies just so they don't have to go buy some \$50+ item just to get started.

Banzai: What's your favorite AFV (or other game piece) in ASL and why?

JH: My favorite game piece is the DC. There are so many things you can do with them. Set them, toss them, place them. And the challenge is to actually get them to work. DC laden half squads are a natural lead magnet. The threat alone can allow you to freely move other units.

I would say my favorite AFV would be the MkIVH/J. It is your bread and butter tank in the mid to late war and has good MGs and a decent gun, and yet if you lose it (which I often do), it won't cost you the game, which isn't the case for some of those larger big cat German tanks.

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

JH: As I mentioned, I enjoy *Axis and Allies* and *FirePower*, but haven't found the time recently. *Settlers of Catan* is also a good evening game among non-wargamers. I also enjoy computer games, but the computer opponent challenge (or lack thereof) can be disappointing.

Banzai: What are your other interests outside of gaming?

JH: I like to read, particularly history and science fiction. I also enjoy traveling when I get the chance. Now that my kids are getting older (a 1 and 3 year old), I enjoy just hanging out with them. *Candy Land* today, ASL tomorrow... hehe.

Banzai: Any final comments to wrap up?

JH: Yes, thanks for putting together *Banzai!!*, and thanks to the entire Austin crowd (and especially Mike Seningen) for the quality ASL tourney every June. The Austin Tourney has done wonders for the Texas ASL community. Without the strong Austin ASL presence, the Houston Half Squads wouldn't have anyone to pick on (smiles with tongue firmly in cheek). I would also recommend that if anyone gets the chance, head up to Oktoberfest, as that is another quality shindig.

Favorite Scenarios

Jeff Taylor



Well, here are five of my favorite scenarios. I've chosen them mostly because they were a lot of fun to play. Yeah, I know ASL is the greatest game on earth, but there are a bunch of scenarios out there that are either boring, incredibly unbalanced, or God forbid both. I play this game for fun and competition, not for its simulation value. I can find better tactical simulations elsewhere. I'd play any of these five scenarios again because they are in my opinion pretty balanced and likely to have good replay value. Most of them went down to the wire when I played them with the victor usually being decided during the last player turn. And no, I didn't win all of them, as my record must surely indicate☺. Here they are.

(E) Hill 621

A monster eastern front scenario that has just about everything: hordes of Russian infantry, T-34s and assault

guns attacking a very small force of 1st line German infantry on a hilltop backed up with a module of 80mm battalion mortar who are rapidly reinforced with AT guns, PzIVs, StuGs, a module of 100+mm OBA, and a platoon of 8-3-8s with a 10-3 leader. Talk about a desperate situation. The battle is usually fought on the reverse slopes of the hill and the German had better get his artillery on target. The VCs are very straightforward: control five of the level 3 hexes on board 2. Yeah, I got smashed as the Russians in this one, but I'd play it again.

(J23) Kampfgruppe at Karachev

This is another eastern front match up, but a much more manageable tourney sized scenario. This one has multiple VCs based on accumulated CVP or control of all buildings in the German setup area, which leads to many tough decisions throughout the match. Both sides also have assault engineers with DC and ATMM which are used to good effect vs. enemy tanks so it's often more advantageous to hunt your opponents tanks on foot. I thought I had this scenario in the bag when I played it as the Germans, but lost it after several CC went badly, thereby freeing enemy prisoners taken earlier in game and giving the Russian an immediate victory.

(A70) Wintergewitter

Perhaps my all-time favorite scenario. It's the only scenario that I really wanted to play again. Yet another eastern front scenario, this time the Russians are defending a small village against a numerically smaller German force who possess better morale, leadership, and mobility. Three T-34s make an appearance on turn 2, and the valiant Soviets must attempt to hold out within the setup perimeter for 5 1/2 turns. This one often comes down to one remaining T-34 or squad for a Russian victory. I squeaked out a victory with just one remaining T-34 after fighting off multiple infantry assaults with a spectacular ROF that I'm sure will never happen again.

(A72) Italian Brothers

I must say that there are a bunch of good scenarios in *ASL Annual '95*. This is yet another one set during the Spanish Civil War. A mixed bag of Italian fascists from the Black Flame division accompanied by three massive L3/35 tankettes vs. several companies from the Garibaldi battalion replete with their own commissar. Again, multiple VCs make this scenario a lot of fun. Fighting rages for control of four buildings. Not a lot of VBM sleaze in this one either due to the weak AF of the tankettes. There is nothing like having your tanks knocked out by LMGs. I managed a Republican victory in this one. It's one of the few scenarios that I've played using VASL.

(J69) The Army at the Edge of the World

Well, I had to throw a PTO scenario in the mix. This one has the French in Indochina defending a fort against a Japanese onslaught across three half boards. It also has several VC. The French are torn between defending the fort on a rocky outcrop and defending the road running the length of the boards. I siphoned off one too many French squads to defend the road and ended up losing the fort in this one. A very tight game against Matt Shostak indeed! Yet another frustrating loss to this ASL grognard, but I must say it was a blast to play which of course is what really matters in the end.

Foggy Breakdown

A Challenge to Designers

Matt Shostak



I've often heard players bemoan the lack of fog of war in ASL. They've got a point. As a player you find that you often know the enemy's exact order of battle, you know precisely when and where reinforcements will arrive, and you have no doubt as to the victory conditions. Is this a fault in the system itself? Is something wrong with ASL? ASL already has all the elements needed to produce a reasonable amount of fog of war. It's up to scenario designers to put them to good use. The rules allow for hidden units and extra concealment to be used as dummy units. Moreover, designers have a lot of leeway through SSRs and victory conditions to add to the fog of war. Here are some suggestions to designers for making things a little more interesting. Perhaps none of these suggestions are new, most having seen the light of day already in some scenarios, but it would be well worth keeping them in mind when creating a new action for your ASL brethren to play.

- **HIP.** So many scenarios offer no hidden placement at all. Why not? As a player, I'd like to see some HIP in nearly every game. Very rarely do they allow the attacker any hidden capability. Why not? Usually scenarios allow no HIP at all (except for emplaced guns), or they allow it for a squad or two, or the entire order of battle. Why not try something in between? How about allowing several squads to be hidden? Or maybe you could force units setting up close to the front line to be on board, but units farther away could be HIP. That might reflect the knowledge front line troops would have due to scouting and recon, but they would know less about areas to the rear. (Thanks to Steven Long for that last suggestion.)
- **Dummies and concealment.** There aren't enough dummies in most scenarios for my taste. Give more, especially to the defense, but allow some for the attacker sometimes too where appropriate. Usually

their effect is short-lived, but they do cast some doubt about dispositions for a while. Besides, how are we going to learn cool deceptive tricks with dummies if we rarely get very many of them?

- **Variable orders of battle.** Players seem to love the ability to make choices about their forces. It's best if the choices are secret of course. Pete Shelling's Kursk trilogy from ASL Journal #3 (*Dress Rehearsal*, *Setting the Stage*, and *Showtime*) is a good example of this concept. Those scenarios are very popular and very fun to play, largely because of their shopping cart approach. Another approach would be to give players a point total from which to purchase forces from a list, rather like what is done in the various campaign games out there, but on a smaller level. To me, this seems preferable to going the DYO route (ch. H), but DYO elements could still be very effective in this regard if done right. For example, the designer could determine the board layout, the victory conditions, SSRs, and DYO purchase points available to each side. There should probably be some restrictions on what the points are spent on to make sure the game is both historically accurate and also fun and balanced for the players. I've seen examples where a certain number of the points must be spent on armor, etc. Keep in mind that for order of battle choices to be truly fun and interesting for the player, the decision must be between units that are different enough to add sufficient variety to play, but of roughly the same overall worth. Ideally you want to create a choice between units that will generate a lot of debate among players. If one choice is clearly superior to the other, what's the point (except, possibly, as a balance provision)?
- **Variable reinforcement entry.** More latitude could be given to when and where reinforcements enter, or they could be dependent on events during play, such as in J74 *Priests on the Line* where the turn of entry depends on whether the Americans have been able to meet a condition. The player could be given the choice of whether to bring reinforcements on at all, as in KE9 *Aces Over Eights*.
- **Variable victory conditions.** Players can be given a secret choice of victory conditions, as in D6 *Draconian Measures*. How about defining 3 objectives, with securing any two being sufficient for victory? Or perhaps points can be assigned to various goals, and the player has to reach a certain point total to win, but there are several combinations for how to do so? DASL A *To the Last Man* is a good example of this, where one player secretly assigns the point values of each objective.
- **Variable boards.** I'm not sure that this option will work well, but I'm putting it on the list in the spirit of brainstorming. Often a scenario focuses on a village, for example, and if the victory conditions aren't tied to the particularities of the village board in use, perhaps the board used to represent it could be randomly

determined. That would certainly add to the replay value, if not the fog of war.

- **Variable terrain.** It adds just a little bit of replay value when a scenario has random placement of things like rubble, shellholes, wrecks and/or burning wrecks. It can add a little to the fog of war, since you don't know everything about the terrain prior to play.

One might argue that to incorporate these suggestions would necessitate a longer playtesting cycle to make sure the scenarios are balanced, or even that it might be difficult to ever be sure of balance in such creations. To that I say, first, so what? We already have oodles of scenarios, and I don't mind waiting a little longer for new ones, especially if it means they will be more interesting and fun. Second, especially with those involving order of battle choices and variable victory conditions, there are balancing provisions ready to hand for the players. For example, if it looks like one side has the upper hand such an action, players could decide to let the one with the unfavored side make the choices for *both* players. Although that defeats the purpose of achieving more fog of war, it's nevertheless an option to help balance things out if necessary. If, rather than choices of groups of units, the order of battle choices are purchased *a la carte* from a list of units, balance could be negotiated between players by bidding for the point totals used by each side. Simple.

Scenario designers are a creative bunch. I respect their efforts. I hope these suggestions are taken in the spirit they are intended, and used to create more fascinating and fun battles for us to enjoy.

Club Information

Biweekly Lunch Gathering

Don't forget to join us every other Friday at 1300 hours down at Pok-E-Jo's on Fifth Street. The club sends out e-mail reminders, or you can call Matt or Sam for information on the next get-together.

Game Days

The Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas 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 now meets on the first Saturday of every month. To stay informed of upcoming club events, join our e-mail 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, Mike, or Sam a call for club information.

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Thanks to Rodney Kinney for VASL, Carl Fung for his VASL counter images, and the VASL Map Cabals for their VASL map images. We use a combination of VASL counter and map images for scenario layouts with permission of use for that purpose.

Next Issue

- More articles about ASL
 - Player Profile
 - Favorite Scenarios
 - Club Meeting Recaps
 - Club Ladder
- And much more!

Club Ladder

(Our humble Club Ladder, as of Jan. 9)

(Inactive players not listed)

Rank	Player	Points	W	L
1	Jeff Toreki	1801	77	24
2	Mike Seningen	1776	109	31
3	Matt Shostak	1772	177	39
4	Jay Harms	1671	42	12
5	Randy Shurtz	1649	52	16
6	Jim Ferrell	1606	69	17
7	John Garlic	1462	14	7
8	Phil Swanson	1430	18	6
9	Zeb Doyle	1422	28	11
10	Sam Tyson	1388	56	42
11	David Hailey	1302	40	34
12	Roy Casagrande	1284	48	36
13	Rob Burton	1260	20	25
14	Eric Gerstenberg	1259	91	92
15	Ken Havlinek	1251	8	2
16	Mike Denson	1224	12	7
17	Jeff Taylor	1203	25	51
18	Bob Chandler	1190	10	7
19	Allen King	1173	28	28
20	Carl Kusch	1140	33	59
21	Walter Eardley	1140	20	22
22	Bryan Register	1119	25	48
23	Glen Gray	1113	20	23

Rank	Player	Points	W	L
24	Doyle Motes	1102	50	42
25	Chris Kolenda	1100	3	0
26	Steve Eckhart	1088	9	12
27	Scott McFarlane	1085	10	14
28	Kirk Woller	1074	53	76
29	Jeff Toney	1072	3	2
30	Gregg Lessly	1069	2	0
31	Cliff Cornell	1059	3	2
32	Bob Purnell	1054	24	19
33	Rupert Cullum	1044	6	7
34	Rick Reinesch	1023	20	35
35	Steve Desrosiers	1020	5	5
36	Bret Smith	1005	19	28
37	Brian Roundhill	997	15	39
38	Jack O'Quin	991	16	27
39	Clinton Howell	985	2	4
40	David Holmes	984	0	1
41	Jess Popp	982	2	3
42	Tom Gillis	974	60	70
43	Dick Curtis	972	0	1
44	Hector Garcia	966	0	1
45	Aaron Schwoebel	958	8	22
46	Edward Beekman	953	3	7

Rank	Player	Points	W	L
47	Ryan Nelson	946	4	8
48	John Hyler	932	11	26
49	Scott Hopkins	931	4	12
50	Russell Mueller	928	4	10
51	Doug Erwin	922	6	31
52	Joe Schlichting	921	0	4
53	Victor Behar	912	0	5
54	Jerry Blakemore	912	0	3
55	Clint Robinstein	911	4	8
56	Glenn Schools	881	9	32
57	Robert Esparza	880	5	8
58	Jim Martin	866	5	18
59	RJ Mate	856	11	21
60	Dan Preston	846	4	16
61	Bill Jennings	823	0	8
62	Mike Austin	812	6	20
63	Matt Schwoebel	807	10	31
64	Steven Long	761	3	18
65	Charles Stampley	740	0	13
66	Bill Dorre	685	6	33

Ladder Results Since Last Issue

(Send ladder reports to Sam at samtyson@kdi.com)

Ken Havlinek (Fren) def Walter Eardley (Germ) in Le Herisson
 Carl Kusch (Germ) def Matt Schwoebel (Russ) in Walk in the Woods
 Matt Shostak (Germ) def Brian Roundhill (Amer) in Priests on the Line
 Rob Burton (Germ) def Tom Gillis (Amer) in The Bitch Salient
 Randy Shurtz (Alli) def Doug Erwin (Jap) in Oil Strike!
 Ken Havlinek (Germ) def Carl Kusch (Amer) in Death at Carentan
 Sam Tyson (Amer) def Doyle Motes (Germ) in Death at Carentan
 Randy Shurtz (Germ) def Doug Erwin (Fren) in Le Herisson
 Eric Gerstenberg (Germ) def Matt Schwoebel (Amer) in Holy Ground
 Mike Seningen (Amer) def Charles Stampely (Germ) in Beast at Bay
 Matt Shostak (Germ) def Rick Reinesch (Brit) in The Island
 Bryan Register (Jap) def Brian Roundhill (Amer) in Alligator Creek
 Randy Shurtz (Germ) def Sam Tyson (Russ) in Funnel of Death
 Sam Tyson (Germ) def Allen King (Russ) in Seelow Seesaw
 Tom Gillis (Amer) def Rick Reinesch (Germ) in Merzenhausen Zoo
 Randy Shurtz (Amer) def Brian Roundhill (Germ) in Tabacchificio Fioche
 Sam Tyson (Germ) def Doyle Motes (Russ) in Debacle at Korosten
 Randy Shurtz (Germ) def Doug Erwin (Fren) in Objective Princenhage
 Jeff Toreki (Russ) def Rick Reinesch (Germ) in Big Cats at Bay
 Randy Shurtz (Russ) def Doug Erwin (Axis) in Moldavian Massacre
 Jeff Toreki (Germ) def Kirk Woller (Russ) in Streets of Stalingrad
 Allen King (Fren) def Eric Gerstenberg (Germ) in la guerre finie!!
 Jeff Toreki (Germ) def Bryan Register (Amer) in Gavin's Gamble
 Mike Denson (Germ) def Sam Tyson (Amer) in Surrender or Die
 Glen Gray (Chin) def Doug Erwin (Jap) in Shanghai in Flames
 Glen Gray (Span) def Doug Erwin (Russ) in Udamik Bridgehead
 Randy Shurtz (Germ) def Allen King (Russ) in Contact
 Jim Ferrell (Pole) def Doug Erwin (Germ) in Close Order Dreil
 Zeb Doyle (Brit) def Randy Shurtz (Germ) in The Cactus Farm
 Zeb Doyle (Brit) def Edward Beekman (Germ) in 3rd RTR in the Rain
 Gregg Lessly (Russ) def Scott McFarlane (Axis) in Moldavian Massacre
 Gregg Lessly (Germ) def Doug Erwin (Brit) in Objective Exodus
 Randy Shurtz (Amer) def Doug Erwin (Jap) in Paco Station
 Jay Harms (Russ) def Jeff Toreki (Germ) in Wintergewitter
 Walter Eardley (Germ) def Tom Gillis (Russ) in Clash Along the Psel
 Walter Eardley (Germ) def Tom Gillis (Amer) in Lash Out
 Doyle Motes (Russ) def Clinton Howell (Germ) in The Dead of Winter
 Zeb Doyle (Russ) def Allen King (Germ) in One Down, Two to Go
 Randy Shurtz (Pole) def Doyle Motes (Germ) in Skirting the Mace
 Matt Shostak (Russ) def Eric G. (Germ) in The Stalingrad of Kursk
 Eric Gerstenberg (Germ) def Jeff Taylor (Part) in Bear Hunt
 Allen King (Germ) def M. Schwoebel (Amer) in Holding the Hotton Bridge
 T. Gillis (Amer) def R. Burton (Germ) in Once There Was a Little Column
 Zeb Doyle (Brit) def Rick Reinesch (Germ) in Cold Crocodiles
 Mike Denson (Russ) def Dan Preston (Germ) in Blocking Action at Lipki
 Kirk Woller (Germ) def Carl Kusch (Russ) in Shklov's Labors Lost
 Randy Shurtz (Ital) def Doug Erwin (Brit) in A High Price to Pay
 Randy Shurtz (Ital) def Doug Erwin (Alli) in Mount Pissadori
 Roy Casagrande (Germ) def Rob Burton (Russ) in Prussian Panic
 Zeb Doyle (Amer) def Bryan Register (Jap) in Sea of Tranquility
 Randy Shurtz (Cana) def Doug Erwin (Germ) in ils ne passeront pas
 Allen King (Russ) def Steven Long (Germ) in Desantniki
 Mike Seningen (Amer) def Zeb Doyle (Germ) in First and Inches
 Doug Erwin (Jap) def John Hyler (Gurk) in Burn Gurkha Burn!
 Edward Beekman (Amer) def Doug Erwin (Germ) in Thorne in your Side
 Mike Seningen (Russ) def Carl Kusch (Germ) in The Cat's Lair
 Randy Shurtz (Germ) def Victor Behar (Brit) in Guards Artillery
 Rob Burton (Germ) def Roy Casagrande (Russ) in Directive Number Three
 Jeff Taylor (Germ) def Eric Gerstenberg (Amer) in Last Stand at Iserlon
 Eric Gerstenberg (Finn) def Jeff Taylor (Russ) in Defiant Confrontation
 Jeff Toreki (Germ) def Allen King (Amer) in Lost Opportunities
 Roy Casagrande (Jap) def Rob Burton (Amer) in Bailey's Demise
 Allen King (Pole) def Brian Roundhill (Germ*) in The Weigh In
 Rick Reinesch (Russ) def Jeff Taylor (Germ) in One Eye to the West
 Matt Shostak (Russ) def Sam Tyson (Germ) in Twilight of the Reich
 Rob Burton (Axis) def Tom Gillis (Amer) in Terminus Sened
 Randy Shurtz (Germ) def Doug Erwin (Fren) in In Front of the Storm
 Mike Seningen (Russ) def Mike Denson (Germ) in Panzerkeil

Doug Erwin (Russ) def John Hyler (Germ) in Jura Juggernaut
 Jeff Taylor (Russ) def Matt Shostak (Germ) in Jura Juggernaut
 Randy Shurtz (Amer) def Glen Gray (Germ) in The Feineisen Factor
 Matt Shostak (Germ) def Mike Austin (Pole) in The Weigh In
 Mike Seningen (Amer) def Roy Casagrande (Jap) in Rikusementai
 Zeb Doyle (Amer) def Rob Burton (Jap) in Rikusementai
 Bob Chandler (Jap) def Bill Dorre (Amer) in Rikusementai
 Tom Gillis (Jap) def Brian Roundhill (Amer) in Rikusementai
 Rob Burton (Amer) def Zeb Doyle (Jap) in The Hawk
 Zeb Doyle (Amer) def Tom Gillis (Jap) in First Matanikau
 Mike Seningen (Amer) def Walter Eardley (Jap) in First Matanikau
 Brian Roundhill (Amer) def Bob Chandler (Jap) in First Matanikau
 Jay Harms (Jap) def Bill Dorre (Amer) in First Matanikau
 Roy Casagrande (Jap) def Bret Smith (Amer) in First Matanikau
 Ken Havlinek (Amer) def Rob Burton (Jap) in First Matanikau
 Jay Harms (Jap) def Zeb Doyle (Amer) in The Sand Spit
 Mike Seningen (Amer) def Tom Gillis (Jap) in The Sand Spit
 Roy Casagrande (Jap) def Brian Roundhill (Amer) in The Sand Spit
 Walter Eardley (Jap) def Bill Dorre (Amer) in The Sand Spit
 Bret Smith (Amer) def Rob Burton (Jap) in The Sand Spit
 Ken Havlinek (Amer) def Bob Chandler (Jap) in The Sand Spit
 Zeb Doyle (Jap) def Tom Gillis (Phil) in Go Down Fighting
 Roy Casagrande (Jap) def Zeb Doyle (Amer) in Storming the Point
 Rob Burton (Jap) def Mike Seningen (Amer) in Storming the Point
 Bill Dorre (Amer) def Tom Gillis (Jap) in Storming the Point
 Zeb Doyle (Jap) def Roy Ca. (Amer) in The Trail to Hell(zapoppin' Ridge)
 Zeb Doyle (Amer) def Jeff Taylor (Germ) in The Sawmill
 Zeb Doyle (Russ) def Jeff Taylor (Germ) in Twilight of the Reich
 Scott Hopkins (Germ) def Tom Gillis (Brit) in North Bank
 Brian Roundhill (Russ) def Allen King (Germ) in Cream of the Crop
 Doug Erwin (Jap) def Glen Gray (Gurk) in A Stiff Fight
 Glen Gray (Amer) def Doug Erwin (Jap) in One-Log Bridge
 Glen Gray (Germ) def Doug Erwin (Belg) in Strength Through Unity
 Allen King (Russ) def Zeb Doyle (Germ) in Jura Juggernaut
 Matt Shostak (Russ) def Zeb Doyle (Germ) in Pesky Pachyderms
 Allen King (Russ) def Steven Long (Germ) in Under Siege
 Eric Gerstenberg (Germ) def Matt Schwoebel (Cana) in Pieghe a Carpiquet
 Roy C. (Jap) def Rob B. (Phil) in Plenty of Time to Rest When You're Dead
 Randy Shurtz (Germ) def Zeb Doyle (Russ) in le diable noir
 Jim Martin (Russ) def Matt Schwoebel (Germ) in Under Siege
 Zeb Doyle (Russ) def Eric Gerstenberg (Germ) in Thunder Valley
 Matt Shostak (Brit) def Rick Reinesch (Germ) in Searing So Itau
 Jeff Taylor (Jap) def Bryan Register (Chin) in Today We Attack
 Bryan Register (Finn) def Dan Preston (Russ) in Silent Death
 Roy Casagrande (Germ) def Tom Gillis (Russ) in A Stroke of Luck
 Doug Erwin (Germ) def Glen Gray (Amer) in Ace in the Hole
 Roy Casagrande (Germ) def Rob Burton (Pole) in Round One
 Glenn Schools (Amer) def Doug Erwin (Germ) in Aachen's Pall
 Doug Erwin (Amer) def Glenn Schools (Germ) in Gavin Take
 Russell Mueller (Amer) def Doug Erwin (Germ) in Devil's Hill
 Doug Erwin (Germ) def Jim Ferrell (Russ) in The Dead of Winter
 Glen Gray (Germ) def Jim Ferrell (Norw) in Might Makes Right
 Eric Gerstenberg (Germ) def Jeff Taylor (Brit) in Flaming of the Guard
 Jay Harms (Germ) def Tom Gillis (Russ) in Silesian Interlude
 Jay Harms (Germ) def Walter Eardley (Amer) in Merzenhausen Zoo
 Rob Burton (Alli) def Roy Casagrande (Ital) in Italian Brothers (atp8 repub.)
 Matt Shostak (Russ) def Bryan Register (Axis) in Bloody Nose
 Brian Roundhill (Fren) def Allen King (Germ) in Marked for Death
 Jim Ferrell (Germ) def John Hyler (Russ) in Seelow Seesaw
 Rob Burton (Amer) def Bill Dorre (Germ) in The Marnach Strongpoint
 Matt Shostak (Russ) def Rick Reinesch (Germ) in Valhalla Bound
 Phil Swanson (Russ) def Doyle Motes (Germ) in Cream of the Crop
 Jim Ferrell (Germ) def Doug Erwin (Amer) in Among the Ruins
 Jay Harms (Cana) def Scott Hopkins (Germ) in Going to Church
 Jay Harms (Germ) def Scott Hopkins (Cana) in Going to Church
 Jeff Taylor (Ital) def Eric Gerstenberg (Alli) in Pride and Joy
 Carl Kusch (Germ) def Dan Preston (Russ) in Silesian Interlude
 Rob Burton (Repu) def Roy Casagrande (Ital) in The Torija