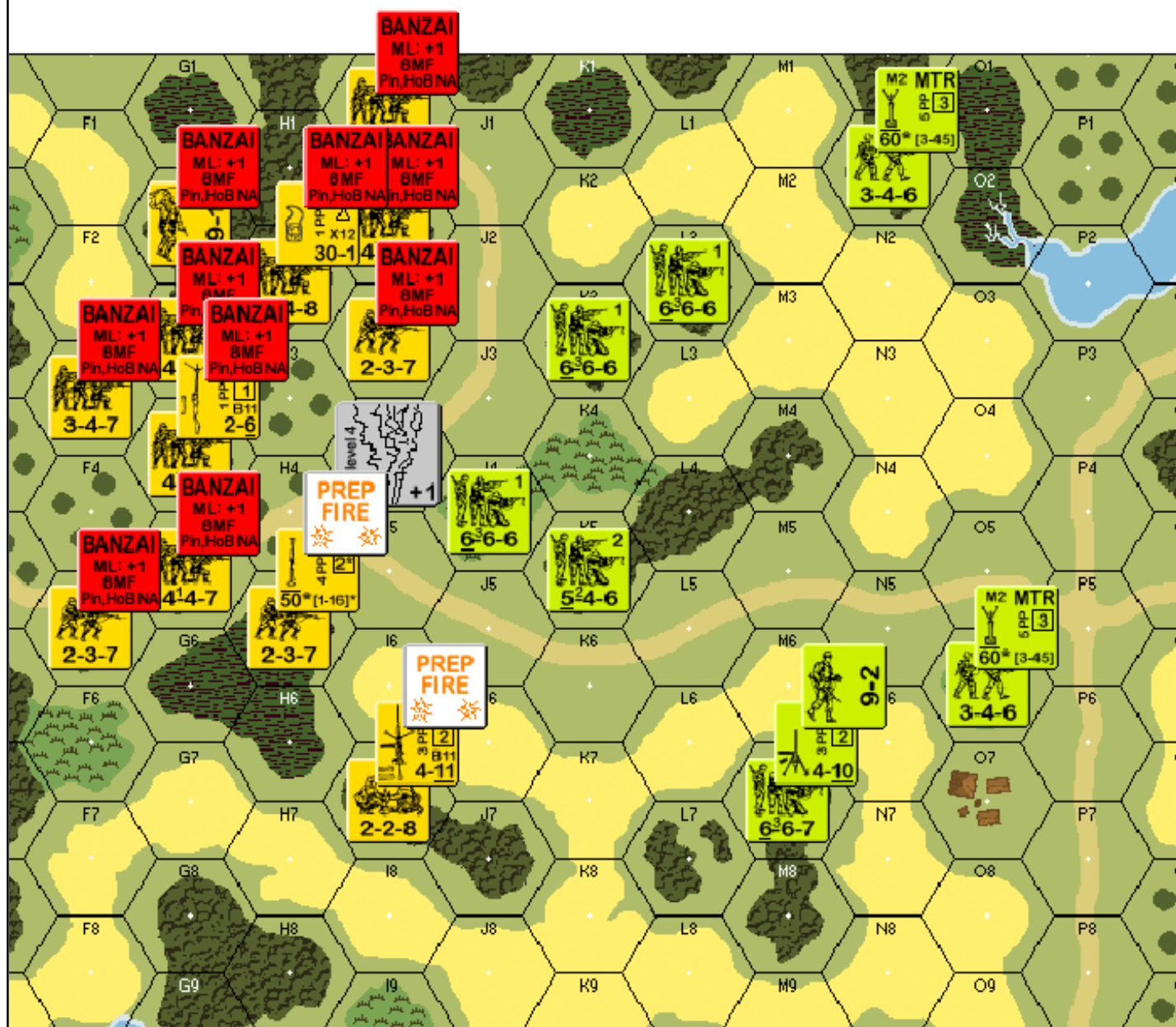


BANZAI!!!



The Newsletter of the Texas ASL Club

December, 2015 Volume 20, Number 1

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EDITOR'S FOXHOLE

Matt Shostak

We are pleased to bring you another newsletter chock full of goodies. This edition notes some of the hard work on CH's Omaha East/West that a number of folks in the Central Texas community did to make a good product a lot better. We also profile Dave Reinking and give a rundown of the recently completed 23rd edition of the Texas Team Tournament. We also note the premature passing of our good friend, Tom Gillis. In all, we hope this issue provides some interesting entertainment. Good gaming!

OMAHA EAST/WEST HOUSE RULES

Allen King and John Hyler

During the 22nd edition of the Texas Team Tournament, a group of intrepid players decided to take on the full invasion scenario (No. 16) of Critical Hit's Omaha East/West (see Banzai!! 19.1). While the group had a great time playing it over the course of the weekend, they felt that there was a lot of unnecessary chrome and esoteric rules that detracted from and dragged down gameplay. They felt that there was a lot of potential for this to be a game that could provide an even better experience for players, and so with that John Hyler took it upon himself to coordinate the streamlining and modification of the rule set with that goal in mind. Assisting John were Allen King, Jason Cameron, and Bill Dorre. Below are their thoughts on the updated rules and gameplay (primarily from Allen with contributions from John). You can obtain a complete set of these modified Omaha E/W rules and great player aids they developed from the Downloads section of the Texas ASL website (<http://www.texas-asl.com>) or from Desperation

Morale (<http://www.desperationmorale.com/play-aids/>). If you are interested in giving it a try, we will be setting up Omaha E/W and playing with these new rules at the 24th edition of the Texas Team Tournament in June of 2016. For more info, check out our website at <http://www.texas-asl.com>. – eds.

With the end of our recent play test, I want to share my insights on our rules clarifications and additions. Overall, I think these changes were excellent and lent to a clearer and more manageable game without any significant sacrifice of the vast scope of the original Critical Hit (CH) creation. As a personal note, I have to say, I loved playing this monster even with its original warts. Its newer incarnation is a much improved product. Almost all the credit for these improvements goes to John Hyler, with a nod to Bill Dorre, Jason Cameron, and me (Allen King).

The significant changes (all of which seemed to work well) were:

1. Addition of a significant number of rules relating to the use of on-board DDs. The play test helped us iron out a few kinks in the new rules. This group of changes will help capture the close DD naval direct fire on fortifications that so assisted the Allied cause at Omaha Beach on D-Day. John did a great job on this. We also revamped the counterbattery fire rules. The way CH wrote them defines a circumstance that can never occur, unless one wishes to have the RCT artillery be on-board. We rewrote counterbattery fire so it is a fire exchange between OBA and NOBA. We defined the DD NOBA rules so that they are no longer optional. An area of confusion was around Rule G14.64 which states that the normal accuracy roll for ship observer NOBA is 2 or less. This is reduced to 1 or less by the presence of heavy surf. So far, so good as we did have heavy surf in effect. However, in G14.68 we see that shipboard observers also get a -1 DRM for their battery's accuracy dr. So, the question: does this in effect negate the heavy surf effect and return the accuracy roll to 2 or less? It appears to me that it does, but is it intended to be "baked in" to the original NOBA accuracy dr of 2 or less?

2. A few significant changes to the VF01 and H677/H667 pillbox rules. In the initial play at the tournament, these new pillboxes with their convoluted Covered Arc (CA) rules caused no small delay in game play for no discernible gain in game realism. The CH rules covering this type of pillbox are cumbersome and hard to implement. John changed the CA to more traditional CAs. While we did not run into these pillboxes in the three turn play test on my sector of the map, it is clear that this change will eliminate much game delay and gnashing of teeth during play.

3. The special rule for Corporal Severloh was changed to somewhat reduce his effectiveness. During the game play at the tournament, the good Corporal and a leader/loader

absolutely destroyed multiple waves of American infantry. It was ridiculous. For those unfamiliar with this rule, the Good Corporal is a hero with a heavy MG. With a leader loader, he became a 6 down 1 or 2 each time he shot. By rule, his ROF was 5! Coupled with the original CH rules limiting German weapon breakdown (the ammo dumps mentioned in the change following this one), that guy just shot, and shot and shot. One wonders if CH even tested this special rule. It was all by itself a game changer. Ask Jack O'Quin if you want to hear a sad story.

So, to reduce the effect of the Corporal, we said that if he failed to gain rate with a colored dr 3 or less (the normal ROF of a heavy MG), but kept it with a 4 or 5, then all subsequent shots were sustained fire. Still bad enough, but not the devastation Jack O'Quin's Americans suffered in the last game.

4. The CH ammo rules and German weapon breakdown. CH introduced the idea of ammo dumps. A German within 8 hexes of the dump and within the same strong point area was allowed to ignore the infamous standard ASL weapons breakdown rule. The rule makes some sense in that the Germans did have considerable ammo dumped in the area. However, in practice this seemed a bit much. Weapons break down for any number of reasons, not just ammo shortage. To reflect this, we changed the rule so that if the Germans do utilize it to negate a breakdown, there is a chance it will reduced the ammo dump first to low ammo, then to exhaustion. Thus, the German player must think twice about burning these dumps to negate broken weapons. It might be worth doing on a 75mm AT gun, but not worth the risk to negate the breakdown of a 50mm mortar.

5. The module, as written, completely botched the hard sand/soft sand rule. They flipped the meanings around completely. What is hard and what is soft sand is a *big deal* in an amphibious invasion game with 5-7 hexrows of sand. We corrected this.

6. We changed the rule for Bangalore torpedoes so that they cannot be used to breach the seawall (too small a charge). We did not get far enough into the game to determine if this rule change is appropriate or not, but it is realistic based on John's research about the use of Bangalores. They are now used as part of a clearance attempt vs wire or known enemy minefields. A successfully placed BT gives a -3 DRM to the clearance attempt, in much the same way that an ATMM gives a -3 DRM to CC vs an AFV.

7. In creating Omaha Beach, CH made changes to the heavy surf, tetrahedron, and anti-boat (AB) mine rules. Some of these rules are less than clear. In addition, interfacing the complex ASL amphibious rules with the CH changes led to hours of discussion and rules reading at the convention game. Once figured out, more discussion arose as players

(particularly the American players doing the landings) forgot the details from turn to turn. While these rule relations have not been codified to date, they should be, or future games will go through the same agony of delay while these rules are thrashed out. It is sad that CH cannot find rules writers who know how to write clearly and succinctly. They have been trying for years. They seem to be no closer to success today. John has tweaked the rules for the various beach obstacles so that the ambiguities are eliminated. He also created a flow-chart player aid to help players through the critical part of actually beaching/unloading the LC.

To summarize, the typical, single landing craft (LC) landing in a non-obstacle/obstacle hex in heavy surf will suffer the following rolls:

1. No tetrahedron (used interchangeably with obstacle or beach obstacle herein): Swamping with a DR roll of 12 (in the ocean/beach hexrow only). Successful beaching on a DR roll of 2-8, goes TI and beaches on 9-11 and broaching on a 12. If there is a wreck or another boat in the hex, these rolls will be modified, making successful beaching less likely.
2. Tetrahedron in landing hex (beach/ocean hex): Swamping with a roll of 12 in the ocean/beach hexrow only). A roll to see if the tetrahedron sinks the LC. A dr 3 (only) sinks the LC. If the LC survives, roll for AB mine/detonation. Detonation requires a roll of a dr 1, followed by another dr 1. If the LC survives these rolls, then it beaches on a DR roll of 2-8, TIs on 9-11 and broaches on a 12.
3. Tetrahedron in non-beach/ocean hex (some tetrahedrons are further out to sea than the actual beach/ocean hex the LC are headed for). While heavy surf is in effect in these hexes, only some of the heavy surf rules apply in these non-ocean/beach hexes. So, the rolls go as follows: No swamping roll as the LC is not in a beach ocean hex. Roll for the tetrahedron effect. A dr roll of 2 (only) sinks the LC. Roll for AB mine effect. Rolls of a dr 1 followed by another dr 1 detonates the mine (can you say bye-bye boat!). If the LC remains in that hex and changes facing, repeat this process again.

And that is it. Just remember the above three situations and required DRs and drs and the game will go *much, much* faster. I do not envy the player that insists on reading and interfacing the regular and CH amphibious rules. It is a chore you will want to miss!

There is some variation in the type of tetrahedron. Some have no chance for an AB mine, others are better at holing the LC, but the above represent the numbers to use in every case for the first 8 turns (after that, different tetrahedrons do come into play and modify things slightly). But if you get the above down pat, then you will avoid hours of discussion and rule reading.

So, on to the takeaways:

1. Playing the Germans:

a. You are going to really enjoy the first 4-5 turns. The Allies have only one meaningful offensive weapon; NOBA. While deadly, it is restricted in use by the nature of NOBA. **Important** to remember: NOBA must start anew after each FFE:1/FFE:2. It cannot be corrected like OBA in the FFE:C state. It must start over each time. Omaha E/W rule 4.81 covers that, and for this module supersedes rule G14.68. An SR is accurate on a dr of 1 if coordinated by the shipboard observer, or 1-2 if coordinated by an SFCP. As for G14.671, non-continuation, this is something that should be emphasized in playings.

Given this, there is little the Allies can do to hurt you in those early turns and there's a lot you can do to hurt him while he is at sea and running across the sand. So, how best to avoid injury from NOBA and maximize the pain for the Americans is the name of the game.

b. Don't hesitate to use the ammo rules to avoid weapon breakdown. Consider taking that IF shot with your 88L. With the ammo dumps, a breakdown roll is negated. However, they do not cancel an X result. These first 5-6 turns are your absolute best chance to stop the invasion cold. If you are unlucky and deplete one or more ammo bunkers, so what? There are many on the map and you are going to need those weapons to kill the troops while they are most vulnerable. Use them. Don't worry about saving them!

c. While others may differ, I would avoid trying to sink LC in deep water (thus killing all on board) and instead try hitting as many as you can. It is the collateral damage on the LC crews and passengers that will do the most damage. LCs generally have enough damage points to make it to at least shallow water (where some of the passengers will survive to wade ashore). The smaller LCs can sustain only three damage points before they sink. Those may be worth the attempt to sink while still in deep ocean. There is a dividing line between gun caliber and ammunition type that should be considered. When firing AP, a hit and successful effects DR will cause only 1 DP (2 if a CH), regardless of the gun caliber. However, when firing HE, the DP caused are the difference between the modified TK # and the effects DR. An 88mm HE round has a base TK of 8. The LCs usually have an AF of 1, giving a modified TK of 7. An effects DR of 4 will cause 3 DP. If the LC has only 3 DP, it will immediately be immobilized. One more DP will sink it. The cut off between AP vs HE is in the 70 - 80 mm calibers. Smaller than that, use AP. Generally, it just takes too many weapons to cause enough damage to sink an LC in deep water. Meanwhile all the other LCs and their passenger troops and tanks will sail right to shore untouched. So, I prefer to hit as many different LCs as

possible in hopes of killing troops and tanks on the LCs or stunning the inherent crew and cause the LC to stop and randomly change facing.

d. The Allies get two BB, two 150mm gun cruisers and three 120mm DDs they can use in NOBA. The Texas is busy for a while eliminating a set of four German off-map guns, so you won't feel the effects of those 14 inch shells until about Turn 5 or 6. **Warning** to the Germans: the Arkansas and its 12 inchers are available from turn 1. Wherever the AR/spotting round goes down for the Arkansas, run away from it. Use your best bunker to hide in or just run (skulk away). Don't think trenches will really help. They will likely become shell holes and any surrounding brush will be in flames when those shells hit. So dang it, clear the way or die. And make sure the Allies start the firing sequence anew each time the FFE:2 exhausts on each NOBA. The 6" (150) and 5" (127) guns are bad enough, but they are survivable. But get the hell outta Dodge wherever the 12 and 14 inchers start falling.

Critical Hit **completely** ignored the presence of the Allied naval forces that were pounding the beach during the invasion. They had some half-baked rules for destroyers only, ignoring the larger capital ships that were present. The new rules remedy this. For the Germans, do not forget the reverse slope rules when dealing with NOBA, especially when the Arkansas (300mm, 36(-2) effects DR) and Texas (350mm, 36(-3) effects DR) have you in their sights. When they plunk an SR down next to you, run away if possible. If a hex in the blast area of a NOBA FFE is on a reverse slope, the NOBA has no effect on the occupants of that hex. The best fortification DRM is a +9. Against the Arkansas, this results in a 36(+7) effects DR. The Texas will have a 36(+6) effects DR. Though a good roll can still ruin your morning, it certainly beats the alternative.

e. Remember to bore sight weapons and remember the first fire bonus for German weapons.

f. Shoot, and keep shooting. The first 5 turns are your best chance.

2. Playing the Americans:

a. Remember that you do not have to land directly in front of the biggest, baddest German strong points regardless of where you are required to come onto the map. While the tendency is to get to the beach ASAP, you can choose where you land to some degree. The longer you stay at sea, the more likely your LC will take damage, or your troops will take collateral damage, but you don't just have to sail directly to shore. Look at the German defenses you can see. You will see areas that are more lightly held. Look at the beaches and which have tetrahedrons in play and which don't.

b. Use your NOBA to create a gap in the German defenses or at least reduce the weapons in play in front of your landing zone. The Germans do not have any immediate reinforcements available and NOBA can at least keep them from running the few free infantry units they have available in the strong points to places that will maximize their ability to hurt you while on the beach. Remember that even the blast zones of shellfire are useful in eliminating the open ground movement fire penalty for your infantry crossing the beach. Some of those beach hexrows have no tetrahedrons, so it is just open ground for the unobstructed German gunners.

c. **Remember** to use platoon movement with your LCs. This will markedly reduce the number of swamp DR against your LCs. This is because when using platoon movement, there is only one swamping DR against the platoon of LC. They are still attacked individually by the beach obstacles and have to roll separately on the Heavy-Surf (Un)Beaching DR.

d. Once you actually beach an LC, don't drop the ramp until the infantry inside have all their movement points available. CX out of the boat and get across the beach ASAP. Don't try crawling to avoid FFNAM. The faster you get across the beach and to the seawall, the better. Remember, you are unloading in heavy surf; hence it will cost 50% of your movement points to enter the first hex off the boat (not 50% plus COT), although if you are fortunate enough to have smoke from a burning LC or tank in the hex, you must pay the +1 for entering smoke. Note that the first hex is hard sand, not soft sand. Remember also, while the tetrahedrons are not obstacles, they do negate the -1 FFMO penalty and do not add to your movement costs.

It is important to note that an LC in a beach-ocean hex has to take the G13.442 Heavy-Surf (Un)Beaching DR when it first moves into, and at the beginning of every subsequent friendly MPh and APh after it occupies the beach-ocean hex, even if it is beached. So if you pass the Beaching DR and beach the LC in one MPh, but do not drop the ramp, in the next friendly APh, another roll is made, possibly unbeaching the LC, although at the end of the turn it will beach again with the removal of the TI counter. However, in the next friendly MPh, the LC could become TI again, preventing the occupants from unloading. I think that the best of a lot of bad options is to run the LC to within one hex of the beach, taking your lumps from German fire. If it is sunk, the survivors can at least wade to the beach. In the next MPh, declare CX for all infantry in the LC and then beach the LC. You have a good chance (8 or less) to pass the Beaching DR. Drop the ramp and start running. The same applies for LCs that contain tanks.

e. Remember on the beach you are fanatic until you reach the hinterland hexes. That means you are not going to break, suffer LLTC/LLMC, or pin on the beach. If you fail

an MC, you casualty reduce, but, keep running or you will die!

f. While in the LCs, everyone (including leaders with a 9 or 10) have 8 morale. Leaders do not help morale checks while in the LC. No one pins, no LL/MC or TCs, no one breaks. You casualty reduce if you fail that morale check.

g. Some disagree, but my thinking is to get to the seawall with everything you have as fast as you can. Infantry can cross without a breach in the wall, but do so judiciously. I'd wait until you blow a breach in the wall before crossing. You might be able to get someone to the wall by turn three. By end of Allied 4, you should have many at the wall, some with DC and tetryl charges. The Germans don't get OBA until turn 5, so that gives you time to breach that bitch and start really threatening German positions with infantry fire and CC.

Clearing a line of beach obstacles (tetrahedrons) is a VC you want to achieve, but personally, I don't think it a good idea to try clearing them in the first few turns. You will get mowed down. An exception may exist when you have a burning tank and smoke to hide yourself while placing or setting the charge. I would never try to set one in those frantic first 5-8 turns. If you try at all, just place it and take your chances (they are decent). But, I think the best course on this is to get off the beach and then clear the line of obstacles after you have reduced the strong points significantly. The tide line is good for 8 turns. After that, your LC do face more tetrahedron risk, but it is better to have live engineers and charges to clear those obstacles later (you have 40 turns to achieve the VC).

The prime role for the armor in the early turns on the beach is to create smoke, whether with their smoke dispensers, smoke rounds, or becoming a burning wreck. This will help the infantry to gain the seawall. The tank-dozer can clear beach obstacles, so they can start working to clear beach obstacles while the infantry sprint to the seawall and use their tetryl charges to blast a breach. A set tetryl charge attacks on 36 column with a -4DRM.

h. You get a number of very nice engineer units who often carry tetryl charges (big DCs); these guys have a smoke component of 5. **Do not** be tempted to drop infantry smoke with these guys. Get them across the beach ASAP. There is a mild breeze blowing from behind and to the left of the US forces. Infantry smoke cannot be laid in adjacent hexes on the up wind side and laying them in your own hex costs a movement point. It isn't worth it. Just run! The same goes for your tanks. I would run them to the seawall and shoot smoke from there.

So, there it is. All in all, I think the American infantry has a decent chance to get across the sand, particularly if the tanks burn near the shoreline. The Germans might want to wait a bit and see if they bog in the soft sand before

opening fire to avoid setting up instant smoke screens for the US infantry.

With lots to think about tactically for both sides, it is a real fun game from either perspective. I just wish we could get deeper into it. In our recent test, the Allies did well. In the first test, the Allies got creamed. It is still unclear if either side has an advantage in this game. But, I sure did enjoy the effort.

RULES REFERENCE

When firing at a Location with multiple targets, remember that Critical Hits affect only one target in the Location. Use Random Selection to determine the target(s) (C3.74). All other targets in the Location are resolved as a normal hit. The exception here is if the Critical Hit is against a vehicle, then the vehicle is always selected and any other units affected Collaterally are attacked normally.

STARTER KIT KORNER

DEFENSIVE SETUP CONSIDERATIONS: DEFENSE-IN-DEPTH OR FORWARD DEFENSE?

Vincent Maresca



In an earlier article (Banzai!!! Vol. 18, No.1) we looked at lines of sight to better prepare your defenses, as well as finding appropriate offensive avenues of approach. Following up on that discussion, I thought we would take a look at some other points to think about while setting up your defensive position. The following discussion is based on Tom “Mr. Stalingrad” Morin’s Scenario S35 *The Volga is Reached* (MMP’s *Operations: Special Edition* #3) that contains some spicy special rules for rubble, shellholes, commissars, Soviet snipers, a dug in T-34, and Stukas. Lesson one: In ASL there is no “perfect setup” as you quickly learn “no plan survives contact with the enemy” (or the dice) but there are things to consider that can improve your odds at sticking around till later game turns.

Scenario S35 requires the German turn 1 forces to enter along the G1-P0 hexes while the initial Soviet conscripts, a few SMG squads, a 76mm gun, and a dug-in T-34 are tasked with preventing the German storm troops, assault engineers, and StuGs from capturing the last row of

buildings \geq row 8 (seven buildings total). The Soviets will also receive turn 4 reinforcements (1st line infantry platoon, MMG, 9-1, and a KV-1) entering along the left board edge and the turn 6 “13th Guards to the rescue” from the bottom edge (elite platoon, LMGs, 9-1, and a DC).

Lesson two: In any scenario, always check the characteristics of all your troops, weapons, vehicles, and any special rules to fully understand how they work and how best to employ them (double checking setup rules and VC doesn’t hurt either). The designer included them for a reason so understand all their attributes. While there are a number of important special rules introduced for this scenario, for our purposes as the Russian defender we will focus on: 1) Russian 6-2-8s have underlined morale (not subject to ELR) with their broken morale increased by one; 2) Elite and 1st Line MMCs gain a -1 to their ambush dr; 3) Units stacked with a commissar have their morale increased by one and are not subject to DM; 4) The T-34 is dug-in (immobile but harder to hit); and 5) Most of the initial Russian starting force is conscripts with low morale and movement (but see #3 above).



Figure 1

Figure 1 illustrates a typical defense-in-depth deployed into three main “belts” or city blocks allowing the Soviet infantry to fall back towards their rallying commissars and the victory buildings defended by the 6-2-8 cream of the Russian crop. A good point here is the defending MMCs are not stacked, limiting the ability of German units to concentrate firegroups on your few defenders. Also, a good number of the defenders, approximately 75-percent, can put fire onto the German entry hexes. However, only 40 percent (2 squads, MMG, and the dug-in T-34) are able to fire at full firepower (while everyone else is at long-range fire).

Now the open square area (hexes K4-O2-O4) is well covered with infantry and antitank fire and should give the German StuG and shock troopers a second thought before venturing into the street here. My only critique is the

conscript squad in the M3 building is in an isolated location so will be forced to low crawl when he eventually breaks. While it looks good initially, I try to avoid these locations as this unit will most likely die in the open under fire trying to rout away to safety. Why do I not have the same comment for the guys in M2 you say? Well, their job is to punch the Germans right in the nose trying to enter and will die quickly for the Motherland but will (hopefully) take some Germans with them! While the western side of the soviet defense is more lightly held, the MMG and LMG should help sweep the streets and slow up the initial German infantry advance. Finally, the commissars are located in the rear since zero-modifier leaders are not as helpful directing fire so no reason to put them in harm's way, and they have been placed along likely avenues of rout to quickly intercept broken troops and put them back into the fight. Remember, these are all commissars per the scenario special rules so units with them are not subject to DM, but could be shot in the head if they don't rally.

One would think the initially HIP Soviet 76mm gun and T-34 would play a larger role in the scenario but these units tend to become "Stuka bait" and are quickly turned into a pile of smoking debris. The plus side is the Stuka is not banging away at your infantry needed for holding key buildings.

While the units in the eastern half of the defense support each other well, the western half is thinly held with two non-mutually supporting infantry groups. The front line is held with low-morale 4-2-6 conscripts while the rear 6-2-8 line cannot support them at all, removing the best troops from the early fighting. Also, the conscripts in F3 have the MMG but with their low morale, will most likely break early and will be forced to abandon this important support weapon so make sure to place the right units with the right weapons. While it's a good idea to protect the victory buildings, remember your reinforcements will be entering this region later on so the need to man the victory buildings is not as great for your initial setup. Lesson three: remember to plan ahead, calculating how far your troops can move (and your opponents'), as well as rout avenues, to estimate likely locations to reach to defend, rally, and attack. Work into your timetable your reinforcements and where they will most likely wind up. You might have heard in chess that you need to always be thinking three moves ahead, well the same applies to ASL! Thus, coordinate your Prep, Movement, and Advance Phases to get you where you want to be for your next turn combat, as well as setting up your units for your upcoming Defensive Fire Phase.

In summary, the tradeoff with a defense-in-depth is that it allows the defender to limit the amount of punishment the attacker can concentrate against his scarce resources but also limits or dissipates the projection of defensive firepower forward. It enables the defender to man key

terrain points within the depth of his defensive position delaying the enemy attack. While the rapid collapse of the defense is mitigated, defending units will fight in isolation from each other and will rarely have additional forces for any localized offensive actions.



Figure 2

Now, contrasting with the defense-in-depth just discussed, Figure 2 illustrates a more aggressive forward defense. This setup masses fire into the German entry locations, forcing the Germans to fight just trying to enter the board. Therefore, the hope is to delay the Germans along their initial entry area until reinforcements move up in support. The western edge of the board is now held by a wall of conscripts stiffened by the 6-2-8s. The brunt of the German attack will have to cross through or around the J2 building. Thus the 6-2-8 with the 10-0 commissar raises its morale to a 9, will not DM if broken, and the LMG boosts its firepower from the 6 IFT column to the 8 column (or 12 to 16 at point blank fire). This position is now the "tip of the spear" protruding into the German attack frontage, maximizing Soviet troop quality, firepower, and morale. The 8-0 commissar in building H5 is located in the likely avenue of troop rout and is now the rally rock keeping the squads fighting for the forward city block. Lesson four: remember when stacking that it is a good idea to have the total firepower equal a column on the IFT – don't you just hate having an IFT total of 7 or 11 – don't be that guy if you can help it! Concentrating your squads provides maximum mutual support, firegroup opportunities, and forward-projecting firepower. Thus, this setup puts murderous fire right down onto all the German entry locations dominated by open terrain or forcing them to assault move into cover, hindering their initial forward march.

The important support weapons are now manned by elite units (well almost all of them – the loss of the MMG in O5 is more likely to be recovered than in the previous example). On the defensive you cannot be strong

everywhere so this is an example of a sacrifice to strengthen more threatened sectors of the front. That being said, the MMG is stacked with the commissar, helping raise the morale of the conscripts to a 7, as well as help lug the gun around as needed. The T-34 in I5 now controls the important A9-P1 line of sight/line of fire that divides the city in half. Your enemy has to cross this line at some point in the game so make sure you are the one covering it with fire and not the other way around. Now the Russian player has the option to decide if his turn 4 reinforcements entering from the left need to reinforce the D3 building/upper city block or move to the south towards defending the victory buildings starting in E9.

One recommendation is to move your turn 4 KV into D7 or E7 as this places more fire along the A9-P1 line of sight/fire and once placed, will allow your troops to move from the C7 building cluster towards the E9 victory buildings while using the KV as cover through the open ground. Odds are the Stuka will kill the KV and the wreck will still provide crossing cover!

Lesson Five: Sometimes your best defense is a good offense! Forward fire forces your opponent off balance, taking fire and casualties just trying to enter the board. While this looks like an “all or nothing” defense, the Russian player in this scenario receives a nice complement of reinforcements moving up from behind the at-start forces, attacking breakthroughs and/or providing that final defense in the objective buildings. Urban terrain is also your friend, preventing quick flanking moves and channeling your enemy’s attacks, allowing a more forward defense (and skulking options). Remember, you only need to hold **one** building, not all seven, to win, so concentrate your limited resources on a single building or two for your final defense. Your initial forward defensive setup in urban terrain should reap you a weakened enemy who had to slog through the upper city blocks and will be attacking your final redoubt with worn out half squads if you’re lucky!

Hopefully this article will give you a few more things to consider for your next defense setup. Taking a little time to study your units (and your opponents’), the terrain you have to work with, where and how much projecting of forward firepower, and understanding the specific scenario rules will go a long way towards ensuring that you will experience the thrill of that last turn CC to see who wins! If interested, you can also compare Figure 2 with Ken Dunn’s own example of a similar forward Soviet defensive setup in MMP’s *Operations: Special Edition #3* (Pages 28-29). The author would like to specially thank Jerry Hamilton for helping with the examples used in this article.

23RD ANNUAL TEXAS TEAM TOURNAMENT RESULTS



Rick Reinesch

Here are the results and rankings from the 23rd Annual Texas Team Tournament. Where players had the same score, ranking was based on the opponents’ W/L percentage first, and then their own W/L percentage second. So players with the same score who competed against stronger opponents would be ranked higher.

Here’s where folks ended in the individual standings. Congratulations to John Garlic for winning the top individual award this year.

Player	Score	Wins	Losses
John Garlic	5	5	0
David Hailey	3	4	1
Clark Lovrien	3	3	0
Mike Rose	3	3	0
Ed Hack	3	4	1
Jim Ferrell	2	3	1
Paul Messina	2	2	0
David Reinking	2	3	1
Roy Connelly	1	2	1
Brian Roundhill	1	3	2
Allen King	1	2	1
Chris Kubick	1	3	2
Andrew Maly	1	3	2
Hondo Nelson	1	2	1
Will Willow	1	2	1
Ed Beekman	0	1	1
Chris Buehler	0	2	2
William Stoppel	0	2	2
Doyle Motes	0	1	1
Ryan Kent	0	2	2
Matt Schwoebel	0	1	1
Bill Dorre	0	1	1
Kenneth Priddy	0	1	1
Kevin Klausmeyer	0	1	1

Brian Ward	0	2	2
Eric Gerstenberg	0	2	2
Randy Strader	-1	1	2
Rick Reinesch	-1	0	1
Sam Tyson	-1	1	2
Greg Schmittgens	-2	1	3
Bud Garding	-2	1	3
Jack O'Quin	-2	0	2
Tom Gillis	-2	0	2
Dan Preston	-2	0	2
Arlen Vanek	-2	1	3
Scott Bell	-2	0	2
Chris Casten	-3	1	4
Jesse Boomer	-5	0	5
Daniel Virobik	-5	0	5

Here's how the Major Johnson standings finished. John Garlic pulled ahead in a tight race that went into Sunday. Great job, John!

Player	MJ Total
John Garlic	17536
David Hailey	13790
Daniel Virobik	13363
Chris Casten	13256
Brian Roundhill	11704
Ryan Kent	10146
Chris Kubick	9177
Jesse Boomer	8638
Arlen Vanek	7950
Mike Rose	7175
Jim Ferrell	7125
Bud Garding	6552
Andrew Maly	6380
Will Willow	5532
Bill Dorre	5080
Greg Schmittgens	5060

Roy Connelly	4916.65
William Stoppel	4700
Randy Strader	4386.65
Allen King	4192
Hondo Nelson	3776
Sam Tyson	3431
Doyle Motes	3102
Ed Hack	3000
Brian Ward	2856
David Reinking	2712
Scott Bell	2703
Ed Beekman	2697
Clark Lovrien	2628
Rick Reinesch	2040
Jack O'Quin	1992
Eric Gerstenberg	1844
Chris Buehler	1712
Matt Schwoebel	1677
Kevin Klausmeyer	1202
Paul Messina	894
Dan Preston	664
Tom Gillis	580
Scott Mullins	533
Kenneth Priddy	532
Kevin Kenneally	349

Here is how the teams fared. Congratulations to Mike, Bill, and Chris:

Team	Score	Wins	Losses
Mike Rose, Bill Zopff, Chris Kubick	4	6	2
Jim Ferrell, Will Willow, Jonathan Rumion	3	5	2
John Garlic, Scott Bell, Lee Jennings	3	5	2
Clark Lovrien, Kevin Kenneally, Sam Tyson	2	4	2
Brian Roundhill, Chris Buehler, Brian Ward	1	7	6
William Stoppel, Bud Garding, Ed Hack	1	7	6
Hondo Nelson, Motes, Albert Salinas III	1	3	2
David Hailey, Randy Strader, Jack O'Quin	0	5	5
Eric Gerstenberg, Scott Mullins, Bill Dorre	0	3	3
Ryan Kent, Allen King, Dan Preston	-1	4	5
David Reinking, Roy Connelly, Daniel Virobik	-2	5	7
Matt Schwoebel, Kevin Klausmeyer, Arlen Vanek	-2	3	5
Jeff Toreki, Chris Casten, Jason Cameron	-3	1	4
Ed Beekman, Jesse Boomer, Kenneth Priddy	-5	2	7

23RD ANNUAL TEXAS TEAM TOURNAMENT WRAP-UP

Rick Reinesch

Another year, another great Texas Team Tournament. This year we celebrated our 23rd anniversary of ASL camaraderie in Austin, Texas. We welcomed 58 pre-registrants and walk-ons from all over the southern part of the US and from locations as far away as California and Virginia. We were able to welcome several new faces this year and several returning locals, which is always great. This year was one of those strange years when life seemed to intervene with a number of long time participants. Here's hoping that folks come through all of these trials ok and can come back to join us next year. You were all missed greatly. We had a number of the new attendees who were getting back into the game after being away from it for a while, and we had several folks come in to play some SK. The tournament is a great way to get up to speed as the immersion of play over the weekend helps to reinforce rules learned/remembered. For those folks returning, we were happy to welcome back John Garlic from south Texas who was our champion nearly 10 years ago and basically picked

up where he left off. Hopefully it won't be several more years before he and others make another appearance.

As we have in previous years, this year's event was held in the Tech Room of the Wingate Conference Center located in far north Austin. This is our fourth year at this hotel which works out especially well for us as they cater to conferences all the time, so coordination goes very smoothly from my standpoint. The venue provides us with plenty of elbow room to play, they had an open bar for beer for us, and the connectivity in the room allows us to show an endless loop of WWII-related DVDs, which makes for a great ambiance while playing. I've already signed the contracts for us to be back there again next year.

In the title match for the individual crown of the Texas Team Tournament, John Garlic bested David Hailey in *Fighting Back* [86] to take home the 10-3 Award as overall champion along with the engraved dice cup and very cool BattleSchool dice that went with it. In the loss, David took the 9-2 Runner Up award and BattleSchool dice, as well. This year I set up a mini

tournament for the individual award, seeding it with the top 8 scorers from Friday's play. This really helped me to narrow the winner down and give the folks who were really interested in vying for it the chance to do so.

The Team Tourney continued the use of a three-man team format. This makes the possible absence of one person on a team less of an issue and allows for all teams to stay in the hunt throughout the weekend. This format has also made for some very tight races for the team crown. Again this year the team results were determined by the final games on Sunday with the winning team of Mike Rose, Bill Zopff and Chris Kubick finishing on top.

Our Thursday mini featured the time-honored Houston institution, **Ferocity Fest**. This is always a fun but brutal and deadly mini as evidenced by its name, and this year the scenario being highlighted was *Vulcan's Forge* [MP11]. When all the points had been counted up, David Hailey and Roy Connelly took home the WWII replica M1 Garand bayonets as the winning Axis and Allied Commanders, respectively. **The Gamer's Armory** gift certificates were awarded for second place finishers Chris Kubick and Ed Beekman.

On Saturday we featured a Starter Kit mini-tournament for those folks new to the game or getting back into it, and offered them a chance to take home a great prize. This year it was Paul Messina defending his crown for the fifth year



in a row, narrowly besting the other contenders looking to knock him off. As always it was very encouraging to see the number of folks getting involved with SK, and we certainly encourage their participation over the weekend.

We presented a number of dice awards for play over the weekend. The winner of the Audie Murphy award for the most snakes over the course of the tourney went to Hondo Nelson. The winner (if he wants to be called that) of the most boxcars over the course of the weekend and taking the Col. Klink award was Dan Virobik. We also presented a nice plaque to the winner of the most Close Combat points collected over the weekend, and the winner of that was Ed Beekman.

The Major Johnson award was hard-fought again this year; with John Garlic playing the most ASL over the course of the weekend and taking home the cup and the German Afrika Korps field cap that accompanied it. So the next time you see John, ask him to show you his Maj. Johnson. The Major Johnson can be won in many ways, and over the past few years it has been the balanced approach of a large number of moderate-sized scenarios that has prevailed. In the past it was the big scenarios that would do it. But win or lose you are always in the hunt just by playing (a lot).

We had a great list of sponsors for this year, without whose assistance we could not offer such a fantastic drawing of prizes. And here they are:

BattleSchool
Bounding Fire Productions
Break Contact
Ken Smith Art
David Pentland Art
Dispatches from the Bunker
East Side Gamers
Friendly Fire
GMT Games
Le Franc Tireur
Lone Canuck Publishing
MultiMan Publishing
Osprey Books
SoCal ASL group
The Gamers Armory
Wargame Depot

Please make sure to frequent these folks with your product orders and let them know that you appreciate their support of the Texas Team Tournament.

I would also like to recognize a number of people that always stepped up to the plate to help out and make the

tournament an enjoyable experience for all. They all did a fantastic job and I can't thank them enough:

- Alan King and Randy Strader for the use of their ice coolers
- Ed Beekman for the use of his vast military video library during the tourney
- And especially my terrific wife Rhonda who ran a number of errands for me during the tourney. To say she is supportive of me doing this would be an understatement!

Plans are already in process for next year. For all of the old and new faces, I hope to see you again next year. For those that have never been to our tournament, I encourage you to give us a try. The 24th Annual Texas Team Tournament will be held June 23rd-26th, 2016 at the Wingate Conference Center in Round Rock, Texas. The website has already been updated with all of the information for next year and we've even got our first pre-registrants already, so it is never too early to get your hat into the ring. Don't be left out of the fun!

PLAYER PROFILE: DAVE REINKING

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?

DR: I started gaming in the mid 70s. My uncle introduced me to my first wargame—*Richtofen's War*. I still remember some of the campaign games from *Richtofen's War*.

Banzai: When and how did you discover ASL?

DR: I had been playing SL (CoI, CoD, GIAoV) since 1980, when the salesperson at the store I normally bought games and models told me about ASL— giving me a \$5 discount for buying the RB and BV together. This was in 1985.

Banzai: What nationality do you enjoy playing the most?

DR: I enjoy playing the British the most. I love their immunity to covering. Plus they have access to quality American AFVs.

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

DR: I love a street fight. Bug hunts, not so much.

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

DR: My strengths are odds calculations and those issues that are numbers-related. I could probably use some improvement in using Smoke Dispensers.

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

DR: The best part of ASL is the camaraderie of the players. The worst part is the amount of time it takes to put out the new products that are quality. As Tom Petty says, the waiting is the hardest part.

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

DR: With HP finally released, I look forward to some products into which I have made some contributions— PiF (playtesting) and SaP (some ideas related to the differing types of grain).

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

DR: The T34-85 has a great balance of speed, firepower and protection.

Banzai: You're playing the Russians in a 1941 scenario, facing a German combined arms attack featuring several AFVs. Would you rather have a KV-2 or a platoon of two BT-7 M37s and two BT-7As? Now turn that around: which combo would you rather not have to face if you were playing the Germans?

DR: Give me the BT tanks. If I am facing the Russians, I would rather face the KV-2.

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

DR: That is a tough choice. Given the prevalence of B11 MA weapons for the Germans that early in the war, I would probably go with the French and hope the infantry does not break too easily.

Banzai: How do you like PTO scenarios?

DR: PTO is something I have to mentally prepare for, since it is so different from ETO.

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

DR: My most enjoyable ASL moment was playing (and defeating) Jim Stahler at Avaloncon 97. My worst was plain bad luck and decision-making while playing *Red Wave* when I opted to ESB a platoon of Russian tanks, rolled a 12 on the ESB roll and yahtzeed the Random Selection roll. It turned a likely win into a bad loss. My coolest ASL moment was playing *A Legend is Born* with three So Cal ASLers.

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

DR: Probably the use of smoke in the attack.

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

DR: There are so many opportunities in DTO.

Banzai: Dice glass or dice tower?

DR: Dice glass— easier to transport.

Banzai: Axis Minor scenarios: overrated or underrated?

DR: Underrated—especially Slovaks vs Poles or Hungarians vs. Slovaks.

Banzai: What ASL products have your attention these days?

DR: AP11 29, Let's Go; AP12 The ASLOK pack.

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?

DR: For new players, buy the ASLSK packs to get a good feel for ASL and do not be upset to play "training scenarios". It is not about winning, but rather about learning. Once you are hooked (and have the resources), pick up the ASL products when they are available. For ASL clubs, it is important to have mentors for new players and to have them learn by doing. Also, if there are players who are leaving the hobby, buy their kit and have it available (especially hard-to-find items) for those new players to use.

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

DR: Best luck: I once had a pair of Russian 50mm mortars stop a German attack dead in its tracks. Between the two in one player turn, I had a total of 15 shots—including two CHs. Worst luck: Playing Matt Schwoebel a few months ago, he had four different CC rolls on the last player turn—needing to win all of them without me eliminating one of his attacking stacks. Going in, I had a 90% chance of winning the game. He rolled 3s and 4s. I rolled no lower than an 8. He won the game.

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

DR: I have enjoyed playing *Great Campaigns of the American Civil War* in the past. *Flattop* used to be a favorite, too.

Banzai: What are your other interests outside of gaming?

DR: I enjoy horseback riding and grilling meat on my Traeger grill.

Banzai: Any final comments to wrap up?

DR: A bad day of ASL is usually better than a good day at work. Oh, and roll low.

IN MEMORIAM: TOM GILLIS



The Texas ASL community is sad to report that we have lost a very good friend and Houstonite, Thomas Gillis who passed away on Sunday, December 13, 2015, at the age of 54.

Tom was one of those ASL opponents that had a great zest for the game and was always fun to play against. His joy and attitude toward the game was infectious, win or lose. And one can still hear him say, "I hate this game!" all the while with a smile on his face. Roll low, Tom, you will be missed.

With the agreement of his family, our intention is to conduct a silent auction of all of Tom's ASL gear at the 2016 Texas Team Tournament, with the proceeds to go to the Wounded Warrior Project, which was of personal interest to Tom as a fellow veteran.

CLUB NOTES

Biweekly Lunch Gathering

Don't forget to join us every other Friday at 1200 hours down at Kneaded Pleasures on Far West (just west of Mopac). The club sends out email reminders, or you can call Matt or Rick for information on the next get-together.

Game Days

The Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas/Ft. Worth groups have remained active, hosting various gatherings for club members to get together and knock cardboard heads. If

you missed any of these you missed a lot of fun. It's like a tournament atmosphere for a day. The Austin group meets on the first Saturday of every month. The DFW group has been meeting on the second, the San Antonio guys on the third Saturday of every month, and the Houston group on the fourth Saturday of every month. To stay informed of upcoming club events, stop by our club website, www.texas-asl.com or better yet join our email group. You can post a message at central-texas-asl@yahoogroups.com or you can point your favorite browser to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central-texas-asl> and take a look. For those still not connected, give Matt, Rick, or Sam a call for club information.

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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
- And much more!