

Banzai!!

The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

Issue #2.4

May 1997

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

Club Notes and Ladder Standings

| Player | Points | Record |
|--------------|--------|--------|
| Seningen | 1336 | 18-8 |
| Shostak | 1319 | 32-9 |
| Smith | 1309 | 25-9 |
| Lavan | 1059 | 3-3 |
| Hailey | 1055 | 9-7 |
| Esparza | 1049 | 3-1 |
| Purnell | 1045 | 9-5 |
| Kirk Woller | 1040 | 15-23 |
| Phelps | 1038 | 1-0 |
| Tom Woller | 1037 | 1-0 |
| O'Quin | 1026 | 5-6 |
| Hively | 995 | 8-17 |
| Swantek | 992 | 3-5 |
| Morgenthaler | 978 | 0-1 |
| Bonham | 966 | 0-1 |
| Fritz | 963 | 2-3 |
| Gerstenberg | 934 | 7-16 |
| Knatcher | 909 | 0-4 |
| Lester | 907 | 0-4 |
| Toreki | 906 | 0-5 |
| Austin | 905 | 0-3 |
| Milder | 821 | 1-11 |

Recent Results

Seningen (Amer) def O'Quin (Germ) in Zon With the Wind
 Swantek (Part) def K Woller (Germ) in The Liberation of Tulle
 Seningen (Brit) def Milder (Germ) in Ring of Fire
 Seningen (Amer) def Milder (Germ) in Broich Bash
 Swantek (Germ) def K Woller (Amer) in Lost Opportunities
 Shostak (Germ) def Swantek (Nor/Brit) in Action at Balberkamp
 K Woller (Germ) def Milder (Amer) in Probing the Villas
 Shostak (Fren) def K Woller (Germ) in The Witch's Cauldron
 Shostak (Germ) def Milder (Brit/Greek) in Cemetery Hill
 Smith (Brit) def Hively (Germ) in It's About Time
 K Woller (Amer) def Milder (Germ) in Festung St. Edouard

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

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

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

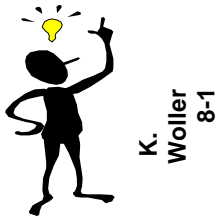
This is an event that you will not want to miss. In the course of one weekend, you will get the chance to play a half dozen games or so, against a variety of players. How long would it take you to do that otherwise? Although the trophies are nice, the focus of the tournament is on fun, so it's a pretty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

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

Top Ten Reasons to Attend the Club's Tournament

1. Last year we shamed Seningen into organizing his counters, this year let's get him to clip the corners!
2. Take those high-falutin' posers at the top of the ladder down a peg.
3. See scenarios set in exotic locations, using unusual board configurations, meet interesting new cardboard troops ... and kill them.
4. It's the right thing to do.
5. It's the right way to do it.
6. Find out if Lavan ever bought that tank he had his eye on.
7. Because you can.
8. It's a convenient opportunity to submit your latest article for Banzai.
9. Meet David Hailey!
10. I love the sound of tinkling dice in the morning!

It Takes a Village Idiot



What does it take to raise an ASLer in these modern times? How can we ensure that the game we all love to hate survives and provides a lifetime of enjoyment? Every player has a stake in supporting the great club we have here in central Texas, and the club in turn is responsible for generating play opportunities and support. This symbiotic relationship, if properly managed and supported by its members, can ensure that we all are able to continue to play ASL. What are the club's responsibilities? Fundamentally, to promote the game and to provide a network of players. Currently these two goals are approached through the club newsletter (which Matt has so generously devoted time to) and the maintenance of a list of available players as well as scheduled matches and tournaments (of which Dave Hailey has had a good part). Additionally, the ladder provides an opportunity to compare your skill to others in the club and allows for a healthy competitive spirit which should lead to improved play on everyone's part.

My own experience with the ladder makes for a good case study. I started as an SL player in the mid-to-late 70s, playing a few high school friends and primarily Bob Purnell, who was instrumental in starting *The Table Top Generals* in our high school to encourage networking (no, not computer) and gaming activity. Several years back Bob generously lent me a set of the ASL rules and bought Paratrooper to give it a go, and we played a bit. But it wasn't until I found out about the club that my play began to improve. I decided that I would play to learn and set out to go head to head with the best players in the club. I quickly moved to the very bottom of the ladder.

There were times when I was tempted to just quit. But I stuck by my strategy, gambling that each time I lost I would learn something. After a year or so I decided to move on up by utilizing what I had learned. Even though it is tenuous and is not unduly important to me, I did manage to move into the top four for a bit, and felt good about my willingness to be the fall guy for many a game. Although the point may seem clear, I just want to emphasize to the players new to the club or ASL that if you stick it out, you too can begin to be successful in your play of the game. And this leads to the second question, which is what are the player's responsibilities to the club?

Basically, to be willing to play and lose and to tutor those you play and beat to help them become better players. To paraphrase Darth Vader addressing Obi Wan Kenobi, "when we last met, I was the student and you were the teacher; now I am the master." Hopefully new ASLers won't turn to the dark side, but you see what I mean. Also, support club activities and be available occasionally to host a get-together if possible, and be willing to play any club member who calls asking for a game. Of course, there are exceptions due to personality or time or space or

economic conflicts, but otherwise the strength of the club relies on its individual members' contributions.

Although another entire article could be written about the specifics of learning ASL, I will only mention a few elements from my personal experience which seem to be helpful. First and foremost is finding one or more individuals who know the game and are patient enough to allow for slow play and misinterpreted rules, and who will point out possible errors in basic strategy. Scenarios should start out with basic infantry engagements, avoiding OBA, vehicles, SSRs, and other distractions. Just stick to infantry on the attack and the defense, and master the basics of fire and movement. After feeling more comfortable with these elements, pick a section of the rules, such as OBA, and play a few scenarios with it, not being afraid to spend the time necessary to look up the rules to do it correctly. This can take a lot of patience so don't worry as much about completing the game as learning the rules governing the element you are trying to understand.

Currently, ASL is still under production and can be fairly easily bought by anyone wanting to begin play, which makes finding new players easier. There will come a day when the game is no longer available, and then the true test will come concerning the continued viability of the game. As a case in point, there was an excellent adventure game which was produced from 1977-83 which I still enjoy playing, but finding players is difficult because there is no club of players, and no easy way for new players to find the game since it can no longer be purchased. With no new blood, the current gamers just age and eventually solitaire becomes the only real option. I am always hopeful about generating new players, but it is an uphill battle. If we build a strong club then this fate can be delayed for a very long time for ASL.

Although Matt has probably already plugged it somewhere else in this newsletter, the June tournament is coming soon and every club member should make an attempt to put it on his agenda for the month.

Ultimately, if we want to enjoy this game for a while longer we must not neglect to introduce it to those who have not stumbled upon the joy gained from successfully drilling a squad from a hidden machine gun nest with a 6-3 attack!

Good gaming!

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



I recently played the scenario *Confusion Reigns*. I was facing off against the infamous Thomas “Beat Me Like a Rented Mule” Salazar, who is in actuality only slightly less well-versed in things ASL than I. Neither of us grasped the readily obvious: that the Boches must run away and the Amis must move quickly to stop them. What ultimately gave me the win was that I was less haphazard in my attack than he was in the art of bugging off. He had put a couple of machine guns and his best leader in the upper story of the board 24 building, but the Americans swarmed around like so many roaches and that can of raid could only hit a couple of ‘em at a time. Salazar’s battle plan soon showed its appalling lack of foresight. A few of Hitler’s flunkies did manage to escape the righteous wrath of the soldiers of democracy (at least for the time being), but in so doing became disorganized. Thomas “Plan? What Plan?” Salazar had trotted one of his only two leaders to the northern edge of the board early in the game, leaving no one to rally the ever-increasing numbers of sniveling Boches cowering in the bushes. It was thus an easy task to stroll over to them and effect their capture. Blookthirsty savage that I am, I would much rather have killed them, but they were worth double victory points alive. More’s the pity. At this point, Thomas “6+1” Salazar was forced to recall his other leader and some of his fleeing Hitlerites in order to attempt a restoration of the situation. It might have succeeded had he not foolishly trotted them out in the open in the range of my flank patrol. A few “Ks” later there were more wooden crosses lining the road to Germany.

While I did manage to win this scenario (and in most convincing fashion, if I must say so myself), the salient feature to me was that there was far too much whining about luck going on. Given the drubbing Mr. Salazar seems to have taken, I am ashamed to admit that I certainly put in my share of the sniveling. Although Thomas had conceded by turn five, by turn three we had both whined enough to outdo a pack of cub scouts forced to leave Chuck E. Cheese early. Perhaps this is the dark side of ASL that is best left unexposed.

With a “No Whining” policy etched in my mind, I took on Kirk Woller in *The Liberation of Tulle*. The way it played out, it should have been named *The Liberation of Sniperville*, but more on that later. Kirk allowed me to choose which side I wished to play, a decision of fundamental opposites. Did I wish to defend with crappy troops, or did I wish to attack with equally crappy troops? I chose the latter. We also chose the ladder, so a victory on my part would give me big points, and a stellar rise on the Austin ASL Club ladder (with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto). I believed that in this situation the Maquisards had the moral upper hand, as the hated Boches had occupied their very homes, and, what was worse, had derided that most noble of French institutions, the truffle-sniffing pig.

My attack got off to a good start, as I was largely faced by dummy “?” stacks in the German front line. Some of them put up quite a struggle, however, but that savage fighting spirit and hallowed military tradition that lives in the heart of every Frenchman was able to shine forth and clear those “?s” from the board with relatively light casualties. Meanwhile, the snipers were quite active on both sides, and at one point Kirk received three sniper attacks (two of which were 1s) on one series of morale checks, the net result being one dead Maquisard 8-0, one eliminated squad and two reduced

squads. I held to my no whining edit though (at least for the time being), as my snipers had broken then reduced two of his six “good” squads (it’s kinda sad when second line squads are your “good” squads). Kirk had placed most of his machine guns and his 8-1 leader on the second level of the stone building on board 22. He could realistically expect to deal some death from this position, and his survival, utterly unscathed, from an early game mortar critical hit would have suggested so. But it was not to be. It was I who had the hot hand that evening, and managed to inflict a second critical hit on that position at a decisive point in the game which wounded his leader and broke all his MMC. At that point the Maquisards were poised for the kill; they had taken the required four multi-hex buildings and were about to annihilate utterly the remaining Boches in hideous ways and then dance on their unmarked graves. Even the subsequent battle-hardening of Kirk’s wounded leader could not prevent this. Facing the overwhelming righteousness of the Maquisards’ fury (and the fact that it was 1:30 AM), Kirk conceded. Vive la France! Vive la Liberte! Vive les Porcine Scavengers de Buried Fungus!

The Dogs of War

Matt Shostak

The Third Reich only has hours left to live. In Prague, partisans seize control of a government building. Troops of the SS, panicky and desperate, try to stop them. Meanwhile, the Russian Liberation Army, Soviet prisoners who had gone over to the German side, are equally desperate. An ugly fate awaits them should they fall into Russian hands, so they agree to help the partisans in exchange for asylum when it’s all over. One final spasm of chaotic fighting is left in this corner of the war.

This is the situation depicted by one of the most unusual scenarios to date in the ASL system, TOT 45 *The Dogs of War*, part of Time On Target’s third offering, featuring German rare vehicles. It is a true 3-player scenario, in the sense that it is intended to be played by 3 players (German, Russian Liberation Army (ROA), and Partisan), and only one of those three players can win. Each player must carefully consider how much attention he should focus on each of his other two opponents. Focus on one enemy too much, and the other may prove too powerful. Dividing resources equally against each enemy may water down the effort into complete ineffectiveness. This is the kind of dilemma faced by each player in this scenario. The 3-player format, however, tends to keep each player in the game until the end, since the perceived leader is usually the priority target by both other players until the playing field is levelled again.

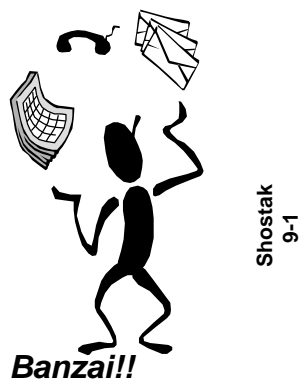
The scenario certainly features some imaginative orders of battle. The partisans sport a French armored car with a 12.7mm main armament. The SS has the use of a couple of powerful tank destroyers and a Pz38(t), while the ROA has a couple of captured T-34s, a Hetzer, and a few German halftracks, one of which is armed with flamethrowers. To top it off, all three sides are given some form of panzerfaust ability, and the partisans and SS each have a panzerschreck. You can just imagine the carnage of scrap metal that results.

The partisans, weakest of the three combatants, start out in possession of the victory building, beset on one side by the SS and on the other by the ROA. As would be expected of the guys at TOT, not to mention for such a strange scenario, there are quite a few SSRs, but they all seem perfectly reasonable and are not very difficult. The aforementioned panzerfaust capability, the SS ELR of 0, and partisan infiltration capabilities, for example, are outlined.

The turn sequence is altered to allow three player turns per game turn, but again this all follows in a logical manner and shouldn't be a problem for most players. TOT supports this scenario with designer's notes in the magazine, and an extra card with the turn sequence outlined, plus an enlargement of the victory building to accommodate the crowded stacking that may occur toward the endgame.

Jeff Toreki, Mike Seningen, and I found ourselves playing this one recently, and it was a blast for all of us. I had the partisans and set up quickly. Jeff (Germans), and Mike (ROA) took their turns setting up and we were off and gunning. The Germans and the ROA sparred tentatively with their opening moves, achieving little. The partisans opened up on the SS with their HMG led by a 10-2, turning a stack into rabble. But the return fire from the SS was devastating, wounding the 10-2 and breaking the squad, thereby putting the HMG out of action for a significant part of the game. A German PzIV70/A smoked the ROA Hetzer, and both sides closed in on the partisans, who were getting clobbered. Snipers, critical hits, you name it – the partisans were hurting early on, and they couldn't seem to get any successful infiltration. Finally the SS and the ROA started hurting each other, and before you know it there were wrecks aplenty on the battlefield. ROA troops reached the government building, while isolated partisan squads held out upstairs. Soon the SS stormed the building as well. An ROA panzerfaust scrapped one of the PzIV70/As, while reinforcing partisans used their panzerschreck to wreck an ROA T-34. Needless to say, the situation was indeed confusing. Toward the end of the game, there were no partisans left in the government building. It was hotly contested by the ROA and the SS. Although the ROA was ahead, it looked like the SS could get more units there on the last turn. Ironically, with only a 7-0 and a 527, plus that sardine can of a French armored car, the partisans still had an outside chance. If the SS and ROA achieved an exact tie, the win would go to the partisans by default. My twisted mind therefore thought it would be better for me to make sure the armored car got brewed up in a particular spot, so that Mike's 9-2, who had been dominating the battlefield, wouldn't have such a great line of fire on the German approach route to the building, but would still have enough to be able to break a squad or two. The extremely late hour forced us to call the game before the last turn, when we all agreed Jeff had the upper hand, although there was a reasonable chance for Mike's ROA, and a slim-to-none chance for my partisans. All in all this was a very fun scenario to play. I encourage anyone to try this one out when you find you have an odd number of players available. Time on Target did a good job on this one.

Trench Warfare Part 2: Digging In



Last issue's article in the Trench Warfare series focused on pillboxes, in particular some basic tactical implications of the rules governing their use. This time we take a look at Foxholes and Trenches. Not meant as a rules primer, nor meant to be comprehensive, this article is simply a few ideas about their use in ASL. Your mileage may vary. Offer void where prohibited. Standard disclaimers apply.

Foxholes and trenches are very interesting fortifications in the ASL system. They seem like they should be so simple. Still, ASL players often misunderstand them or use them unwisely. Since exiting a foxhole renders a unit vulnerable to defensive first fire before it can get to another location, foxholes can often be more like a death trap if set up in open ground. Certainly it is much more difficult to skulk a unit out of such a foxhole. This can leave a player with the unenviable choice of leaving his unit in the foxhole to take advantage of the +2 TEM, but thereby giving up the opportunity to relocate it effectively, or trying to leave the foxhole in the movement phase and suffer those awful open ground modifiers when it gets shot at. Taken to the extreme, the worst situation a dug-in squad can find itself in is in a foxhole, with nothing but open ground adjacent, and a desperate need to rout. With these considerations in mind, I usually try to place my foxholes adjacent to rout-worthy terrain, if not in that terrain itself. Remember that a unit can rout through several foxholes without interdiction by spending more movement points to do so (B27.41). Having woods directly behind a foxhole can have a calming affect on your own nerves and those of your cardboard soldiers when it comes time to skedaddle. All this advice boils down to that famous ASL adage, *beware of your rout paths*. Okay, so it's not that brilliant. But players still miss it anyway.

Perhaps more often overlooked, if not as important, as rout implications with regard to setup, is the creation of foxholes during play. Although rarely attempted, digging a foxhole at the right time in the right place can sometimes be that subtle game-winner. Impress your friends. Try it. Like everything in ASL, proper use of this tactic depends on the situation at hand. It seems especially useful when there isn't much cover around, or you need a squad to occupy ground and yet have some cover from OVR/OBA. Consider scenario A28 *The Professionals*. The Yugoslavs might be well served by having a squad with a machine gun run across the bridge and dig in at the other end. They can threaten a firelane down the bridge, yet still have some protection should the Germans decide to show them the business end of their tank treads. If you play a lot of campaign games, particularly KGP and Platoon Leader, you will often find your troops digging foxholes in order to help define a perimeter for the next scenario. Just remember that entrenching attempts can provoke the enemy sniper.

What is there to say about trenches? Not much. If not set up connecting to each other, they are essentially the same as foxholes. Their real advantage is in the ability to move from one to another without exiting, and without losing concealment. In the desert, trenches can connect directly to sangars as well, so entire defensive systems can be constructed. Don't forget that set up in the same hex as a pillbox or in a hex Accessible to a pillbox, that pillbox becomes a bunker, giving it certain advantages (B30.8). Red Barricades players probably already know that halftracks and wheeled vehicles may not enter trenches, while fully-tracked vehicles must risk bog to enter, so they can sometimes be used to limit certain avenues of approach by those vehicles. Since trenches allow a terrain bonus –1 DRM to rally attempts (A10.61) it is useful also to consider that in your setup.

When it is easier to dig foxholes:

- If you're Russian (-1 DRM A25.21)

When it is harder to dig foxholes:

- Desert +2 DRM (F.1B)
- Mud +1 DRM (E3.63)
- Ground/Deep Snow +2 DRM (E3.722)

- NA during Extreme Winter (E3.743)

Tactics Tip

You have a concealed unit and your opponent advances in on it for some Close Combat. Most players just hope for ambush, and then roll the dice, hoping for the best. But why not keep the concealment? Consider the tactical implications of doing so. First and most obviously, your own chances of surviving that first round of CC are increased, since the concealment halves your opponent's firepower (A11.19). Okay, everyone knows that. Additionally, however, if your concealed unit survives, it is not held in melee (A11.15). So what, you say, it can't hold its opponents in melee either. During the next turn, however, you can voluntarily drop concealment at any time (A12.14). Once you do so, your opponent is prohibited from firing outside the location (A7.212). So your other units can move up unmolested (at least by this enemy unit), and blast him in advancing fire, without affecting the friendly unit (A7.4)! If the advancing fire doesn't finish the enemy off, perhaps these reinforcing guys could go in for some more CC if it seems worthwhile.

Correction

Last issue's copy of the scenario *Wotanstellung* did not list entry areas for the German reinforcements. This issue's copy has corrected that error.

The *Banzai* Staff

Editor: Matt Shostak

Technical Writing Advisors: Mike Austin, Paula Shostak

Contributing Authors: Matt Shostak, Mike Seningen, Kirk Woller, David Hailey, Jim Knatcher, Tom Repetti, Tim Hundsorfer, Tom Huntington, Dade Cariaga, Chas Smith, Rodney Kinney, JR Tracy, Greg Swantek

Sounding Boards: Tom Repetti, Tim Hundsorfer, Tim Wilson, Dade Cariaga

Schedule: *Banzai* is published whenever the editor feels like it.

Copyright is retained by original authors. Contact the author before making any use of any of the articles contained in *Banzai*.