

A detailed hexagonal grid map of a battlefield. The grid is labeled with letters G through P across the top and numbers 1 through 9 down the left side. The map features various terrain types: green for open ground, brown for hills or mountains, and blue for water bodies. Numerous units and cards are placed on the grid. Red cards with the word "BANZAI" and "ML: +1 8MF Pin, HoB NA" are scattered across the upper left. Yellow cards with numbers and symbols (like a tank or a person) are placed in various locations. A grey card labeled "level 4" and "PREP FIRE" is also visible. The map includes a compass rose in the top right corner and a scale bar in the bottom right corner.

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Editor's Foxhole

Rick Reinesch



For those that frequent the Gamesquad ASL forums, there is a poll being conducted as *Banzai!!* goes to print asking the simple question, "How old are you?" The results show this nice bell curve with the majority of respondents in their forties. Much has been said and written about how the average ASL player is getting older; how ASL and boardgaming in general will die out as we current crop of players do the same. I would encourage everyone to find a younger player and bring him over to the joys of boardgaming (and ASL in particular). The face-to-face interaction afforded by boardgaming is better than the AI built into any software, any day. Try to show me a 30-year-old computer game that can still give one the kick that a great game of ASL provides. I think once the younger computer gaming players of today get a taste of the emotional rollercoaster that is ASL, they'll be hooked for life. Our local group has had several new players come to our monthly game days with copies of the Starter Kit in hand. The great thing about this is that those players are in their twenties, and I have a next-door neighbor whose 15-year-old is showing an interest in boardgaming, so there is hope yet folks. All it takes is a little effort on everyone's part.

This issue of *Banzai* covers the activities of a couple of the local tournaments: The North Texas Shoot-Out held last November up in Fort Worth, and the upcoming 20th edition of the Texas Team Tournament being held in Austin in June. We delve into the fertile mind of Bryan Register for his outlook on ASL and gaming in general, and Matt Shostak encourages players to think outside of the expected to gain the initiative during play. All that and more awaits you in the upcoming pages of *Banzai!!* We hope you'll enjoy it.

North Texas Shoot-Out Tournament Report



Ed Beekman

Last November 11-13, 2011 was the 2nd Annual North Texas Shoot-Out ASL Tournament in Fort Worth, Texas. Please join with me in congratulating our current Tournament Champion, Matt Shostak. Matt was undefeated the entire weekend and gave our Runner-up Randy Shurtz his only loss in the championship game of Friendly Fire's scenario *Saluting a General*. In the Master Sergeant Mini, Mike Denson won the Allied Master Sergeant trophy while Jerry Simmons took the Axis Master Sergeant trophy. There was a tie for All-Around ASL Player; congratulations to Randy Shurtz and Mike Denson for playing the most diverse scenarios and earning first pick from the prize table.



Matt Shostak, our tournament champion, receiving his trophy.

The North Texas Shoot-Out ASL Tournament traces its origins to the defunct Oklahoma Thunderbird ASL Tournament. We have kept the same format but added our own distinctive Texas flavor to the event. When you sign in you get a scenario packet and red ASL t-shirt. We select about 40 scenarios which are posted on the NTASL.com website 30 days prior to the event. Our selection criteria are that the scenarios are fun, balanced, and tournament-sized. We also see to it that our sponsors are well represented in the selection. Every nationality and theater of war is also represented. The t-shirt color was selected to evoke the move of the tournament from Oklahoma City across the Red River to Fort Worth. This year's shirt featured a berserk Russian 6-2-8, reflecting our enthusiasm for ASL.

The first day is open gaming where players sharpen their skills, earn seeding in the tournament, cards for the Texas Hold 'em poker game and credit in the All-Around ASL Player Prize Giveaway. Let me describe these events in greater detail.

The tournament is a single-elimination event. Players are seeded based on their win-loss record from the first day. An effort is made to avoid rematches from the first day and matchups between players from the same city. We want you to compete with players from outside your normal circle of opponents. The winner receives the champion trophy, a large eagle trophy with an engraved gold placard (see attached photo). The runner-up receives a smaller eagle trophy with an engraved silver placard.

But what about those eliminated in the first round? We have the Master Sergeant event. The idea is to give those players another shot at a trophy. This year we had a two-round mini tournament. The players were again seeded based on their win-loss record. The higher seeds were assigned to the Allied side and the lower seeds assigned to the Axis side. Players from each side are matched against each other for each round but they are competing against their fellow Axis or Allied players. Points are earned for winning a scenario, CVP inflicted modified by a fraction of those suffered and possible bonus points on a scenario-by-scenario basis. The player with the most points for each side won the corresponding Master Sergeant trophy, an eagle head trophy with an engraved green placard for the Allied player and an engraved blue placard for the Axis player.

For added fun there is Texas Hold 'em poker games on Friday and Saturday. After each game played on these days the loser is given 2 cards. He selects one and gives the other to the winner. At the beginning of the day two cards are posted with an additional card after each round. At the end of the day the players with the highest and lowest poker hands win a prize. The prizes are game accessories. For example this year they were either tweezers suitable for manipulating game counters or a piece of Plexiglas.

I would like to thank all of our sponsors, especially East Side Gamers, Lone Canuck, and Bounding Fire Productions, who helped fill out the prize table. Please check out their products when considering your next ASL purchase. The order in which players get to select a prize from our sponsors' generous donations is determined by the All-Around ASL Player Prize Giveaway. Every scenario in the scenario packet earns the players points towards being the All-Around ASL Player who gets first choice from the table. Points are awarded for nationalities played as and against, terrain types played on and rules sections utilized. Who won the scenario has no impact on these points, only the fact that you played the scenario matters. However, once a point is earned, it cannot be duplicated in another

scenario. Saturday evening the points are totaled and results announced. If players tie, they simultaneously select a prize and if they both want the same item, they dice for it.

A good time was had by all; we had a good turnout with many new faces. Worth mentioning was a local Starter Kit player making his move to full ASL while attending his first tournament, a walk-in registrant who is a long-time player new to the area and even a visitor from Maryland who was in town and dropped by to watch for a while.

Plans are to hold the event again this year on November 9, 10 and 11. Keep checking our website, NTASL.com for additional details. I am looking forward to seeing you all at the 3rd Annual North Texas Shoot-Out.

Great Expectations

Matt Shostak



Suppose you have a Japanese 4-4-7 squad in HTHCC with three enemy 4-4-7 squads. Assume there is no ambush. Should you attack just one squad at 1:1 odds, or two squads at 1:2, or swing for the fences with a 1:4 attack against all of them? One way to look at it is to consider the expected value of each option. Since rolling dice is a discrete problem, it's a relatively simple calculation for us. Let's compute the expected value for each choice. First, if you opt for a 1:4 attack on all of the enemy units, you'd need to roll a 5 or less to eliminate them all, and rolling a 6 would cause casualty reduction with those affected determined by random selection (remember we're counting a -1 HTH DRM for the Japanese). So we could write that with this syntax:

$$E(1:4) = P(<6) * 3 + P(6) [E(3\text{-way random selection})]$$

Where $E(1:4)$ is the expected value of this 1:4 attack, $P(<6)$ is the probability of rolling less than 6, etc. What about the 3-way random selection? If there is a "yahtzee" (3-way tie) then all 3 squads get reduced, so 1.5 squad equivalents are eliminated. Similarly a 2-way tie eliminates 1 squad equivalent and no tie at all eliminates just 0.5 squad equivalents. There are exactly 6 ways to get a yahtzee out of 216 possible outcomes when rolling 3 dice. For a 2-way tie to have an effect, the tie also has to be the high value. In other words, a result of 1,1,2 on the 3 dice will not eliminate two half squads, but only one. So how many ways are there to roll a 2-way tie for random selection on 3 dice? There are 216 possible rolls with 3 dice. There are 45 ways to get a random selection that results in 2 units suffering casualty reduction. All other results affect only 1 squad. So now we can rewrite the equation as follows:

$$E(1:4) = P(<6)*3 + P(6)[(6/216)(1.5) + (45/216)(1) + (165/216)(0.5)]$$

$$= (10/36)(3) + (5/36)[(6/216)(1.5) + (45/216)(1) + (165/216)(0.5)] = .92110$$

So it looks like on average you can expect to eliminate about .92 squads by going for the 1:4 attack. Let's do a similar calculation for the 1:2 attack.

$$\begin{aligned} E(1:2) &= P(<7)*2 + P(7)[E(\text{random over two})] \\ &= (15/36)(2) + (6/36)[(6/36)(1) + (30/36)(0.5)] \\ &= .93056 \end{aligned}$$

So the expected value here is quite similar, about .93 squad equivalents eliminated. What about the 1:1 attack on just one squad? Here goes:

$$\begin{aligned} E(1:1) &= P(<8)(1) + P(8)(0.5) \\ &= (21/36) + (5/36)(0.5) = .65278 \end{aligned}$$

That's a rather dramatic drop to only .65 squad equivalents expected value. But what if the CC were not hand-to-hand? Let's consider a similar situation, where you have a single squad and a -1 leader in CC with 3 enemy squads. All squads have 4 firepower, so your choices are a 1:4 attack against all of them, a 1:2 attack against two, or a 1:1 attack against just one, all attacks with a -1 DRM courtesy of the leader. The math is basically the same, except for the dice rolls needed in non-HTH CC:

$$\begin{aligned} E(1:4) &= P(<4)*3 + P(4)[(6/216)(1.5) + (15/216)(1) + (195/216)(0.5)] \\ &= (3/36)(3) + (3/36)[(6/216)(1.5) + (45/216)(1) + (165/216)(0.5)] = .30266 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} E(1:2) &= P(<5)*2 + P(5)[E(\text{random over two})] \\ &= (6/36)(2) + (4/36)[(6/36)(1) + (30/36)(0.5)] \\ &= .39815 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} E(1:1) &= P(<6)(1) + P(6)(0.5) \\ &= (10/36) + (5/36)(0.5) = .34722 \end{aligned}$$

So in this case it seems the "sweet spot" is the 1:2 attack. We'll leave it as an exercise for the reader to do other calculations for different odds columns with different modifiers. There are many other considerations when trying to make tactical decisions about if and how to engage in close combat, but we hope this brief sojourn into probability will help inform those decisions.

Fear Factor

Matt Shostak



How many times have you held back from making a particular move because you envision bad things happening? It's a natural tendency and is probably even healthy to a certain extent. Yet I think it can lead to overly cautious play sometimes, too. How about instead of considering only what you fear might happen to your troops, you instead try to imagine what your opponent fears? I've had many games where as I anticipate my opponent's upcoming moves I think to myself, "Gee, I hope he doesn't do that", and sure enough when he does something else I've felt greatly relieved. Too much caution can hurt your chances of winning just as much as being too reckless.

Some hypothetical examples can help illustrate this point. The first example is an attack in city or town terrain which is being held up by some wily defenders using a lot of skulking. It is the beginning of the Advance Phase for the attackers. Many players are reluctant to push their men out into the street because there's no cover there, and they imagine the defenders shredding them with lots of firepower at +0 TEM. Thus, they often leave the situation looking like this:



From this position the defender simply skulks during his turn, and the attacker then wastes more valuable time trying to overcome the position again in his next turn.

But take a step back to the beginning of the attacker's Advance Phase again, and this time put yourself in the defender's shoes. What is he thinking? Chances are it's something like, "I hope he just stands pat so I can skulk again because that makes my choices easy and burns time off the clock." With that in mind, consider advancing some guys into the street instead of holding them back. Sure, they might get shredded there, but in doing so your opponent will have to leave men in the front line instead of skulking them back, and thereafter they will be vulnerable to defensive fire as well. Although it may cost you some casualties it may also overcome this position faster, which may be more important. If the defender instead decides to skulk again, then your men in the street can take wall advantage where applicable, and they will be well positioned to add more firepower to upcoming attacks because they will get point blank benefits.



Let's look at another example. This time you have some infantry that need to attack over open ground, but there is an enemy unit in nearby woods covering your avenue of attack. What to do? Well, you could prep fire with a lot of your men, but that eats time even if it works, because units that shoot can't move. Or you could cautiously advance, hoping to make some progress without suffering any breaks or casualties. But is that what your opponent fears, or is it playing to your own fears about suffering some bad luck? Chances are in this situation that lone enemy squad is simply trying to buy time for the defense, so these two approaches may be just what the defender is hoping for. Maybe what your opponent fears more is something like this: a half squad charging straight at the defender, forcing him to use up his fire opportunities. If the defending unit fires, its options immediately become limited no matter the

outcome, because Subsequent First Fire must be within normal range and cannot be used at a target if there is a closer known enemy unit. If the defender doesn't fire, then at least you've gotten an attacking unit that much closer to threaten it with. Then you can simply repeat the process with other half squads and squads, one at a time, forcing the same tough decision on your opponent each time. In many cases this is what your opponent doesn't want you to do, and can result in overcoming the position much faster.



Rules Tip

Rick Reinesch



Remember that when bypassing a hex with Residual FP already present in the hex, you get to apply any non-hexside terrain modifiers in the hex (including SMOKE/FFE-Hindrance DRM) to any resulting Residual FP IFT DR [see the second to the last sentence of A8.2]. This will also negate the application of FFMO since you are combining the Residual FP attack with another effective protective TEM. So that squad which is bypassing a stone building hex containing Residual is attacked with a +2 DRM (-1 FFNAM, +3 TEM), not a -2 DRM. That's a big difference.

Player Profile: Bryan Register

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?

BR: I've been gaming since I was seven or eight. Here's the story. My dad had had some of whatever they were

doing for wargames in the 60s. (I've got some of the pieces; there was something with little red and blue plastic ships with removable masts.) Anyway, he was once in a bookstore and saw the original Third Reich on the shelf. He glanced at the back cover and it said that it was "not for the faint of heart or the beginner to simulation gaming." So obviously, being a beginner to simulation gaming, he got it and acquired the hobby. He did not, however, acquire a bunch of gaming buddies or live in a place where there were possible opponents (because we were in the nightmarish hellscape of east Texas — you can find it on a map because it's got FORBIDDEN ZONE! DANGER! SOULS CANNOT FLOURISH HERE! IA! IA! CTHULHU FHTAGN! printed across it in large letters in the dark font of Mordor — but I digress). So when I was a little kid, he was routinely bent over a game board. I remember the old Starship Troopers, in particular, being apparently a favorite of his. At some point, we picked up Axis and Allies and I got my start. I can remember one New Year's Eve when I was able to more-or-less continually send large Soviet forces from Karelia behind the German front line, finally closing that game out in a draw. I can also remember trying to get my Mobile Infantry into a perfect hexagonal patrol pattern, for no apparent reason; finally, my Third Reich Soviet infantry making a last stand in the Urals. Russian Front was definitely a favorite of mine. I liked several of the old AH "Smithsonian American History" games from the 80s; I remember on my 8th grade class trip, we went to the Smithsonian and I got Gettysburg; I played that so many times that the names of the generals have been rubbed off of the counters. I love Civilization and Dune and I can definitely dig Diplomacy..

Banzai: When and how did you discover ASL?

BR: Partially by the paternal route. My dad ordered ASL and Paratrooper at some point when I was about thirteen or so. He didn't take it very far and we never played until a couple of years ago, when I was familiar with the game and had gotten him the starter kit for Christmas. I had seen some people playing some sort of large scenario at Nancon in Houston one year in the early 90s. I swear I think that they were playing the entire frakking Battle of the Bulge. But I knew it by reputation and finally, more or less on a whim, decided to take the plunge in the summer of '01 when I saw it on the display racks at Dragon's Lair.

Banzai: What nationality do you enjoy playing the most?

BR: They're all sort of interesting in all sorts of ways. My basic way of playing is balls-to-the-wall, take-no-prisoners, careless aggression, so the nationality that I most want to play is the one in the scenario that lets me do that. But, as a statistical aggregate, obviously the Japanese.

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

BR: My favorite kinds are either grueling city fights or else ones where just all kinds of crazy things happen. Armor-heavy scenarios are my least favorite, for two reasons: first, tanks don't break-and-sometimes-rally; they're roughly binary game elements, which puts more emphasis on the TH/TK rolls for the tank fight than any single roll in a more infantry-heavy game, and, second, I am ass at armor tactics.

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

BR: Well, my weaknesses include everything to do with armor, and trying to govern individual decisions according to a deep understanding of probabilities. My strengths include nothing. I'm given to clever moves, flights of tactical fancy, and the occasional very precisely planned Hail Mary attack, but I'm really not all that good at the game.

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

BR: The worst is playing greasy stupid boring genocidal fascists. Fortunately, we don't have very many of those around here. The best is twofold. ASL's two basic strengths as a game are that it is episodic — you need never play the same situation twice — and that you are active during your opponent's turn. Those two basic facts, more than any details of the game, I think, are what account for its being such a good game. Plus, you guys are cool.

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

BR: Playing it some more. In the last five years, I've had a kid, single-handedly moved a family of three to and from Virginia, gotten a divorce, and had to shift for myself to a higher degree than I was accustomed to. (What with unemployment being what it is, I'm hardly complaining about having so much work to do!) I've played maybe ten games in that entire time. I'd really like to get some of the rest of my life a bit more sorted out and make ASL a regular part of things again.

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

BR: Definitely the turn counter. It keeps track of time. Time is a very fundamental concept; perhaps time is the very essence of our humanity.

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?

BR: Please return to the part where I said that I was bad at tanks and statistical analyses.

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?

BR: The French, for the novelty.

Banzai: How do you like PTO scenarios?

BR: I like lots of them quite well. The ones with dug-in Japanese are not typically my favorite, but they can be interesting if they're large enough and nobody gacks the defensive planning.

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

BR: My most enjoyable moments are the ones in which I beat a player who is manifestly better than me, preferably by doing something enormously clever (instead of just playing a consistent, solid game, though that's cool, too). For example, Sam Tyson is manifestly better than me and set up a solid defensive position in a small '44 West Front scenario. I had a tank and drove it into a gully, under the lines of sight of his anti-tank weapons, into his position, and that was that. The look on his face was — well, not priceless, but valuable. My worst would have to be the time that I was playing Jeff Taylor in a small all-tank scenario. My five tanks took out three of his four tanks, and then his remaining tank took out all five of mine. Seriously. What the hell? That would also count as my funniest and craziest ASL moments. I also remember a small scenario against Roy Casagrande in which I concealed a machine gun in a very obvious spot, kept my cool until he had walked past it, and then killed three-fourths of his force on the first turn and the rest on the second. Of a six-turn scenario.

On second thought, the worst would have to be times at which it looks like I'm playing ASL, but I'm actually not, because someone has gacked some rule. I was playing Bill Dorre once at a biggish, pretty cool jungle scenario, and I was sort of whomping on him with once-in-a-lifetime clever tank tactics that mostly involved a lot of moving in bypass. I thought that I was brilliant until we found out that it was dense jungle, so my tanks had spent almost the entire scenario where they could never be. That was lame. Bill's such a wickedly awesome guy that he didn't make me feel any worse about it than I already did, but still, lame.

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

BR: The part where I play once in a while.

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

BR: I'm strongly tempted to say something like, "Yo momma's so under-represented," but I'll spare myself coming up with a punchline for that and say that I'm so unfamiliar with third party products that I have no business having an opinion. (Also, I'm sure that your mother is a delightful person and/or god rest her soul.)

Actually, I've just come up with an opinion. I would like to play hypothetical ASL. German beach landings in England, US v. Russia cold war clashes, things like that. I know that people do those, but not a whole lot.

Banzai: Spanish Civil War scenarios: overrated or underrated?

BR: No opinion.

Banzai: Now that Armies of Oblivion has been out for a while, have you had a chance to generate some impressions about playing the Axis Minors?

BR: Nope. I've played some of the scenarios. They don't seem radically distinct.

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?

BR: Uh, like, play a lot and have fun?

I don't really know what to do for attracting new players. While I'm not the person who has most recently joined CTASL, I am, and have been for ten years, our youngest

member. Something is wrong there. I suppose that it's graying-of-the-hobby woes. I don't know precisely how to make old-fashioned board wargaming cool to the kids, but I would recommend figuring that out and doing it.

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

BR: Thanks for the opportunity to personally snub everyone that I know fairly well and don't mention in answer to this question. I'll pass.

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

BR: Well, my worst run of luck would have to be that time that I went on four first dates in four consecutive days and hit it off with none of the women.

Oh, wait. You were talking about 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?

BR: Didn't you already ask me that? Either I'm confused about "stands out" and "favorite," or else this has been covered in the first question.

Banzai: What are your other interests outside of gaming?

BR: All wargamers have a thing for history, but I got tired of military history a long time ago and I now try to follow an interest in economic, social, and intellectual history. Likewise all wargamers love to read fiction, but I'm sort of worn out on most genre stuff and I'm now into classical literature. Let's see. I like to display flags of middle eastern countries that are throwing off evil dictatorships, drink good beer, watch and read about vampires and zombies and reflect on the social meanings of these monsters, watch excellent TV shows like Breaking Bad on DVD, and then of course I'm a practicing philosopher trying to come up with a deeper understanding of the nature of human action.

Banzai: Any final comments to wrap up?

BR: Nope.

First Impressions: Crucible of Steel

Matt Shostak



Like many other ASL players I was very excited to finally get my hands on *Crucible of Steel* by Bounding Fire Productions. I cannot give an unbiased review of the product because many of the team are good friends of mine and I was involved in some playtesting and proofreading. So with that disclaimer out of the way I'll go ahead with a few brief impressions.

As we've come to expect with BFP, the quality of the components is top-notch, from the glossy 40-page booklet to the rule pages, maps, and counters. There are a lot of counters and they are attractive. The boards add some variety for terrain choices, especially those with hillocks, making for some interesting battlefields the likes of which we haven't seen much of yet in the ASL scenario library. The rules provide for some extra chrome, including several types of ground attack aircraft, which should be fun to put through their paces.

The booklet has really excellent content. There's one article that is an overview of the product, and three superlative rules primers covering the topics of slopes, dug-in/entrenched AFVs, and fortifications. Some people may have wished for a historical article covering the battle, but I don't fall into that camp. I like to get my history elsewhere, preferring that ASL publications focus more on the game itself. The subject matter of these articles could not be better chosen for this pack, as they have direct application to many of the included scenarios. The articles are well written, with liberal use of graphics for examples, and I certainly learned a few things. All of the articles are by Chas Smith, an impressive output for one person.

Of course the core of any such product is the scenario set. Here there are 32 scenarios, some small, some large, and one monster. Naturally all of them occur at Kursk so there won't be a lot of variety of nationalities or theaters. Intense combined arms firefights are something that the BFP team excels at creating, and with this pack they've compiled an exciting collection of engagements that ought to provide loads of fun for quite some time. Since most of my playtesting efforts involved some of the smaller actions, I'm eagerly looking forward to settling in to some of the bigger slobberknocker contests with the many fine opponents available here in Texas.

20th Annual Texas Team Tournament

Rick Reinesch



The planning for this year's tournament is coming along nicely as we make plans to celebrate a big milestone for our event – 20 years of great ASL. The tournament this year promises to be just as much fun as in years past, so make those plans now to attend the 20th Annual Texas Team Tournament in Austin, TX, June 21-24, 2012. We have big changes in store for this year as well as we move the tournament just down the road from our old home for the past 8 years. This year we are at the Wingate by Wyndham Conference Center with corresponding upgrades in floor space and amenities. We've managed to bump up our playing space by 50% so there will be plenty of room for all players.

Last year we had 51 players from points all over the country participating. The website (<http://www.Texas-ASL.com>) has been updated with information on tournament activities, the hotel info and the registration fees. We are constantly updating all that information and more leading up to the tournament, so make sure to check in regularly for all the latest. Note that the last day to get our great hotel rate is June 8th, so don't delay! And while you are checking out the website, make sure and preregister; you never know what goodies I will come up with for those doing so. All pre-registrants this year will be getting a free copy of the 20th anniversary scenario pack we will be producing. This pack has contributions from a number of designers that have been associated with the tournament over the past years.

As in previous years, Thursday's games will be informal gaming, with those games only counting toward the Major Johnson award. On Friday morning, we will launch the formal phase of the tournament where we will track wins and losses over the course of the weekend to crown the team and individual winners.

Our tournament runs an open format; players are free to match themselves with anyone and play any mutually agreeable scenario. As the TD, I seed the team part of the tourney so that every team has an equal chance at the top prize. As we've done for the past couple of years, we will have 3-person teams. This has shown to help mitigate the impact of the loss of one person on a team and at the same time opens up the ability of more folks to walk away with one of the top prizes. Each of the team awards for the past couple of years since we've instituted this change has come down to the final games on Sunday in determining the winner, so it has shown to be an exciting race to the finish.

How does the team scoring work, you may ask? Scoring is not based on total wins or losses, but on the difference between the two. So a team with 10 wins and 4 losses has a score of 6 and is actually tied with a team that goes 6 and 0, which would also have a score of 6; though a tie breaker would go to the 6 and 0 team of a better win percentage for the team. So with teams of 3 at least the loss of one individual on a team is not the end of the team tournament for the others; you just need to keep the wins and losses differential to your advantage. Check our website for all the details on how the team tourney works. Moreover, while we call ourselves a team tournament, individual play is still paramount. We offer plenty of individually based prizes, from the individual champion and runner-up, to the Major Johnson award given to the individual playing the most ASL over the weekend, along with any number of mini-tourneys and dice-based awards.

And speaking of minis, the *Opening Assault Mini* will once again be taking place on Thursday! The action this year will again be something unique and special, and I'm planning now on doing something from *Festung Budapest* though that isn't yet final. This is your chance to experience a part of this brutal battle in the final days of World War II.

For the other Thursday mini, we are pleased to be sponsoring a Houston institution in Austin this year – *Ferocity Fest*. For those that like their fighting brutal and deadly, this is not to be missed. We will be featuring a scenario dredged up by the devious mind of Rob Burton. Players will be paired up, one Axis and one Allied, to remove any issues with scenario balance. Your objective is to do better than the other players of your side, either Allied or Axis. The team with the largest number of points at the end of scenario play will be the winner of some great dioramas also of Rob's creation. This mini is that simple. We'll be posting the specific scenario as it is determined.

We will kick off all mini play promptly at 9am Thursday, June 21st. If you are interested in participating in either mini, please contact the Tournament Director (me) directly. We'll post participants for the minis online as they come in. You can find my email address in the Club Notes at the end of this newsletter.

But that's not all for the minis. We will also be sponsoring an SK mini on Saturday. We'll have it as a classic pairing bracket using scenarios from SK1 and the recently released SK1 expansion pack, with one person besting all others and walking away with the prize.

For the regular part of the tourney, remember that above all else we are an OPEN tournament; play what you want against whomever you want, or even as much (or little) as you want.

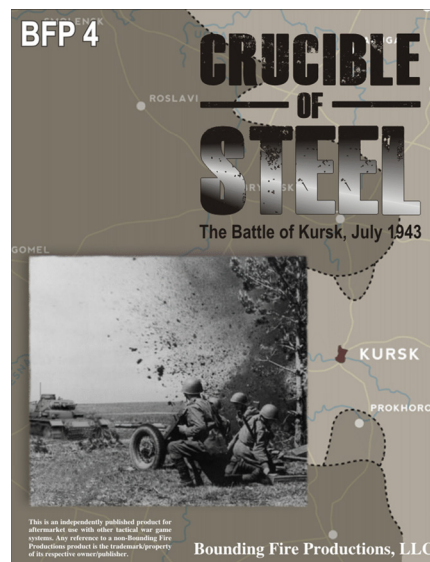
That being said, there are plenty of prizes to be had. We give out the Major Johnson Award to the player who plays

the most ASL over the course of the weekend. We provide awards for the best team over the course of the weekend as determined by the best point differential between wins and losses. And then there are awards given to the overall individual champion and runner-up. But even if you aren't in the running for any of those awards, you can still try for the Audie Murphy Award given to the most snakes over the course of the weekend, or there is also the Col. Klink for most boxcars.

Saturday of the tourney is also the day we conduct a random drawing for all of the merchandise our sponsors so graciously provide. I would encourage everyone to head out to our website and check out the listing of these fine folks, and make sure to consider them first when you are making your purchases.

Registration this year is \$36 for all Thursday-Sunday gaming, \$31 for Friday-Sunday; and \$21 for Saturday only. Your entrance fee includes participation in any Mini-Tournaments should you desire to enter. We are at the Wingate Conference Center with a fantastic room rate of \$79/night.

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



BFP 4: Crucible of Steel

Bounding Fire Productions is proud to announce that **BFP 4: Crucible of Steel** is now available for purchase.

This project focuses solely on the southern shoulder of Operation Citadel. We definitely captured the feel of Kursk and the scenarios have a wide variety of actions. Not only are there are plenty of mid-sized to larger scenarios, there are also numerous tournament-sized scenarios.

The BFP team is very proud of this project and has enjoyed putting Crucible of Steel together. We are confident you will enjoy the included boards, articles, counters, and scenarios.

- 32 scenarios
- 3 New Double-Wide map boards
- 3 New Standard map boards
- 2 NEW countersheets for Kursk
- 4 updated countersheets from Blood and Jungle
- 1/2 updated countersheet from Operation Cobra
- Magazine with detailed articles
- Vehicle and Ordnance Notes
- Rules pages

Visit our website at www.boundingfire.com to order your copy, and while there check out all of the other BFP products available.

Club Notes

Biweekly Lunch Gathering

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

Game Days

The Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas/Ft. Worth groups have remained active, hosting various gatherings for

club members to get together and knock cardboard heads. If you missed any of these you missed a lot of fun. It's like a tournament atmosphere for a day. The Austin group meets on the first Saturday of every month. The DFW group has been meeting on the second, 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!