

Banzai!!

The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

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

From the Editor's Desk

Matt Shostak

Without articles this newsletter would cease to exist. Although I have a small backlog to draw from, it will run out soon. So if you want to see something in these pages, write it up and get it to me (in electronic form if at all possible). Such things as after action reports, scenario analyses, and tactical tips are all welcome. Don't worry if you don't consider yourself an expert - school's out, you won't be graded on it.

Club Notes

The most recent club meeting was held Saturday, Feb. 24. Seven members made the effort to enjoy some ASL action, including Jack O'Quin, back from a long absence, and newcomer Chas Smith. The gathering had an Eastern Front theme, albeit by coincidence. Jack took on Mike Seningen in *Acts of Defiance*, ultimately bowing to Mike's vaunted Germans. Greg Swantek and Eric Gerstenberg chose the deluxe scenario, *Berserk!*, with Greg's Germans prevailing. Lastly, Chas gave David Hailey all he could handle in *The Agony of Doom* before succumbing to his Russian forces in close combat on the last turn of the game. It was a very exciting match. For information about our club, and the next club meeting, please call Matt (280-8414) or Mike (288-3778).

Ladder Standings

With their games from the recent club meeting, Jack, David, and Chas have all joined the ladder, as has Greg Swantek with his recent games. We now have ten active members of the ladder, of which six have played more than one game. That is outstanding, considering that this all started only two months ago. Join the fun. You may notice that despite starting with a base of 1000 points, those who have not completed a ladder game will not be ranked higher than those who have. This is to encourage everyone to get on the ball and get some games in. This is just a friendly competition; please - no wagering.

Player	Points	Record
Shostak	1156	6-1
Esparza	1037	1-0
Hailey	1037	1-0
Purnell	1004	1-1
Swantek	1004	1-1
Seningen	977	1-2
Smith	967	0-1

Player	Points	Record
O'Quin	966	0-1
Gerstenberg	954	1-3
Kirk Woller	954	2-4
Austin	1000	
Hively	1000	
Lavan	1000	
Milam	1000	
Nicholson	1000	
Sosa	1000	
Tom Woller	1000	
Valdez	1000	

Total Results

Shostak (Russ) def Kirk Woller (Finn) in Fighting Withdrawal
 Gerstenberg (Germ) def Shostak (Amer) in Silence That Gun
 Kirk Woller (Germ) def Purnell (Amer) in The T-Patchers
 Purnell (Germ) def Kirk Woller (Amer) in Lost Opportunities
 Shostak (Germ) def Seningen (Brit) in Franzen's Roadblock
 Esparza (Russ) def Kirk Woller (Germ) in To the Last Man
 Shostak (Germ) def Kirk Woller (Russ) in Panzers Marsch!
 Shostak (Germ) def Seningen (Brit) in Franzen's Roadblock
 Shostak (Germ) def Gerstenberg (Brit) in Phyrri Victory
 Shostak (Germ) def Gerstenberg (Russ) in Wintergewitter
 Kirk Woller (Germ) def Swantek (Russ) in The Guards Counterattack
 Seningen (Germ) def O'Quin (Russ) in Acts of Defiance
 Hailey (Russ) def Smith (Germ) in The Agony of Doom
 Swantek (Germ) def Gerstenberg (Russ) in Berserk!

BASE POINTS:

These are the points that are gained/lost depending on who wins/loses a scenario. If the lower rated person wins a game, then the lower rated person gains the points in the "Lower Wins" column while the higher rated person loses those points. "Bonus Points" are added/subtracted from the base points to get the total points gained/lost.

DRAWS RESULT IN NO POINTS GAINED/LOST

Point Differential	Lower Wins	Higher Wins
0-50	25	25
51-100	30	20
101-250	35	15
251-500	40	10
501-	45	5

BONUS POINTS:

These are variable points added to the winning players base and subtracted from the losing players base. To find the bonus point total:

$(1000 - (P_{win} - P_{lose})) * 0.01$ Where P_{win} = point ranking of winner P_{lose} = point ranking of loser Bonus points are FRU.

Incentive for Playing: Each player is awarded 2 points per game completed, regardless of who won, as an incentive for participation in Ladder games.

Beginners' Corner No. 2: Newbie Oversights

Kirk Woller

Have you ever finished a turn or scenario and then realized that you neglected to do something simple that may have altered the outcome of the game, maybe converting a loss into a win? Because ASL is such a huge system it is easy to neglect certain activities which are easy to perform (and are your right) which may even up the odds a bit. These are all oversights which I made when learning the game (and still make occasionally) due to either not knowing about a rule (the ones stuck in later chapters which are retroactive to chapters A-D are especially annoying) or just downright forgetting in the rush to set-up and play after a tiring day at work or chores. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but is merely an introduction to some of the major mistakes I made.

Bore Sighting (C6.41) - The Scenario Defender (see the definition in the index) is allowed to bore sight certain weaponry, mostly larger MGs and other guns, resulting in a -2 modifier for shots taken at the pre-recorded Location. Neglecting this advantage can make a huge difference in your ability to defend certain areas. Additionally, this modifier is good for the ENTIRE game, not just the first shot, unless the gun is moved, the VGA is changed, or is temporarily lost if not fired by the original crew or manning infantry.

Concealment Gains - Remember to conceal those units which qualify at the beginning of the game. If your opponent comes onto the board on turn 1, then all of your units can start concealed BEFORE the opponent looks at the board. Units in non-concealment terrain qualify (A12.12). Don't neglect to gain concealment on your turn throughout the game, regardless of whether or not you feel it will be useful later.

Field Promotions (A18.11) - On your turn you may rally one leaderless unit not normally capable of self-rally if it is the FIRST MMC rally attempt. If you and your opponent are playing less strictly, he may allow you to make the roll after another rally attempt, but don't count on this and definitely don't make it a habit. Look for this opportunity at the beginning of every rally phase.

Replacement (A19) - I can't recall all the times I have replaced (due to a unit failing a morale check by greater than its ELR) a currently broken unit with one of lesser quality until I realized that BROKEN units don't suffer from replacement (A19.11)!

Rate of Fire - Look for rate of fire when it applies. As a habit, I usually place the dice to the side as they were rolled in case I forgot to check as I rolled. Not doing this can result in a loss of many shooting opportunities, robbing your MGs and other guns of one of their primary advantages.

Sniper Activation Number (A14) - As with ROF, be alert for your SAN. Your opponent is likely to overlook it so it is up to you to take your sniper shots when you are due them. Conversely, remember the possibility of sniper checks, which, although not always possible or prudent, are often overlooked by the recipient of a sniper attack (A14.4). I can't remember the last time someone made a sniper check, and I have to believe there were some times when it was completely forgotten.

Double Time (A4.5) - If you declare double time (not CX, it is not the same thing!) during the movement phase you only receive ONE extra point. Although there are times when it is prudent to wait, many times it is mere oversight that prevents you from obtaining the two points you could have had if you had planned your move in advance and declared double time at the beginning of the move.

There are many other rules oversights that could be cited, but this short list should help you as a beginner close the experience gap. Good gaming!

Scenario Challenge

Tom Repetti

So you think you know scenario trivia, eh? We'll see about THAT. Take the Scenario Challenge below, IF YOU DARE.

Start by identifying the scenario from the first clue and follow the clues from there to get the next 8 scenarios in the chain. For instance, if the first two clues are: 1. Start in the United States 2. Keep the first word and make it a Deluxe scenario

Then you would answer #1 with "First Banzai" because that's the only scenario which takes place in the US (Attu, in the Aleutian Islands). Then for #2, keep the first word in "First Banzai" (which happens to be "First") and find a Deluxe scenario that has the word "First" in it. The answer is "First To Strike".

I have no idea how well this is gonna work out. Hopefully the clues aren't too unfair or too easy, but it's supposed to be reasonably hard. There also may be other scenarios that I'm not aware of that fit the clues, but hopefully there's no other sequence of 9 scenarios that fits all of the clues. And hey, misdirection is part of the game.

Use whatever resources you want; I'd be stunned and amazed if anybody got all the way to #9 going only by memory. Ready? Begin!

- #1. Start with the hedgehog
- #2. Make it an Annual scenario
- #3. Switch to the only other AH scenario with that special character in the title
- #4. Add up the number designations of all of the overlays. Go to the scenario that has that many turns.
- #5. Go to the scenario in the same location.
- #6. This scenario has the same boards as #5, but they're rearranged.
- #7. Backtrack 2 years.
- #8. See how many turns this scenario has? Go to the scenario that has exactly this many fortifications.
- #9. This scenario and the adjacent 3 form four-fifths of a special group. What's the fifth scenario?

Have at it! (answers will appear in the next issue)

Intermediate Driver's Ed

Part 1: Smoke Gets in Your Eyes

Matt Shostak

Many players begin their ASL careers with a sense of dread about chapter C (ordnance) and chapter D (vehicles) because of the added complexity they bring to the game. But playing infantry-only scenarios soon grows tiresome, and most take the plunge and learn the basics about vehicles. Usually that involves nothing more than learning how to count out movement points and use the To Hit and To Kill tables. More advanced topics, however, often go unlearned for a considerable time. And it really isn't necessary. In this article I assume a certain basic working knowledge of vehicles, and I hope to point out a few of the subtler things that can make your driving experience more worthwhile. The lesson for today is vehicular smoke dispensers (D13).

Smoke dispensers are devices on AFVs that allow them to place smoke during the movement phase. Although the rules section (D13) is quite small, and the mechanics are rather simple, use of vehicular smoke dispensers is often one of the most overlooked capabilities of AFVs, especially by beginners. Perhaps this is partly because the capability is indicated on the back of the counter by abbreviation and usage number, and therefore is more easily forgotten.

There are several different types of smoke dispensers, but Smoke Dischargers (sD), Smoke Pots (sP), and Nahverteidigungswaffe (sN) are all very similar in that they put white dispersed smoke at base level of the AFV's own hex. Smoke Mortars (sM) are a little more versatile. They can place dispersed smoke at the base level of any hex in LOS, within 3 hexes of the AFV, and within its TCA. The Nahverteidigungswaffe not only has a cool name, but it can also double as a close defense weapon system in CC against infantry (A11.622) provided the AFV is BU.

Use of vehicular smoke dispensers is simple (D13.2). An AFV equipped with one can use it during the movement phase by making a DR \leq the usage number indicated on the back of the counter, provided it has not already fired a weapon, and is not abandoned, stunned, shocked, and the crew is not broken. This roll is subject to DRMs, the most common being a +1 for BU. It is worth noting that an AFV must be CE to attempt Smoke Pot usage, so this DRM could never apply to Smoke Pots. Smoke Mortars must pay additional DRMs for motion status, TCA changes, and LOS hindrances. If the attempt is successful, it costs the AFV one MP, but if it is unsuccessful there is no movement cost. Moreover, unlike special ammo (C8), failing a roll does not deplete the capability. You can try for smoke dispensers every movement phase, but only once per phase (D13.3). Some AFVs are equipped with more than one type of smoke dispenser, as indicated on the back of the counter. Although there is no rule in section D13 prohibiting a player with such an AFV from trying for smoke from each type of dispenser in the same movement phase, the vehicle notes in chapter H do so prohibit in every case I could find. Always read the vehicle notes carefully, looking for exceptions to the standard procedure. EX: An early model of the Tiger tank (PzKpfw VIE, German vehicle note 30) has something like the Nahverteidigungswaffe that is not quite as powerful, and is indicated by a M7 on the back of the counter. EX: The T-34/85 (Russian vehicle note 18) has a Smoke Discharger, but it can only be fired once per scenario.

One thing that is easily forgotten (perhaps because it is mentioned in one simple sentence at the end of D13.2) is that you may even use these smoke dispensers during your opponent's movement phase, "as if you were intervening with defensive first fire." File this away in your bag of tricks. Coupled with a motion attempt (D2.401), this little trick could save your armored hide someday, as explained in an example below.

EX. Suppose you have a Sherman, and you are worried about your opponent's Panther, which is out of LOS, but is going to move up and fire. You know that you have a very slim chance of stopping the Panther, but you really need for the Sherman to survive. If the Panther were given free reign to drive up adjacent and shoot, it might need a 7 to hit (base 10, -1 size, -1 point blank, +1 BU, +4 case B and C). Yikes, that's too risky. But if you succeeded with your smoke dispenser, which you are allowed to use by the last sentence of D13.2, he might need a 5 (if you placed smoke in your own hex) or a 4 (if you had a Smoke Mortar and place smoke directly on him). You may just save the Sherman to fight another day (or turn). Combined with a motion attempt (D2.401), you just might make your Sherman nearly unhittable. The details of motion attempts are outside the scope of this article, so that's all we'll say about them right now.

There is another smoke capability of AFVs that is easily forgotten, and that is their ability to place vehicular smoke grenades (D13.35 and F10). I think this is because the rule was not introduced until chapter F, which came with West of Alamein. But note how significant it is. Now any AFV has some smoke ability. Sure, it's "small" rather than "large" smoke, but it's much better than nothing.

Now that you are aware of this ability, you may wonder how to use it tactically. It's a little difficult to offer great advice here since each situation is different. Obviously, you will want to use it to protect your AFVs, which we illustrated by example. An attacker with several AFVs can use them to screen the approaches his infantry will take. If you are lucky enough to have Smoke Mortars at your disposal, then they can also be used offensively to place smoke directly on pesky strongpoints. D13.32 says "A moving/motion AFV must add a +2 DRM to its sM Usage DR." The closest thing I can find to a definition of "moving" in the rulebook is C.8, which says that a vehicle is considered moving "if during the current player turn it has entered a new hex, used VBM, or began its MPh in Motion." I therefore contend that if an AFV begins its movement phase stopped, it could fire its Smoke Mortar with its first movement point, thus avoiding the +2 DRM. I could be wrong, but that's my best reading of it. That might prove to be a useful addition to your bag of tricks. (Note also the errata from the 95 Annual which says that a sM cannot be fired from within a building or dense jungle.) The use of smoke dispensers is an opportunity to be creative.

I hope that you will take these points to heart and that it will prompt further investigation on your part, and make your experience using your vehicles more enjoyable.

Coming Soon

There are already several articles in the hopper for future issues. Be on the lookout for: some tips on panzerfaust usage from Coloradoan Tim Hundsdoerfer, the one-time king of ASL web page providers; another brain teaser from Tom Repetti; an interview with Louie Tokarz, the driving force behind the Chicago ASL club; an introduction to the PTO for beginners; and another lesson in the Driver's Education series.