

Issue #10

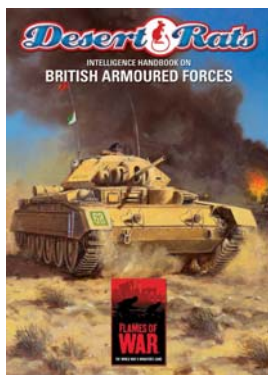
Summer 2004



WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

WARNING ORDER

Desert Rats



Our group has always thought about gaming the North African Campaign in WW2. Although we discussed it many times, we could never agree on a set of rules to game with. When Flames of War came out and the group tried it, we decided to have a second look at this theater. Now, with the release of Desert Rats we have heavily invested in this period and several games have already been played.

Desert Rats is the newest supplement in the Flames of War line. If you've seen the Warhammer Ancients supplements, then you have a good idea of what these are like. A stiff cover, pages of additional rules, history, an army list and organizations, plus several pages of color pictures. These books are designed to give you inspi-

ration and to sell a lot of miniatures, and they succeed at both.

First, the good points about this supplement. The color photographs are first rate and give you a good idea of what desert warfare gaming should look like. There is also some good information on vehicle markings and color schemes, plus sections on the history of the 7th Armored Division. The army lists are very well done, with well illustrated sections showing how many vehicles/figs in each unit, the cost to upgrade, and how to organize your forces. Again, the production values are very good and there has obviously been a good deal of thinking on how to present this period to new gamers.

Now, there are several issues that I have with this supplement. The color comic with miniatures is a little unusual to say the least. If you took out that and the two full color pages showing a diorama and replaced it with info on their opponents or historical actions, this book would have been almost perfect. I also have concerns about some of the specific rules added into

this supplement. If this becomes a habit, then gamers are going to have problems remembering all of the bizarre, little quirks that each army can do during a game. The Broadside rule is more at home in WH40K than in WW2 warfare.



Despite the few quibbles that I have, the system works for the desert. Games are fun, fast, and furious. Sure, there are more detailed, more realistic sets of rules such as Command Decision 3 and Kampfgruppe Commander out there, but you can't use hundreds of figs and finish a game in under four hours!

For a battle report using this supplement, go to page 8 to learn more.



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Special points of interest:

- Analysis and playtest of Desert Rats.
- Age of Eagles scenario replay.
- Boardgame and book reviews.

Age of Eagles: French Rear Guard Action

Although we love the Napoleonic period, trying to get everyone interested at the same time and agree on which rules to use is always a problem. Finally, we decided to play an Age of Eagles scenario set in Russia during the 1812 campaign. I had just finished a new Russian village in 15mm from Stone Mountain, so I was anxious to see it get used on the table top.

The fictional setting for the scenario was that a wing of the French army had



become separated from the main body and was in danger of being cut off by a Russian flanking force. Both sides were attempting to seize the lone bridge in the area. The French needed it to withdraw back towards the main body, while the Russians needed it to trap the French forces.

Both sides were allowed to place one division within 18" of the town center and a second division within 24". The remaining forces were deployed behind the front lines.

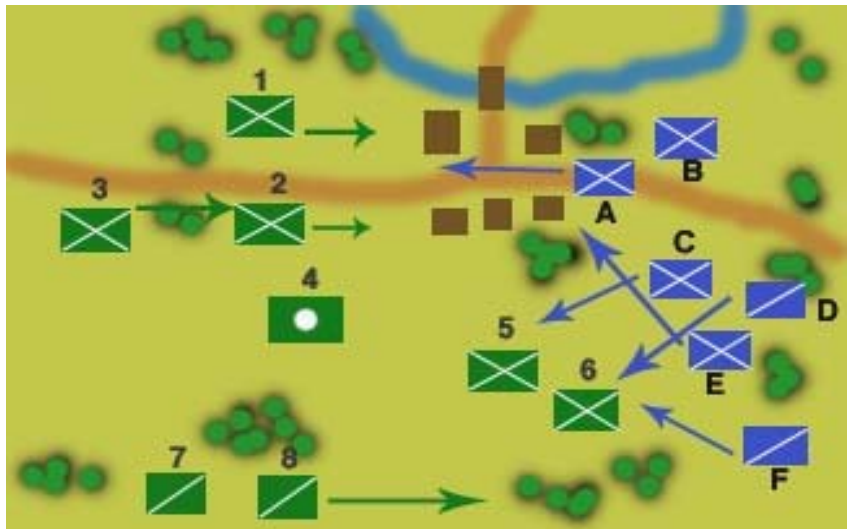
AOE Replay

French Order of Battle

I Corps 2 divisions of infantry/4 guns
II Corps 2 divisions of infantry/3 guns
Cavalry 1 heavy/1 light cavalry divisions/1 gun
86 inf. stands/40 cav stands/8 batteries

Russian Order of Battle

I Corps 2 divisions of infantry/4 guns
II Corps 3 divisions of infantry/4 guns
Artillery Reserve 4 guns
Cavalry 2 divisions (1 light/ 1 heavy)
78 inf. stands/34 cav stands/12 batteries



Opening Moves

Both sides began out of tactical engagement range (15"), so everyone had to roll on the Reserve Movement table. The first turn, more than anything else, really put the Russians in a bad position. The Russians were unable to move over 75% of their forces on the first turn. This let the French, who only got about half of their forces to move, advance and occupy the center of the village. Also, the French were able to quickly take the farm area in

the middle and prevent the Russians from applying pressure on the main road.

The second and third turns fared about as bad for the Russians. Seemingly unable to move at all, the French were able to get a good defense set up and await the Russian attack, if



it ever came. The French even began shifting forces to start an early withdrawal.

Finally, by turn five the Russians were ready to at least start an offensive and both sides began shelling each other.

AOE Replay (cont.)

The French decide to hit the Russians before they get attacked, so a French brigade charges from the village outskirts up the slope where a Russian division is getting ready to coordinate an assault. This opens up a four turn battle which results in a see-saw contest for possession of the village approaches. The Russians twice almost succeed in breaking through the French perimeter, but are pushed back by continual counterattacks.

The Russian cavalry finally is able to move and begins to deploy to the front lines, but the French have set up a good defense on that

flank while they shuttle units back to the road and away to safety over the bridge. The French form a grand battery to guard the extreme flank. A Russian attack towards the road is beaten back with severe losses.



By now the situation is getting desperate for the Russians. The French are in control of the village and the bridge, with most of their forces easily moving along to the bridge. The

Russians are trying to maneuver to deliver some sort of an attack, but bad die rolls continue and there



is no hope of coordinating even so much as a division sized attack.

So, after 8 turns the game is essentially over. The French have already crossed one division and aren't really threatened in any other part of the field.



Summary

We hadn't played Age of Eagles in awhile, so we did do a few things wrong. Certainly, the Russian artillery reserve should have been able to move easier and become involved in the fight sooner. This, however, does nothing to prevent the absolutely horrendous die rolling by the Russian players during the first few turns.

The French had a good plan and stuck

with it. Leapfrogging divisions into the village, then the bridge crossing, then from the flank to the road, etc... They were definitely helped out by the bad Russian die rolls, but the counterattacks around the village were well timed.

All in all, the game did not go as I had planned, but it was still fun. Frustrating as I was a Russian

player, yes, but fun. We are anxiously awaiting the commercial version of the



rules and hopefully some scenario books. AOE is fun, suitable for large groups, and looks impressive on the table top.

In the 1970's wargaming was still in it's infancy. There were Avalon Hill and SPI for boardgames, GHQ, Ral Partha, Minigis, and a few others for miniatures, and there were maybe fifty sets of rules. Complexity was accepted as a "given" and WRG, Empire 3, Newbury, etc..., were commonplace sets of rules. We thought nothing of buying SPI's Air War or Next War, fighting a Warsaw Pact invasion of Germany using Enola's Combat Commander rules (who cared if you only got 5 or 6 turns in 8 hours of gaming time?), or quoting Rule 314.17.5a of the Starfleet Battles Captain's Edition rulebook regarding Romulan auxiliary power problems. Squad Leader was almost too easy compared to other games in your collection.



Now in 2004, the entire gaming world has been turned upside down. Flames of War, Warhammer Ancient Battles, Volley & Bayonet, and other sets of rules have done a complete 180 from the 70's. Realism is sacrificed for playability, speed is exchanged for good tactics, and marketing counts more than actual knowledge of warfare. Many games have the attitude of "Let's roll a bunch of D6's and kill things!" Is this good or bad?

Well, both. It's good in that the hobby has grown tremendously, with top notch products and an incredible offering of miniatures. Gamers can meet, play a fast game, then get on with their lives. It's bad in that realism has been thrown out the window for the sake of marketing and it's creating a pool of wargamers with little real knowledge of history. So, what are the reasons behind this?

First and foremost is the time factor. In the late '70s, throughout the 80's, and the early 90's there was no such thing as the Internet. Computers were clunky at best and computer gaming, while novel, was anything but exciting. There were no Sony Playstations, X_Boxes, etc..., although there were Atari 2600s and Sega game systems. Now, all of the above are

easily available and take up the time of gamers, along with satellite TV, hundreds of movies, history specials, and the list goes on. Essentially, there are more things competing for your leisure time.

Second, the pace of society has definitely speeded up. Gamers, particularly those in big cities, face traffic, longer hours at work, family life, and a myriad of entertainment offerings. Naturally, this means that most gamers have fewer hours per week to game or work on gaming materials.

Now of course this does not apply to all gamers, but judging by the number of Ebay transactions I have had with gamers on both coasts, this is an issue. Plenty of gamers have three to four hours to spend per week for their hobby. This means buying pre-painted

armies, finding a set of simple rules, meeting for a few hours and playing a game.

Contrast this to the late 70's and early 80's where you might spend twenty hours a week to kit bash some micro-armor, plan out a scenario, read chapter 525 of some modern rules set, and basically focus your leisure energy towards the next game.

Naturally, something had to give and it's in the rules that we now play. Realism is sacrificed for playability, history is glossed over, and the main concern is getting the game over in a couple of hours. This could also do with the social aspect of gaming, the rise of sci-fi and fantasy gaming, and the varying needs of a larger gaming population, but those subjects are for another time, or article.

Let's take the latest modern air to air rules for miniatures called C:21 and compare them to say, COA's The Speed of Heat. The big difference, right off the bat,

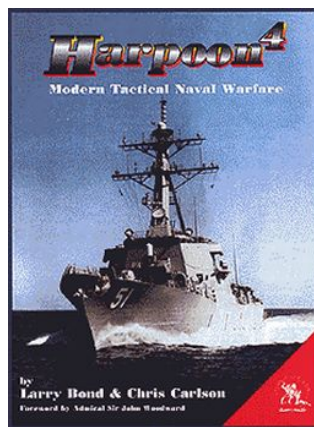
are no altitude rules! True, C:21 plays fast, everyone has fun, but no altitude rules! The Speed of Heat is difficult to learn, can take some time to play a game, and is not visually attractive. But, it is realistic and you're going to learn a hell of a lot more about air combat than with the previous set of rules.

In the world of ancients gaming, where there are as many opinions as gamers, you have Warhammer Ancient Battles and it's dozen or so supplements. Yes, they have had a positive impact by adding hundreds of new ancient gamers and selling thousands of new figs. However, are they very realistic? The answer would have to be no. The amount of bizarre and unrealistic things I've seen in WAB games could fill a book. Five pursuing figs reach a fleeing unit of 36 figs and the fleeing unit is destroyed. Units on hills being destroyed by attacking forces who strike first because they charged. Flags and musicians adding pluses to decide who destroys who wins melee, and I could go on.

Again, it's fun, fast, and quick, but is this what gamers want out of the hobby? Apparently so, judging by the success of the rules book and others that attempt to imitate it. Naturally, this is creating a huge pool of gamers who know very little actual history or who do any research into the period they are playing. Trying to explain to people that it wasn't a common tactic to charge Tiger tanks with Bren carriers is a waste of time.

Where is this leading? Hard to say at the moment. Hopefully, more gamers will become bored with these kinds of rules and look elsewhere, making game companies produce better rules. Others may go back to older sets of rules and start doing some research on their chosen period. On the other hand, if it goes the other

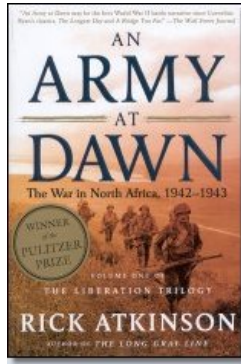
way and we end up with Warhammer ACW or Warhammer Arab-Israeli War, this hobby may as well consign itself to having to take the historical out of historical gaming.



An Army At Dawn

An Army At Dawn is the first in a trilogy of books about the U.S. Army in WW2 by Rick Atkinson. The first volume starts with the Torch landings in North Africa and goes up to the start of the landings in Sicily. This is quite an undertaking as Atkinson must detail not only the combat operations of the U.S. Army, but the political and doctrinal elements as well.

Fortunately, Atkinson has the gift of writing similar in style to Cornelius Ryan. That is, he can go through otherwise boring details by making them seem rele-



vant. His battle reports are filled with personal narratives that makes you feel as if you were there.

There are many things in this book that generally aren't known and I learned a great deal about operations in North Africa. The story of the first disastrous commando type operations by the U.S. Army are detailed, as well as giving the reader a good idea of the mind boggling supply situation in that part of the world. The Vichy French forces are definitely something to be hated, especially their commanders who were caught up in a game of showmanship and politics.

The book also shows that the American high command and division officers really had no concept of team-

Book Review

work or what to do when they first encountered the Germans. The book does a remarkable job of showing how the Army went from disaster to being the greatest fighting force in the Second World War. I was very impressed by Atkinson's style, research, and how he shows this transformation.

An Army At Dawn is great for both historians and wargamers. There are literally hundreds of ideas for scenarios and game developers in this book, plus a real good insight into the fighting qualities of the various armies during that time period. For historians, you will learn quite a lot that's not in most histories of the Army's first campaign.

I can't wait for the second volume and I highly recommend this book.

Fall of Berlin 1945

The final Soviet drive and the Battle for Berlin have always been a favorite subject of mine. After reading Cornelius Ryan's The Last Battle, I have always picked up anything I could find on the subject.

This new offering from Antony Beevor, author of Stalingrad, tackles the end of the Third Reich. The book covers the inner workings of



the city of Berlin, the military situation, and the final battle itself.

I think that I was expecting much more on the military aspect, but what this ends up being is a lesson on Berlin sociology. What military information is provided is very interesting, particularly

the breakout of the Ninth Army. However, this information is spread out with long stretches of social commentary in between.

The book does have its good points and is well written, although at times it is a little dry reading. For a more detailed view of military operations I would recommend The Last Battle or The Fall of Berlin.

Book Review

MWAN #129

Hal Thinglum finally retired from doing MWAN with Issue #128 and Don Perrin has taken over. Issue #128 was a transition issue, so #129 is now entirely by Don and his crew.

Overall, I would say that the changes have been positive so far. The cover is heavier, good photos on the inside, plus the content is pretty much the same. This is not a Wargames Illustrated rip off, but

rather a mag for gamers in that all of the articles have that "practical" feel to them.

This issue features a good set of free Napoleonic ship to ship combat rules that are very well done and I will have to try them. As always there are scenarios, letters, club listings, a column by

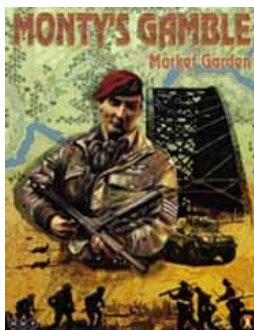


Hal, and of course a ton of ads which gives all of us even more ideas about how to spend our hobby dollar!

Hopefully the trend will continue and MWAN will go on for awhile. It's a magazine for gamers by gamers and every issue has something that you can use with your gaming.

Magazine Review

Monty's Gamble



Most gamers are big fans of Operation Market Garden, the bold plan to drop a “carpet” of 30,000 paratroops to seize bridges in Holland, then race forward with armor into Germany and end the war months earlier. Immortalized by the book and movie *A Bridge Too Far*, it has served as an inspiration to gamers for decades.

Having already owned and played about ten different Arnhem/Market Garden games, I was a little hesitant to pick up *Monty's Gamble*. However, after reading several glowing reviews I decided to buy the game.

The box contains a beautiful 34”x22” map, from Arnhem down to the XXX Corps starting area. There are several play aid cards for set up and around 400 counters that are also very well done.

There is a 3 page reference cheat sheet and errata available at the MMP site. The rule book is very well done, with examples of play and everything clearly laid out. You do need to read a few things carefully as this is an unusual play sequence and some important rules are in strange places. The discussion group on Consimworld is very helpful and the designer will answer your questions online.

The game begins with a massive air bombardment and the XXX Corps assault, which can be pretty disheartening for the German player. This is followed by the airdrop of three divisions of paratroops and the seizing of bridges. Now is when it gets interesting...

Each turn is divided into a number of impulses where you select an area, then move and fight with your units. The problem is that you never know when the day will end, so there are critical decisions that need to be made on the selection of each area. Supply also comes into play as each side only has sufficient depots to re-supply or fix a

Wargame Review

limited number of units. The combat system favors the defender, so assaults are bloody and will result in a number of units needing supplies to stay in fighting shape.

This is the game's strongest point. You don't know when the turns will end, you don't have sufficient supplies, combat is unpredictable, and the amount of

options available to each player is almost limitless.

Naturally, this results in a quick-paced, very nerve wracking game as the Allies try to seize the bridges and

keep the road open while the Germans close in from all sides.

Very challenging and fun. This game has moved to the top of my favorites list and I can't wait for more games in this series to come out.



1904/1905 Russo-Japanese War



The Great War at Sea series has been a proven winner for Avalanche Press, which has expanded into a WW2 series as well. This game is an attempt to take the concept into an earlier

period by slightly modifying the rules to fit the slower, less well gunned ships of the pre-WWI era.

You get a tactical map, a strategic map showing a large area of Russia, Korea, and Japan, plus beautiful counters of all of the ships that served during the war. For those gamers who thought the Russo-Japanese War was a one-sided, one battle victory for the Japanese, you are sadly

mistaken. The scenario book has well over a dozen battle scenarios, almost a dozen operational scenarios, and two campaigns. I was amazed at the number of naval actions during this war, especially the “what ifs”.

During the operational scenarios, each side must plot their moves out in advance and give each group missions. This does somewhat negate the need for a double-blind, or hidden movement system, plus it's faster. When each side contacts each other, the battle is moved to the tactical maps. Each ship or group (torpedo boats and destroyers are in groups) is rated for primary and secondary firepower. Each side then fires at a number of ranges during the tactical se-

Wargame Review

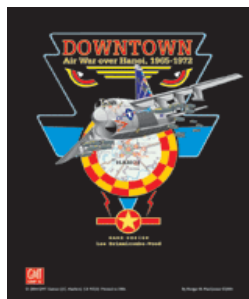
quence. Each ship can also take only so much damage and there are ship logs for keeping track.

The Japanese definitely have the advantage in ships and command, but all is not lost for the Russians. They have a numerous fleet and with some good die rolling could make life miserable for the Japanese player. Trying to knock out the forts at Port Arthur can be very challenging.

All in all, I was surprised by this game. I thought it was a boring subject, but after reading the scenario book and trying a few games, it has given me a much greater appreciation of the period. It's gener-

ated enough interest that I'm going to start looking for other games in this series.

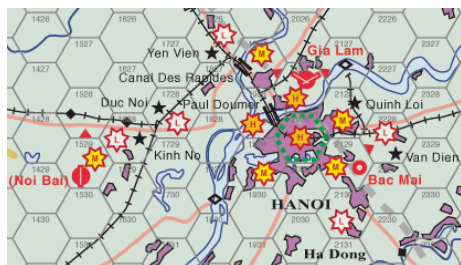




Although there have been many air combat wargames over the last thirty years, very few seem to focus on the operational side. Downtown from GMT attempts to remedy

that situation by coming out with the first of a proposed series on operational air combat.

Downtown covers the Vietnam War from 1966-1972. The map covers the important areas around Hanoi and extends up to Haiphong harbor in the north. The alignment of the map makes it possible to simulate the thousands of air sorties by the Air Force from the west and the Navy from the southeast.



The two counter sheets are good and mostly portray informational markers. Each aircraft flight is represented by a generic counter, then a counter with a detected and undetected side. Each aircraft counter represents from one to four aircraft, so this is definitely not about tactical air combat. There are also some well done play sheets and reference cards, along with a well laid out rules and scenario books. Overall, the components are well done and you get a lot in the box.

In the scenario book there is a great introductory scenario called Surfin' Bird, which has two A-4Cs trolling along a highway looking for targets. The scenario notes tell you which sections of the rules to read to get started. It doesn't take very long to play, but it teaches you how to fly, check for detection, anti-aircraft fire, and attacking ground targets. With the rules and charts near by (and this is a chart driven game) I was able to figure

the system out fairly quickly.

After this scenario there are suggested scenarios to try that add in SAMs, jamming, Iron Hand missions, and more, so that you can have that layered on learning system. I went to another scenario that had 20 A-4Cs on a strike with 4 F-4Bs and 4 F-8Cs as MIGCAP.

Downtown is designed as a two player game, but the designer's web site has a set of solitaire rules available for download and they seem to work well. I followed the instructions for setting up the AAA and the Mig flights, then filled out the logs. After that you need to mark the ingress and egress routes on the copies of the game map that are provided.

The F-8s and F-4s entered first, with the A-4s coming in a turn later. I had planned an ingress route that would avoid most of the heavy concentrations of AAA. Two flights of Migs rose up to meet me, but a good detection roll revealed one as a dummy flight. A flight of F-8s swooped in to engage them and got shot down for their troubles! With that, the F-4s moved in to engage and within three turns had shot down two Mig-17s and damaged a third. Air combat is very interesting and I like the system a lot. Each side gets a chance to engage, then rolls to see how many shots they get, if any. Very clever and it works well.

With the skies clear of enemy aircraft the A-4C made their final turn at the second way point, dropped down to low level and raced in. They took heavy flak, but suffered only one damaged airplane. However, the flak did cause some negative modifiers to the bombing runs, although both targets suffered heavy damage.

So, I had heavily damaged two main

targets, shot down two Migs, and damaged a third, but it ended up as a draw. The victory conditions are very realistic and the U.S. player needs to play an almost perfect game to win.

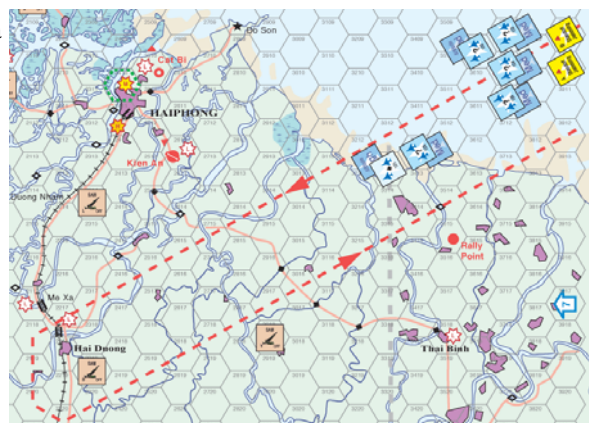
Buick F-4	Van Coc MIG-21	Oyster ?	Gunpowder EKA-3
Van Bay MIG-17	Viceroy A-7	204 ?	Ngoc Tiep MIG-19
Van Coc ?	M ?	Canyon A-4	Carbine F-105

There are about 15 scenarios and many of those have great replay value as they have multiple targets and strike packages. You could play the scenario several times and not have the same targets or aircraft to use. In fact, several of the scenarios

are more like mini-campaigns. There are also three campaigns that could take awhile to play. So, it definitely is not a game that you're going to get bored with easily.

As stated in the first paragraph, this is hopefully the first in a series of games on operational air combat. Work is progressing on a Battle of Britain version, Arab-Israeli War, Falklands, and a Warsaw Pact vs. NATO game. If any of the forthcoming games are as good as Downtown is, then this could be a very popular series.

Finally, a note on complexity. Air combat games by their very nature are complex, so this is no different. Take



your time and start out slowly. It's well worth the effort!

For more information go to: <http://www.airbattle.co.uk/downtown.html>

Flames of War Replay: Seizing The Pass

With the arms race growing for our group's North Africa collection, we decided to try our newly acquired Shermans. The panzers had been running wild against the Honeys and Cruisers for the last few times, so we thought we would make it tougher on them by adding some Shermans.

The scenario was that a German battle group had punched through the lines and was in exploitation mode. They had reached a critical pass before the British moved a blocking force into position and they were threatening to cut a major supply road. The Germans needed to secure the pass, then seize the village and it's crossroads for a victory. The British needed to either seal the pass or take control of the village.

German Order of Battle

Panzer HQ Co.	2 PZIIIG
1st platoon	5 PZIIIG
2nd platoon	5 PZIIIG
Anti-tank platoon	4 Marder II
2 Paratroop platoons	
1 Panzergrenadier platoon in SDKFZ 201/1s	
2 10.5cm howitzers	

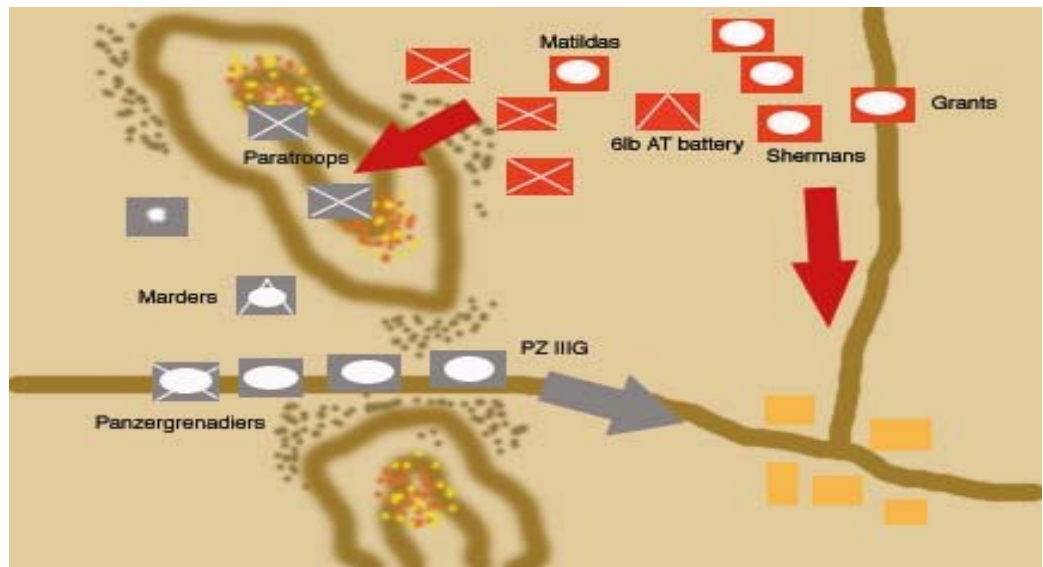
British Order of Battle

Heavy company HQ	4 Shermans
1st platoon	3 Shermans
2nd platoon	3 Shermans

Scenario Replay

3rd platoon 3 Grants
Support platoon 3 Matildas
2 infantry platoons, HQ platoon, MG platoon, AT battery with 4 6lb. AT guns, plus about 10 Bren carriers.

Both sides had limited air support.



The Battle Begins...

The Germans decided to hold the reverse side of the ridge with the paratroops, supported by the artillery and the Marder platoon. The PZIII company was to charge down the road, screening the panzergrenadiers as they made a grab for the village and it's important crossroads.

The British decided to attack the main ridge with their infantry, then try to cut off the German armor before it could get

to the village. Without infantry on the village flank, the British would have a difficult time trying to dig German infantry out of that position.

On the first turn the Germans kicked into high gear and barreled down the road towards

the village while the British moved to intercept them. By the third turn the leading elements were exchanging long range gunnery fire. The British infantry struggled up the rocky ridge to launch an attack on the dug in paras and both sides prepared for some major combat.

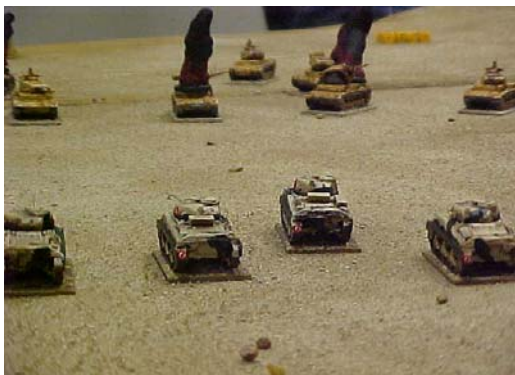


The British Counterattack

The German panzergrenadiers raced into the village and dismounted. The Shermans now moved up and with their longer range began to score hits on the German armor. What followed was several turns of back and forth tank fire with little to no effect on either side. However, a British 6lb. Anti-tank battery was able to deploy and by the sixth turn the weight of fire began to tell. The first German armor platoon fell apart and was forced to fall back, then the second platoon lost 50% and was also forced back. An opportune air strike hit the panzergrenadiers and the Grants began to flank the village.

Back on the ridge, the British infantry launched their attack, but

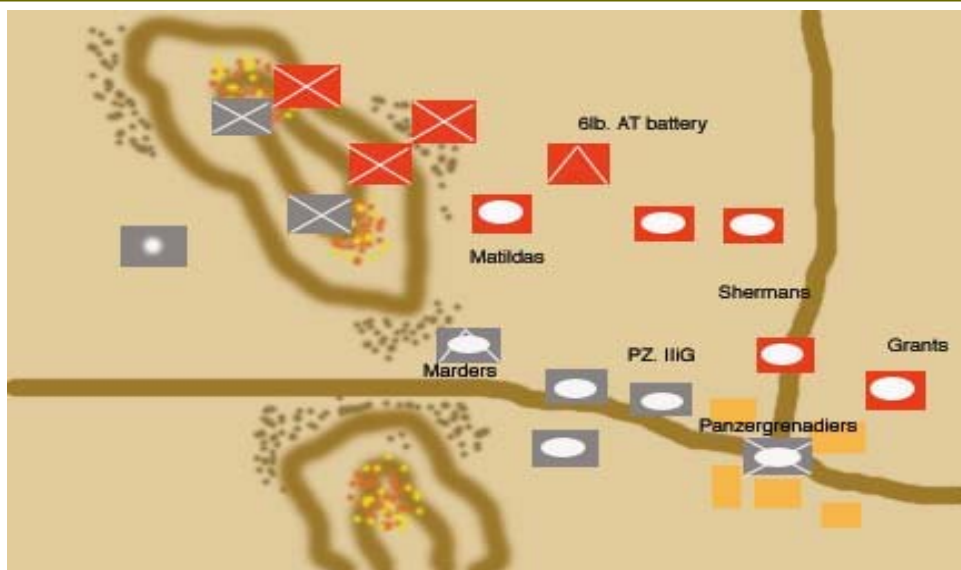
were met by a withering fire from the paratroops. Although the British did cause some casualties, the defenders held firm and demolished both infantry platoons, forcing them back off the ridge. The pass was held, but the village sector was not looking good for the Germans.



The British began to leapfrog forward, knocking out the remaining German armor until only the company command team was left. A counterattack by the Marders had some initial success, but they were forced back by the victorious British armor.

The Grants began to pound the grenadiers in the village and the end was not long in sight. The German defenders at the pass were unable to come to their aid and 75% of the German armor had been knocked out.

After surveying the situation and weighing the odds, the German players decided that the game was over. Although they had held the pass, the village would be unable to be secured.



Summary/Post Battle Thoughts

A well played game by both sides and the Shermans proved their value in their first engagement. Their longer range and better armor made me wish that I had taken some PZIVs instead of a bunch of PZIIIs!

The British did get a chance to form a big semi-circle and on a few turns were getting upwards of twenty shots into the group of German armor, so something

was bound to hit sooner or later. The Germans were just unable to close the range and had no place to go.

The defense of the ridge was the only German highlight of the battle. The British could not coordinate an attack using all of their assets because of the terrain.

Finally, the game system plays good and fast, which is a plus when

you have a lot of figs on the board. My only complaint is that there are so many special rules, especially in the Desert

Rats supplement that you almost need a cheat sheet that lists all of them. Other than that we were able to get through 9 turns in about 3 hours.





WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meet every other Friday night in SLC, Utah from 7pm to midnight. We play Flames of War, Mustangs, Harpoon, Fire and Fury, Age of Eagles, Sword and Flame, Warmachine, Warmaster, Arc of Fire, Dogs of War, Age of Reason, Age of Discovery, boardgames, and more...

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As anyone who follows gaming knows, the I-Kore situation brings reality back to our hobby. A seemingly successful company who produced sci-fi and fantasy figs suddenly is in receivership due to bad management and embezzlement (or as reported so far). Gamers expressed shock, outrage, "I told you so's", etc..., after the news came out. Why should this surprise anyone? This is a hobby that is pretty much run as a cottage industry. Most gaming related businesses are not run by businessmen, rather by gamers. That in itself should make you wonder why any of them succeed at all! The few who do, namely Games Workshop, Old Glory, Essex, etc..., are run as professional enterprises and succeed.

We need to be reminded again that this hobby is run by the hobbyists themselves. This is good and bad. It's good because new figure designers, companies, or stores continually open up and push new products, which expands the hobby. It's bad because most of them won't survive their first year for various reasons. If you're starting to build an army from company xyz, then you better get all of it now as chances are, they won't last over a year.

Hopefully, the hobby will use this as a wake up call to start treating itself more professionally.

Warmachine Revisited

by Michael Marchant

With so much happening in the wonderful world of Warmachine I believe an update article might be in order. While technically our group, the Wasatch Front Historical Gaming Society, focuses on all things historical, any regular reader of Warning Order or visitor to www.wfhgs.com will have guessed that some of our members occasionally delve into Sci-Fi and Fantasy games.

One such game that has become a fast favorite with many in our group is Warmachine. The game presents a chance to throw a few figures on the table and duke it out in a few hours. Indeed, its startup cost makes it a very attractive alternative to many other games of its type. Boxed sets are available for any one of the 4 major factions, at around \$40 each retail. Each of these includes a warcaster and 2-4 warjacks. This and a copy of the rules is all you need to begin playing.

For the uninitiated, Warmachine is set in the Iron Kingdoms, a Privateer

Press realm, which blends magic with Victorian-esque steamworks and gunpowder. A player takes a magic user (a "warcaster" in game terms) and a group of massive steam-powered armored robots (warjacks) into battle, using their magic to cast powerful spells and help their 'jacks' move and attack better. The 4 main factions offer something for everyone. There is Cygnar- the technologically advanced faction favoring speed and accuracy, the undead Cryx, with their

horrific creations, or the Menites, a devout religious faction. Completing the list is Khador- a slow-moving Russianesque faction favoring heavy armor and brute firepower. In addition to these 4 are a number of unique mercenary characters and units, which are hireable to fight alongside faction troops.

Warmachine has been out for some time, but Privateer Press is about to release an expansion rulebook called Esca-

lation, which offers new rules and situations, along with a whole host of new figures, which are being released monthly. Each faction now has the choice of a half-dozen or so different warjacks, 4 warcasters, and a number of human (or undead) figures and units to build their force with, along with expanded mercenary additions. A player can customize his or her army to their hearts content.

The rules are fun and simple to learn, the game is easy to begin playing, and the support the company offers is superb. The figures are beautiful, and the games popularity is now widespread. Daily discussion of the games many facets is a regular feature in the forums at www.ikwarmachine.com.

On the downside, the price of some of the new figures seems to be creeping up compared to the original releases. However, considering the investment required to start playing almost any game, fantasy/sci-fi or historical, the game still offers a very competitive value and enjoyably infinite playability. I would recommend it for anyone looking for a light-hearted game, which is easy to get into, dangerously collectible, and surprisingly addictive.

