



A platoon of U.S. Rangers moves into position around an Afghan village near the Pakistani border. Recon teams have already confirmed what the Global Hawk UAV that has been orbiting this location for over 12 hours has shown operators. A large contingent of Taliban are using the village for regrouping and are possibly using the village as a staging point.

minutes the village is secured and intelligence teams move in to assess the remains. Over twenty Taliban fighters are dead with no Ranger casualties.

The Rangers work their way towards their start points with textbook precision. Snipers and heavy weapons take up their supporting positions while air support prepares to move in. When the command is given, an overwhelming attack is unleashed. Two bunkers and a building serving as a barracks are quickly knocked out. The Rangers assault carefully selected buildings, clearing them out one by one with ruthless efficiency. Within

The Ranger objective is an airfield that terrorists and the Taliban have been using to smuggle arms and equipment in and out of a remote region. There is a village near the airfield where at least 30 enemy soldiers are holed up. A few of the Ranger players try to move near the objective to get better fields of fire, but after awhile boredom sets in and soon squads of Rangers are charging into the village streets, slugging it out in a firefight that would make Warhammer 40k players green with envy.

and outcomes better represents reality? Well, obviously the first, but with gamers the second is the more likely outcome.

21st century combat operations present the gamer with a number of challenges. First, how do you simulate the incredible advances in military technology? Second, how can you design a set of rules that will demonstrate the vast advantages that most Western forces have in training along with command and control? Finally, is it possible to have a realistic game that doesn't turn into a WH40K slugfest where you're simply exchanging U.S. Rangers for Space Marines and Taliban for Tyrannids?

After several hours of game play the Rangers have been defeated and withdraw, leaving ten dead, ten wounded, and only five Taliban casualties.

I think that the first thing that you have to ask yourself is (cont. on p.10)

So, which of these two fictional scenarios



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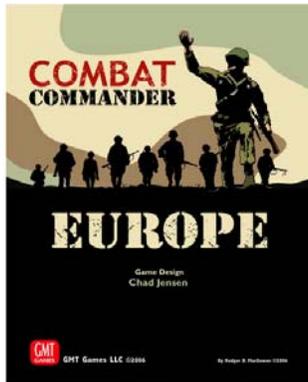
Special points of interest:

- Several boardgame reviews, including GMT's *Combat Commander: Europe*.
- Multiple battle reports for WW1, WW2, naval, and Napoleonic eras.
- Editorial on the divergence of the hobby regarding pre-painted and unpainted figures.
- Several product reviews.

GMT's Combat Commander: Europe

Game Review

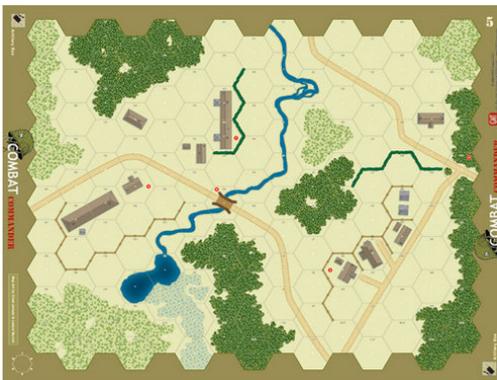
It seems that once or twice a year a wargame comes along that takes the hobby by storm. Besides all of the games that are produced in a series such as ASL, Panzer-grenadier, and others, plus the usual East Front games, Napoleonics, etc., when something unusual comes out it makes a big splash. Hammer of the Scots and Empire of the Sun come to mind that are perfect examples of this in recent years.



scale. Each hex is around 30-35 meters and can only hold 7 men. With each counter representing a 4 man fire team, two man weapons team, or individual leaders, the stacking density is pretty light. You get Russians, Germans, and U.S. forces in this first game of the series along with 12 scenarios, so this is more than enough to get you started. There is also an outstanding scenario design system at the back of the scenario guide that allows you to create possibly thousands of randomized scenarios to keep you busy for years to come.

The latest entry has to be GMT's Combat Commander: Europe. Amidst the playtesting and discussion it was set as the "playable" alternative to ASL, which set off a host of arguments about playability, realism, and more. CCE quickly became the most talked about game in the hobby and had one of the highest pre-order counts I've ever seen.

One of the most interesting aspects of this game is that the objectives have variable point values and while each side might know one or more objectives, you may not know what all of them are or what they're worth. This can definitely influence strategy during the game. Each player gets a deck of Fate cards, which have events, time or sniper triggers, die rolls (there are no dice used in the game), and various actions such as Move, Assault, Fire, etc... As can be expected, card play is the most crucial element of the game. You are allowed to keep playing cards as long as you have something that can legally be used. Each time a unit fires a second card is pulled and the die roll number on it is checked. Now this gets interesting as every time a card is pulled it could result in an event, a random sniper, or the turn ending.



So, for all the hype and \$70, what kind of a game is CCE? First, the box is pretty good sized and it should be to hold all of the components. There are several two sided maps, several hundred counters, a rule book, a scenario guide, and three decks of cards. There's not much to complain about with what comes in the box. The rule books are in full color, the card decks are very nice, the maps, while similar to some of the ASL ones, are functional, and the counters are well done. So far, so good.

So with all of the random events, no way to know when the turn might end, and variable objectives, you're probably getting the idea that this probably results in pretty chaotic game play. Well, you're right! It's this fact that divides people into the "This game is a blast because you never know what is going to happen" or the "There's too much chaos and I don't have enough control like in ASL" groups.

The main thing to realize here is that this game is a step below ASL in terms of

I've played this game five times solo, twice face to face, and have taught the game to a few others in my group. On the positive side all have been pretty good games and one had several wild swings of fortune that resulted in one of the best board game scenarios I've ever seen. You need to be constantly thinking



about what to do with your cards such as should you hang onto certain ones, should you burn through them quickly to force the end of a turn, or what combination to use for a devastating attack. At the same time you have to prepare yourself for enemy reinforcements popping up in the worst possible place, random air strikes, snipers, and an ever changing tactical situation.

About the only down side I can see at this time are that there are no rules for vehicles. Mention this at Consimworld and you'll get stoned for various reasons! The other item is that if the cards don't go your way you could be in for a long game and you may waste a lot of turns discarding cards to get something that you can use.

On the positive side the game is very well done with great components. The game play is strong and is a perfect alternative to small scale WW2 tactical combat as in the ASL or ATS games. The next game out will focus on the early war forces and the Med, so I'm looking forward to it.

Overall, this game is worth the price. If you enjoy tactical challenges and fun, then this game is for you. If not, then I guess it's back to ASL!

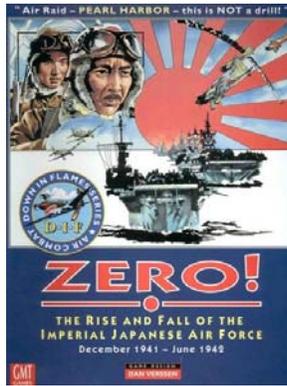


GMT's Zero!

Ok, so I'm a little late on this one seeing how it came out in 2001. I kept seeing modules, scenarios, and extra cards in GMT's C3 magazine, so I decided to get the game, especially since Zero! Is only \$20!

For \$20 you get a box packed with gaming goodness. There is a rulebook, a campaign guide, two card decks for both aircraft and maneuvers, several campaign and target cards, plus a small counter sheet. I'm sure the idea is to hook you for the \$20, then hope you buy the next module Corsairs & Hellcats, plus all of the C3 issues, etc...

Each player gets a leader and a wingman, then uses a series of cards from their hand to maneuver for shots. The opposing player uses their cards to block



your maneuvers while trying to shoot down your aircraft. The game plays surprisingly well and a dogfight can be finished quickly, sometimes in under fifteen minutes. Naturally, this leads you to the conclusion that you could play a campaign game.

Well, GMT has thought ahead on this and Zero! Comes with several campaigns that use a very clever system. First, you draw a card, then depending upon the month and year that you've chosen a target and aircraft for the mission are generated. Each side also gets a number of assets, such as extra aircraft or ace pilots to use as well. You play four missions, then add up the victory points. Simple, effective, and a lot of fun. There are campaigns for the Coral Sea, Philippines, Malaya, and more. Since each card has several time periods and dozens of targets, you can play the same cam-

Game Review

aign any number of times and get quite a variation of scenarios.

This module covers the early years in the Pacific with Buffaloes, Hurricanes, Wildcats, and all of the early Japanese planes, including many bombers. This game is also suitable for group play as there are more than enough aircraft to go around for a 6-8 player game.

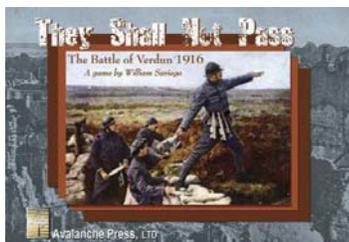
Overall, this is an outstanding deal for \$20. A great game for those nights where you finish another game early or are trying to find something everyone can agree on. Great components, well thought out ideas, and enough replay value to keep you busy for several years.



They Shall Not Pass

The latest entry in Avalanche Press' series of games for \$20, They Shall Not Pass takes us to the battle for Verdun in World War One. Now I own several of these \$20 games and they are hit and miss. Some, like Defiant Russia, are outstanding little gems, while others, Gazala 1942 and Strange Defeat come to mind, were not very good.

The map is interesting to say the least. It shows the area around Verdun, including all the vital roads, hills, forts, and trench lines. The map uses some interesting colors, but overall it's not bad. The counters are well done (Avalanche usually does a good job with their counters) and the rules are pretty straightforward. I had few problems with the set up and after going over the rules and charts I was



ready to try the game.

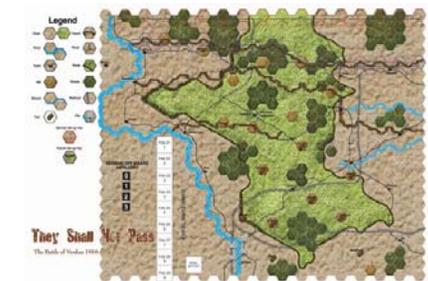
Basically, the Germans launch an all out massive assault to swamp the first trench line. There are a number of decisions to be made by the German player in the first few turns about where to attack, artillery support, and how to use your early advantages. I will say, however, that if things go badly for the Germans early, I think that chances of a comeback in this game are not very good.

The French, on the other hand, have the benefit of strong defenses, interior lines, and having reinforcements on the way. However, the big problem is knowing when to pull back at the right time, which can be very tricky.

Generally, the Germans



Game Review



meet fierce resistance at the first defensive line, break through, then the French go through a desperate withdrawal to new lines while reinforcements plug the holes. The Germans, after catching their breath and getting reorganized, make a second push to take their objectives.

Not a bad game, but not a great game. I think the first few turns are pretty exciting, then the game settles in to attrition warfare. For \$20 it's a good bargain, but I'm not sure of the replay value unless you're a WW1 fanatic.

Price of Glory Playtest Game

Scenario Replay

In our continuing quest for a set of WW1 rules we now turn to the Price of Glory from Iron Ivan Games. Based off of the Disposable Heroes system, Price of Glory is at the upper end of the skirmish genre, but it looked suitable for group play and 25mm figures. For the price you definitely get your money as the rules are professionally done, well written, and contain several army lists. After a quick reading (I was chosen to read the rules and teach the game to the group) I created a pretty simple scenario. The stats were kept generic, with everyone having the same characteristics to keep things simple through our first try.

A Turkish and German force are entrenched on a ridge and a village outside of a strategic pass. The Allied forces need to seize either the village or the

positions on the hill to force a draw, or if they seize both it is a major victory. The Allies had three platoons of infantry, two tanks, several squadrons of cavalry, two field pieces, and several MGs. All in all, a powerful force with some mobility.

The Germans and Turks had two infantry platoons deployed on board, with one platoon in reserve in the center. They had several Krupp guns along with an assortment of MGs, plus they were in strong positions with good fields of fire.



We then spent some time going over the rules. There's a few things that would be new to most players, namely the movement and firing systems, which are not the same as in other games. After a brief explanation of the rules covering these items,

plus the special rules about tanks and artillery, we were ready to begin.

The Central Powers forces set up their forces to cover both avenues of approach while the Allies spent some time try to determine a plan of attack.



Opening Moves

The first turn did not start out well for the Allied forces. After a series of short advances by the attacking infantry platoons, they took some MG fire that caused several casualties. The Allies began to work themselves around the Allied right while the tanks provided cover for the infantry on the left flank.

For their part, the Central Powers forces were content with their deploy-

ment and opened fire with everything that was in range. A Turkish platoon did move forward to an abandoned farmhouse to bring more fire down on the advancing Allied troops.

After the initial shock of the first turn wore off,



the Allied forces began to issue suppressing fire on the village, scoring several hits with direct fire artillery. The Allied infantry continued to advance towards a position where they could close assault the village.

Price of Glory Playtest Game (cont.)

Scenario Replay

At this time the Turks put one of the tanks out of action with a Krupp gun firing over open sights. The British infantry were taking a beating on the left flank and could not make any headway. On the right flank the British were involved in a brutal firefight with the Germans and Turks in the village, with casualties mounting on both sides.



the center. Although two of the squadrons took heavy fire and were forced back to re-group, the third squadron charged forward, catching an enemy infantry unit in the open, which was quickly destroyed. Although the cost was high, there were now no enemy troops in between the two forces holding the village and the ridge, essentially cutting them off from each other.

Then the remaining tank moved around the walls of the farmhouse, catching the German naval infantry, who were acting as a reserve, moving up to support the village. The fire from three machine guns against troops in the open was devastating. With this opening the Australian Light Horse moved forward to attack

the Indian platoon was able to reach the outskirts and launch an attack. The first building in the village was taken in a bloody hand to hand combat, but the second attack on another building, despite some initial success, was repulsed. The Indians were joined by the remnants of another British infantry platoon that continued to pour machine gun fire into the Central Powers positions in the village and on the ridge.

By this time both sides were in bad shape. The Australian cavalry was decimated, the Indian platoon was barely hanging on with a foothold in the village, and the rest of the Allied forces were regrouping in the closest cover that they could find. The Germans and Turks were in no better position, so the next turn or two would be decisive.

The main Allied attack now went in against the village. Despite heavy fire,



End Game/Summary

The Allies concentrated everything against the village, finally driving out the enemy forces. While the Allies had seized the village, they lacked the strength to take the ridge, so the game was called as a draw. Both sides had fought hard with close to 40% casualties.



Price of Glory turned out to be a pretty good system for WW1 company sized actions. We had seven players and things were kept moving along at a pretty good pace. When we do the game again we'll

make unit cards for each unit with different stats for some variety and try the off board artillery system. Although it was our first try with the rules, everyone had a good reaction to the game system. I think that the Middle East area offers a lot of potential for WW1 gamers or those who are looking to expand out from Colonial periods. There are plenty of colorful troop types along with modern firepower, which makes things interesting.

John Jenkins Samurai Buildings

Product Review

Before I found out that the WAB Divine Wind supplement was delayed until 2008, I went all over the place getting more figs, rebasing existing ones, and looking for more Samurai era terrain.

I had seen the John Jenkins ads, reviews, and several threads on TMP, so I went to his site and ordered two buildings, which were a Samurai house and a shed (for a barn or stable). I chose to order it directly from Hong Kong and with the



shipping it came to well over \$75. Now that is quite a lot for two buildings, so I was a little concerned, even after ordering them!

The package arrived within 10 days, which is very good time from overseas, especially as far away as Hong Kong! After opening the package I had two beautifully crafted buildings. The Samurai house is well sculpted, with the boards, doors, and roof

pieces standing out from the rest of the structure. This one will definitely be a challenge to paint! The shed was also very well done, with logs piled up in one place and a variety of other items sculpted into the building.

Overall, I was impressed. The price may put some off, but I think that you have to consider these kinds of terrain pieces as investments. First, they are beautiful (I'm saving up for the temple now!), well done, and you get good service. There are currently only several offerings and hopefully more will be added soon, but it is money well spent and highly recommended.

Litko Aerosystems Trays & Bases

Product Review

As mentioned above I've been rebasing my Samurai for the upcoming WAB Divine Wind supplement. I definitely needed some movement bases as the Samurai, particularly the cavalry, can be fiddly to move around individually.

After searching through a number of companies, I decided to go with Litko Aerosystems, mainly as I had ordered a



building through them before and received good service.

The first thing that you notice is that the movement stands and figure

bases come in a bewildering array of sizes and shapes! Everything that you could possibly want is available for any

size stand or unit size.

I ordered a few bags of figure bases and several movement trays. The average shipping time was about two weeks for both orders, so you need to plan on that. My first order had a mistake, but they sent out a replacement asap, so the service is excellent. The bases and trays were well packaged, fit together well, and not much more could be asked for! Highly recommended.

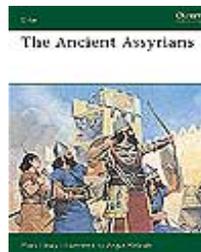
Old Glory 10mm Assyrians & Osprey Assyrians Product Review

I'm reviewing both of these items as you really need one with the other. I began building an Old Glory 10mm Assyrian army for Warmaster, armed with multiple packs of figures and the Osprey Assyrian book.

The Ancient Assyrians from Osprey features some excellent artwork from the late Angus McBride, that feature the transitional nature of the Assyrian army. The text describes the rise and fall of the Assyrian Empire and the many campaigns undertaken by the Assyrian kings. Overall, this is one of the best Osprey books I've seen.

The first thing you notice about the OG Assyrians is that they are well sculpted and I prefer the infantry in the strips. The main problem is that when you start comparing them to the Osprey book you see that the various packs "sample the ages". By that I mean that the heavy infantry are from one era, the medium from another, the cavalry packs are from different eras, and so on. It can be overcome, but it is more annoying than anything else.

To me the major problems are that



there are no skirmishers available, so I will have to look elsewhere or use other ranges. The second major problem are the four horse chariots have the rigging for the horse on the outside of the horses! I think that the horses may have been sculpted in reverse. I fixed this by reversing the horses and cutting off the unwanted extra rigging.

Overall, a mixed lot on the figs. They look great once painted up, but a lack of skirmishers, differing eras, and the chariot horse issue make this range only an average offering at best.

There was a series of recent postings on a Yahoo group concerning the Warhammer Historical event held in May. The subject came up about whether or not unpainted armies would be allowed. The answer was no, which set off a running commentary between the forces supporting painted armies and those who just wanted to game with unpainted lead. It got to a point where one member said that if confronted with an unpainted army he would forfeit the game rather than play! And to that I say, "Bravo!"

"Back in the day", when we were playing with GHQ micro-armor on a 4x8 bright green railroad grass mat with lichen for forest and masking tape roads, it was unthinkable that unpainted lead would be allowed on the tabletop. Sure, there were a few gamers here and there that played with unpainted stuff or used an Italian destroyer to represent the Yamato in a WW2 Pacific game, but they were far and few between. Even today, our group will delay trying out a new period or rules set if we don't have the figures painted in time as we feel that the overall look is part of the enjoyment of the hobby.

Now I can hear the cries of "Elitists!", "Historical Snobs", and more emanating from the readership. Actually, this is not the case. The members of our club are quick to help out other gamers with questions, painting, and research. We have fun games as can be seen by many of our "Quotes of the Game" on our web site. It is just that we have chosen to spend time and effort putting on high quality games with painted terrain and figures.

This needs to be contrasted with what is currently being seen on many sites, Yahoo groups, local game stores, and even some conventions. "Getting in a game" has become the rallying cry of about half the gaming population at this point. By this I mean buying all the pre-painted figs that you can, or playing with large quantities of unpainted lead. They flock down to the local store, unload a couple of hundred dollars (to which the figure manufacturers and store owners thank them), unpack the figs from the blisters/boxes, then play a game. After-



wards, everything is swept into a giant plastic storage box to await the next game.

Personally, I don't see the attraction of the pre-painted figs. The paint jobs are lousy and the rules that come with most of these games must have been created by ten year olds. However, I will fight to the death to let each gamer choose how he or she wishes to spend their money. But here's what I don't get...

Whenever our group plays at the local stores, invites new gamers over for a game, or at the times we've set up a game at a con, everyone usually comments on how well everything is laid out, the quality of the painting, size of the armies, etc... I think it's in the nature of most gamers to want to play in a game that looks good. However, this is generally followed by comments such as, "My painting sucks", "I could never do that", "That takes too much time", and so on. You then talk with them about painting and gaming where you find out that they have the time, it's just that they don't want to put that kind of effort into the hobby. Rather than paint, ask for help in painting, or put a little effort into the hobby they will say that they're too busy. Again, upon further discussion you find out that they play World of Warcraft three hours a night, know every contestant who has ever appeared on American Idol, and can quote every officer's line from the entire Band of Brothers series. Obviously, they have time, but they choose not to paint.

So this is where the hobby begins to diverge and more so every day. Go through any number of threads on TMP

concerning pre-painted figs or playing with unpainted figs and you can see this growing split for yourself. There is an ever increasing number of gamers that live "for the game" and think that painting is for elitists or see it as an obstacle to "getting in a game". Where in the 70's and 80's, and to some extent the 90's, where this part of the hobby made up less than 10%, it now makes up probably close to half the gaming population.

To me, the great enjoyment of the hobby has always been the beautiful figures, seeing a fresh unit painted, research, and the social friendships during our games. Painting figures is just a necessary part of the hobby and needs to be factored in. Do you see a lot of unpainted trains and scenery at model railroad shows? What chances do you think an unpainted model has of winning anything at the International Plastic Modelers Society meets? Sometimes doing things, even in hobbies, takes time, practice, and patience.

The big problem with that is in today's 24 hour, ADD society, people think that they don't have the time. Leisure time has become another event in the day planner. And before anyone says any-



thing I have a full time job at a major university, four children, two hours a day commuting, and I can still find a few hours each week to paint or work on terrain and figures. If I can do it, pretty much anyone can.

So if cons or tournaments want to exclude unpainted armies, I'm all for it. Inclusiveness and understanding only go so far anymore.

Memoirs of a Miniature & Board Wargamer Pt. 5

Fortunately I had made some new friends at a local gaming store while playing 40K and Epic. Like me, they had reached the point where the GW stuff had gone too far and it was becoming an endless money pit. Most of the guys had been playing historical miniatures for a number of years, but they had gotten into 40K for the same reasons I had and were now getting out for the same reasons.

It was good to get back into a club where everyone had similar interests, namely playing historical miniatures in periods that were staples of the hobby such as ACW, Napoleonic, and WW2. Of course there's that uncomfortable feeling as you get to know the club members and they get to know you, but that quickly passes. After the first few games you generally get accepted as part of the group and I was to have associations with most of the members that still last to this day.

Fortunately again, the host of the group had a table that was 6' x 14' with plenty of chairs and room for our games, plus there was an adjoining room with a sofa that was great for campaign games, plotting strategies, waiting for hidden movement to finish, etc..., so we had the perfect gaming set up.

Now at this time the wargaming world was sitting on a fence. Complex rules such as Empire, Command Decision, Harpoon, and others were still regularly played. Most of the group had grown up with these kind of rules and so complexity, sacrificing playability for realism, and taking 15 hours for a game were just shrugged off as part of the hobby. One of the first rules sets that we added shortly after I joined was Warfare in the Age of Reason. Affectionately referred to as AOR, it was one of the first rules sets that dealt with a massive war with a playable set of rules, enabling large 8-12 player games to be completed fairly quickly. The adoption of this rules set, at least in my thinking, greatly influenced the group to start to search for other, more playable sets of rules.

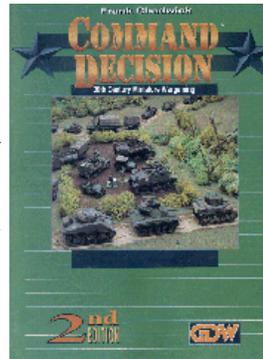
For me, this was the golden age of miniatures gaming. Old Glory had just come out with their 15mm 100 figure bags, we had adapted AOR and Command Decision, plus we did regular games of Harpoon, Empire, and Johnny Reb, all of which are still fondly remembered today.

If there was any problem with the group it was the fact that it got too large at times for just one game to be played by all. Add to this the fact that there were many people who attended on an irregular basis. The group had a lot of friends from the old days, plus it knew gamers that hung out at the local stores, so there were always a couple of guys who showed up at most games. As I stated at the top, fortunately there was a lot of

room around the table. However, due to the varying personalities (psychologists would have a field day with wargamers!) and interests, we had the occasional problems of arguments, distraction, and more talking than gaming.

So while most of the games were fun, you did have the odd night where nothing went right. When your involved in a 12 player game of Johnny Reb, the rules lawyers, ACW experts, etc..., all come out of the woodwork and it kind of ruins the game. Fortunately, most of these people "got the hint" and fewer and fewer of them showed up each time. Within a few years we were down to a core group of about ten players with usually seven or eight attending each game, which was just about right.

So for a few years things were really going well. We were blessed in having some of the best painters in the Western U.S. all in the same group, so our games weren't just fun, they looked good. Visitors from other parts of the country remarked that we could win a lot of prizes for best game at almost any convention. The games were usually fun, there was a lot of



discussion about history, figures, rules, etc., and so this is really what the hobby is all about. I'll take this kind of format over a one on one tournament setting any day.

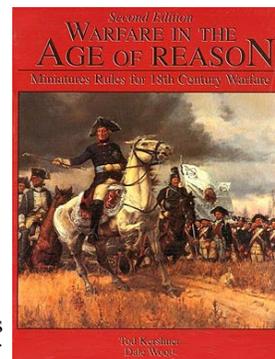
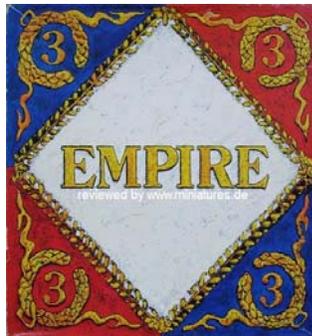
One of the things we did and a tradition that continues to this day, is that we all went to dinner on game nights before the game.

This was sometimes more fun than the game itself! It was also a good opportunity to get to know everyone outside of the hobby as we would spend hours talking about movies, favorite TV shows, books, and more.

Our collections grew at an alarming pace. Within a few years we had complete armies in micro-armor for the late war Eastern Front (replaced entirely later by 15mm after Old Glory started to sell WW), large forces in 15mm for ACW, 15mm French and Austrian armies for 1809, 15mm Age of Reason armies for Prussia, Russia, and Austria, plus we had a good sized collection of 20mm WW2, Harpoon modern naval fleets, and the group was getting into 25mm Ancients and AIW. Obviously, choosing a period and keeping things fresh was not a problem!

However, at the same time this is what led to the eventual break up of this group: too much choice. When you have 10-12 members and you add to the mix an incredible range of options for figs and rules, getting more than a few guys at a time to agree on anything becomes difficult. This eventually leads to some acrimony and a group starts to have problems.

However, this was still coming down the road so we need to remember the good times. The group had a ton of well painted figs, some good guys, and some great games. In the next installment I'll go over something that we had a lot of fun over the years with: campaign games.



Blast From The Past Pt. 4

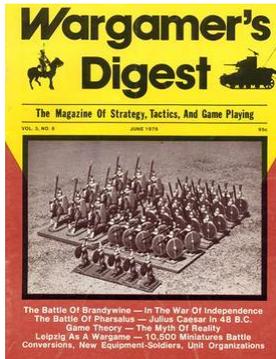
For this installment I thought it would be interesting to reflect on some of the wargaming magazines that have been around over the years.

When I first got into wargaming it was on the board gaming side of the hobby. Naturally, the only real magazine for that was *Strategy & Tactics*, which still continues to this day. For historical miniatures gaming, however, while there were choices, they were far and few between with irregular publishing schedules. Now I'm old, but not that old to remember magazines like *Table Top Talk* or anything from the 60's or early 70's!

My first exposure to a miniatures magazine was when I saw a few of the micro-armor guys in my club looking through issues of *Wargamer's Digest*. As I was interested in WW2 and NATO/Warsaw Pact board games, several of the articles appealed to me, so I bought a few issues. When I moved to Utah and got started painting miniatures I began picking up a few other magazines that had articles of interest.

For those of you who regularly buy *Wargames Illustrated*, *Miniature Wargames*, etc..., these magazines were nothing like those. There were no full color ads, entire pages of color game photos, and the graphical presentation left a lot to be desired. The British and U.S. magazines had a definite separation in that the British magazines were more scenario/game driven while their U.S. counterparts were heavy on the history and how to game certain periods historically.

This trend continued for a long time until the U.S. viewpoint recently surrendered with the demise of *MWAN* and the *Courier*. Going through an issue of *Battle from England* in the 70's and an issue of *The Courier* from that same time period showed the differences. *Battle* had a tabletop teaser (think scenario), articles about some recent gaming shows, board game and figure reviews, and gave the



feeling of a friendly hobby where having fun was secondary to the actual history. The *Courier* from that same time period would have articles about Frederick's linear formations, choosing the best army from Book III of the ancients lists, naval tactics, and you were left with the assumption that wargaming was a very serious hobby.

Reflecting back, I thought that both approaches were valuable in laying the foundation for what the hobby is today. You had both the "fun" aspect of the hobby along with the research, realism, and trying to simulate combat with miniatures portrayed. Many gamers buy a lot of magazines and ;you could always find something of use for a current project or one that you were thinking of doing.

Going into the mid 80's you still had the *Courier*, which now had gone to doing "theme" years. Personally, the volumes with the Sudan, Mexican-American War, etc..., are still some of my favorite magazines of all time. *Military Modelling* became the repository for gaming in England, but it was well less than half the magazine. *Wargamer's Digest* evolved into *Military Digest*, which hastened its eventual end.



Historical gaming was at this time in limbo. Board war games, role-playing, and sci-fi games were growing and even I was involved pretty heavily in each of them. Magazines like *The Dragon*, *Nexus*, *Space Gamer*, etc..., were doing well and for a time were far

more popular than any historical wargaming magazine could be. However, when RPG began to slow down, gamers gave up on *Starfleet Battles*, and board games went into their period of stagnation, something had to turn things around.

It was at this point that *Miniature Wargames* arrived on the scene. By issue #5 it had become the leading miniatures

magazine and each issue was eagerly anticipated. Here was what wargamers dreamed about! Massive battles with well painted figures and terrain, articles about creating terrain, and lots of ads that started one thinking about hundreds of future projects.

Today, *Miniature Wargames* continues on, while the former editor moved on to create *Wargames Illustrated*. The *Courier* and *MWAN* were folded into *HMG*, plus there are now around a dozen other magazines plus online web zines. The gamer now has a wide variety of resources to go for battle reports, color pictures, and ideas.



If I have any complaint about today's magazines compared to those of yesteryear, it is that to me they have no "soul". By that I mean that the old magazines were a labor of love. Today's magazines are purely commercial ventures with an eye towards getting people into new projects and selling as many figs as possible. There's nothing wrong with that and I hope that as many figure manufacturers as possible are successful. But when you go through the magazines and read about fictional campaigns set against the backdrop of the 18th century, thoughts and ideas about gaming certain periods, and how to convert Airfix Robin Hood plastic figures into suitable forces for the Fenian revolt, you get the sense that there was a passion and comraderie in wargaming that seems to have been lost in today's hobby.

I still go through many of these old magazines today. The wealth of information on flags, uniforms, and orders of battle are not available online or in book form, so they are a valuable resource. It's also good to read some of the old battle reports and when you need energy to get on with a project it seems to breathe new life into you. Hopefully today's magazines will end up being just as cherished.

Modern Ground Ops: Is Gaming Possible? (cont.)

“What does my gaming group like to play?” The answer to this will go a long way to helping you determine which set of rules you might want to use. If your group wants realism and detail, then you need to be searching for sets of rules that will have a small time scale, weapon differentiation, the use of modern technology, and differences in training, command & control, and where real world tactics can be shown. If your group is into rolling dice and killing things, then you need to find a game system that is light on details and fast on action.



To better help you decide which system is best for you and/or your gaming group, let's go over a few simple truths about modern combat. Now I'm not going to get started on geopolitical discussions, causes, political will, etc., but I will merely focus on combat operations.

1) There are huge disparities in training which show themselves on the battlefield.

A platoon of U.S. Rangers, British infantry, 101st Airborne, or Royal Marines will easily defeat twice their number of terrorist or insurgents in a firefight. Why is this? The answer is training. Western forces are well trained, have good communication, are well led, and have ample firepower available to them. Many Western forces have combat experience (for which there is no substitute) and most importantly, they are taught to shoot and use their firepower to maximum advantage.



2) Command & Control is critical on the modern battlefield.

Again, this is what really separates the Western forces from the Third World armies, terrorists, etc., as platoons of infantry are continually aware of their situation. This makes close coordination of fire teams, indirect fire, tac-air, and other battlefield support options possible. These types of forces should be able to move faster, coordinate actions, bring in off table assets quicker, and basically be able to offset any numerical advantage an enemy might

have. If your rules don't have this, then you should look elsewhere.

3) Marksmanship-Key to battlefield success.

Watch any number of videos of Hamas fighting Fatah in the Gaza strip, Lebanon's constant civil wars, Serbia vs. Croatia, or any Third World firefights. Compare this to combat footage of U.S. Polish, or British units in Iraq. The primary thing that you notice is that non-Western forces use a ton of ammunition with extremely limited results. Western forces usually hit what they aim at with a lot less ammunition expended. This can be factored into any rules set by assigning Western forces much higher shooting skills.

4) Assets are a fact of life

Unlike WW2 or Korean War battles and even Vietnam to some extent, close air support and division/corps level artillery assets are available for use in tactical situations. During WW2 it was rare for close support aircraft to interfere at the forward edge of a battle. In today's world, however, UAVs, attack helicopters, and strike aircraft hover around the operational edge of the combat zone, ready to deploy firepower in support of troops at a moment's notice. The same goes for artillery and mortars. Rules for gaming this period need to reflect the ability to deploy assets quickly

and with amazing accuracy.

After reading up to this point I'm sure many gamers are thinking, “If you insert realism into a game at the tactical level then Western forces will win every time”. Well, that statement is not far off. While it is true that operationally, there is pretty much nothing on the planet that could stop a U.S. armored division with all of its assets from flattening three times its number, at the tactical level other possibilities open up.

At the time of this writing the Coalition had suffered a little over 500 combat deaths in Afghanistan while the Taliban's casualties were well over 10,000. In 2006 alone the Taliban lost over 3,000 fighters. Obviously, fighting Western forces diminishes your life expectancy greatly!

Yet, Coalition casualties in combat do happen. Roadside bombs, suicide bombers, friendly fire, cleverly laid ambushes, or massive firefights with a lot of lead flying around will produce casualties. So how do you come up with scenarios that would be of interest to your gaming group or should you even try?

Again, and I cannot stress this strongly



enough, it will greatly depend upon the makeup of your gaming group. If most of your players have the WH40K mentality or if the game is more important than realism, there's

really no problem here. Just throw out 50 insurgents in a couple of buildings, give the opposing side a platoon of 101st Airborne and let the lead fly! After a few turns there's ten guys left on each side and both sides call it a night.

If your group has a bunch of grognards, tread heads, or guys who like playing Advanced Squad Leader, a game like that above could lead to the death of the gamemaster! So is there a common ground? (cont. on next page)

Modern Ground Ops: Is Gaming Possible? (cont.)

Fortunately, there are plenty of rules available in the hobby for modern ground combat. Not only are there tactical rules, but platoon level and higher that will let you engage in ground operations of almost any size. These range from the complex to the very basic. There are so many kinds of rule sets with differing theories on modern combat that it would take another article to go over all of them. We'll take a brief look at a few and the kind of combat operations that they will let you game.

Surprisingly, the higher level that you go in modern combat, the easier it is to game. Rule sets such as Modern Spearhead or Cold War Commander allow gamers to use platoon basing, where one stand of infantry or one vehicle represent a platoon. In this way you can model entire battalions and regiments, plus you can easily integrate artillery and air support into the game. Details at the tactical level are abstracted, so much of what has been discussed is factored into the unit stats or charts. If you like masses of armored vehicles, choppers, and a lot of air and artillery support, then this is the scale for you.

For the gamer who is interested in low level tactical combat there are a number of choices in rules. The first would be the simple, or basic type of system, of which Battlefield Evolution is a good example. This rules system lets you use a lot of stuff on the board and is ideal for players who want to roll dice and kill things without getting caught up in the ROF of a M4 assault rifle firing suppressive fire against houses classed as mud/brick!

The next level up would be typi-

fied by Arc of Fire, which has been reviewed here in earlier issues. This is a medium complexity system with each player running a platoon. The good thing about this set is that there are a number of optional rules that can add another layer of complexity.

The level up after that would be Dogs of War, which takes skirmish combat into much more detail. Our group playtested this set a few times and while the grognards liked it, we had a number of people who got impatient and charged into the middle of firefights, which naturally killed off their commands (a sign of good rules). You may be able to get away with this in some sets of rules, but the more detailed the rules, the less chance you have of surviving that kind of thing. It's kind of like when FOW players first try other rules and find out that when they attempt to charge across the open to flank a Tiger tank they end up with a lot of burning Shermans!

Finally, we come to the upper end of the scale as represented by Phoenix Command and the board games Firefight, City Fight, and Firepower. These are designed for squad on squad games with different stats for each player. Highly detailed and not for the faint of heart. I once ran a firefight in Phoenix Command that took several hours to do 30 seconds in real time. I'm not sure I would want to do it again, but it was a fascinating gaming exercise.

By this time it has become obvious that there are a lot of options for doing modern ground combat in the gaming world. While the platoon level and above have fewer problems, the tactical level still has that nagging problem of realism.

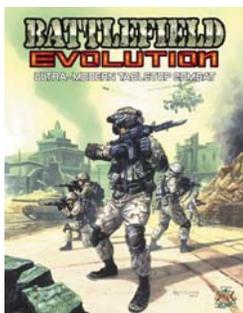
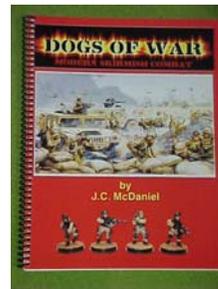
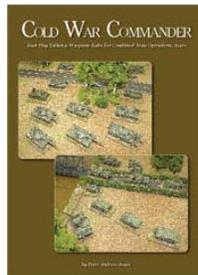
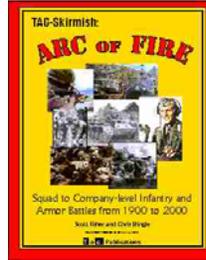
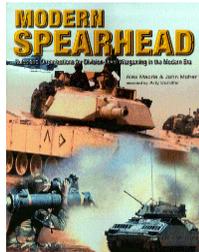
Now this might not be a factor as I've said before if your group just wants to blow things up for a few hours. However, for those who want to even add an ounce of realism, there are a lot of questions remaining about if this period lends itself well to gaming.

I think that the answer lies in scenario design, which unfortunately, most gamers are not very good at. How do you keep the Western forces from charging across the open? How can you prevent them from calling in massive airstrikes and taking out entire blocks? Other than pitting 500 Taliban against 50 Rangers, how can you balance out the game?

This is where the idea of "negative objectives" comes in. In the real world a U.S. officer doesn't say, "Take these three M1s, five M2s, and fifty guys, roll into this sector and demolish every building in sight. Also, try to keep our casualties to under 50%." Rather, most operations are well planned, have very specific objectives, and they go in with the idea of losing no one from their force. This kind of thinking opens up opportunities for the modern gamer.

For example, a scenario where a British force of an infantry platoon backed by some armored vehicles must clear a roadblock on a bridge, then search several houses for arms caches. To win they must accomplish, say, three out of five objectives. They lose if either they don't accomplish them, the operation results in more than five civilian deaths, or they lose more than two KIA from their own force. Right there you have forced the British player (s) to rein in their firepower advantage, be more cautious about crossing open ground, and to carefully choose a route to approach the target and then to egress the area. These are all things that real world commanders must consider in tactical operations.

Now this is definitely not for every gamer, but it does show how the period can be gamed with some degree of realism. If this seems like too much work, not enough fun, or you're worried that your group will get bored and open fire on anything that moves, then go back to 40K and zombies.



Spring 1813 Battle: Day One

Age of Eagles Battle Report

We decided to do a fictional Spring 1813 battle that became so popular it spun off into a second battle! The entire two day battle took almost four nights of gaming to resolve and was well worth it.

The situation is that a large Russian force has moved too far ahead of the main Allied army during the early part of Spring in 1813. The Emperor, not wanting to waste an opportunity, takes the forces that are immediately available and tries to cut off and destroy this part of the Allied army.

The French forces consisted of one infantry corps with three divisions, one infantry corps with two divisions, an infantry corps with one French and one Saxon division, plus a heavy cavalry and a light cavalry division.



Russian forces consisted of three infantry corps (with one only having a division of grenadiers), a large cavalry corps with heavy cavalry units, and a light cavalry corps with only a few units. Both sides had numerous artillery batteries.

The Russian plan was to not defend too far forward and let the French dictate where they would attack, then move forces to block the most immediate threat. The cavalry was kept in reserve, ready to go out and tie up the French cavalry when and if it appeared.

The French decided to put pressure all along the front, but to make the main attack toward the village on the Russian left. The French and Saxon commanders in that area were given orders to clear the village, then begin pressing towards the Russian rear and secure the only road exit. Fortunately for the Russian they had seen the potential of that threat and had posted a division in the village with another in support. With everything deployed, the two day game began.



The Battle Begins

It definitely looked like the main effort would be on the Russian left. A French corps under Van Damme, including a Saxon division, attacked the village held by the Russians. The initial attack ran into frontage problems and despite some suc-



cess, soon bogged down. The Russian corps commander in that area fed his reserves into that area, preventing a flanking movement and generating a series of melees that would go on for a few turns.

The remainder of the French army slowly advanced across the board, trying to position itself to take advantage of any opening in the Russian deployment. The Russians, for their part, slowly shifted their forces to meet the expected French attacks.

The Russian cavalry, seeing that a few French units were getting too far out in front of their supports, attacked.

Spring 1813 Battle: Day One (cont.) Age of Eagles Battle Report

The Russian heavy cavalry went in on the extreme right of the Russian side, crashing into a French cavalry division. This started a series of charges and counter charges that went on for several turns. The other Russian cavalry corps went up the center, charging and overrunning a French artillery battery and forcing the French onto the defensive. The big problem here is that they had gone too far and were now hammered relentlessly by French artillery and musketry.

The disorganized Russian cavalry was then hit by the Saxon cavalry which had moved across from its position on the French right. This, coupled with another French cavalry brigade's charge, shattered what was left of the Russian cavalry in the center. The French and Saxon

cavalry pursued, smashing into several Russian artillery batteries and decimating a Russian infantry brigade before it could form square. A gaping hole appeared in the center of the Russian line and if the French got initiative on the next turn the Russian army would have been cut in half.

Fortunately for the Russians, they got the initiative and a grenadier brigade filled in the gap and drove the French cavalry back. The Russians were now dangerously thin in the center and all of their reserves had been committed.

On the Russian left the desperate fight for the village and the large estate there continued on. The French were making gradual pro-

gress due to numbers and finally the Saxons came into line on the French left after a series of horrible movement rolls. The French had moved up their artillery and were now pounding the remaining defenders.



Conclusion of the First Day's Battle

The Russians on the far left finally gave way and withdrew from the village. The Russians had set up a second defensive line on the ridge overlooking the village and as units fell back they were thrown into this defensive position. The French and Saxons pursued them vigorously



and the flank was barely holding. The Russian heavy cavalry had achieved a stalemate, but had been decimated by the process. The Russians were now under attack all across the board and had no re-

serves. The French pressure on the Russian left and center was now at the point where the Russians were going to fall apart, so the game was called.

It was determined that the Russians had a disorganized withdrawal after nightfall that was closer to a rout. The French pursued, but because of darkness were unable to complete their victory, leading to a second day of battle.

Spring 1813 Battle: Day Two

AOE Battle Report

It was assumed that during the night, as the Russian army streamed back to friendly lines, that disorganization and chaos reigned supreme in the Russian army. While the French and Saxons camped for the night in the town at the edge of the board, the Russians were trying to reorganize themselves and get reinforcements to the front.

At dawn the next day, Napoleon resumed the attack. A French infantry corps streamed out of the town to find a Russian grenadier division holding the ridgeline overlooking the town, backed by three batteries of artillery and several brigades of light cavalry. Reports of fresh Russian units moving along the roads to assist them hastened the French deployment.



The French players decided to use one infantry corps plus some cavalry support to take the ridge while a second infantry corps moved to the center of the board to block the oncoming Russian reinforcements. Finally, the combined

French/Saxon corps would sweep around the French right and seize the bridges over the river.

The Russians for their part planned to hold the ridge and hurry along reinforcements as quickly as possible. If they could get to the village in the center before the French, they might be able to hold the ridge, then focus on driving the French and Saxons back to their starting point.

There was also the possibility of a Prussian corps coming in to support their Russian brethren, so speed was of the essence to the French players. They needed to attack with overwhelming force and then move quickly to deal with the Russian reinforcements before they could get good defensive positions.



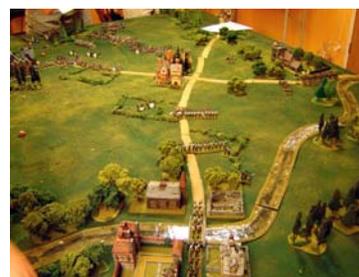
The French Attack the Ridge

Deploying directly from the line of march, the French infantry attacked the ridge. The first attacks were repulsed by heavy fire from the grenadiers and the supporting artillery. The Russian cavalry moved to block the extreme right flank where the French cavalry were seen to be moving towards.

The rest of the Russian army was experiencing traffic congestion and were

having problems moving up at the worst possible times. The rest of the French and Saxon forces poured out of the town and began to move towards their objectives.

A second French attack on the ridge



went in and with the weight of numbers it gained a foothold on the ridge. The Russians counterattacked, driving back a French brigade and for a moment the battle hung in the balance. The French then sent in a third attack and seized the crest of the ridge while the French cavalry engaged the Russians.

Spring 1813 Battle: Day Two (cont.)

AOE Battle Report

By now the grenadiers were worn down and the cavalry battles had not gone well. The Russians continued to resist, then a devastating series of volleys by the French forced a massive rout as the remaining Russians fled the ridge area, hotly pursued by the French.

The Russians and Prussians were busy trying to form a second defensive line when they were struck by the second French corps and the victorious French from the ridge. The battle swayed back and forth as both sides tried to find the best way to exploit the surrounding terrain.

On the far Russian left the Russian infantry corps and supporting cavalry were finally across and shook themselves into a huge line. Already half the day

was gone and the attack that was supposed to have gone in several hours before was now ready. The cavalry had several battles with the French and Saxon cavalry, but they were holding their own.

Unfortunately, it was too late. The French had seized the ridge and the center village. The Russians and Prussians in the center were trying to push out from their positions, but the rapid collapse of the ridge position and any flanking support left them with poor choices given the terrain in that area. Each attempted counterattack was met with equal force by the French.

There was one last push by the Russians and Prussians, who because of casualties, now had virtually no cavalry remaining and were outnumbered heavily



at certain points on the board. It was obvious at this point that the French and Saxons were going to break through somewhere and possibly along the entire front. The game, which had lasted four gaming nights, was finally called as a French victory.



Two Day Summary

With the success of this game we may do more like it. Our group enjoys this period and we have been very happy with the Age of Eagles rules for a long time now, especially since we helped playtest them!

Both sides definitely had their chances, but in the end the Russian die rolls for movement on both days was a contributing factor to their eventual de-

mise. The French had been very aggressive, which led to them being able to exploit the times when the Russians were trying to shift positions, but the French got there first.

Overall, it was a good gaming experience that we will have to repeat. Although large games such as this are not feasible for every group, they should be tried every so often.



Flagship: WW2 Pacific Battle

Rules Playtest

Much like air combat gaming, few gamers can resist the urge to do any kind of naval game. Whether it's ancient triremes, sailing ships, ACW ironclads, or WW2 carrier actions, gamers have no problem trying out naval rules!



face forces were intercepted by a U.S. surface task force, led by some Iowa class battleships. Each side had several battleships, a number of light and heavy cruisers, plus 10-15 destroyers per side.

A new member of our group had been working on the forthcoming GHQ naval rules called Flagship and thought that our group would be the ideal test for the system. Not wanting to turn down anyone who wants to put on a game, we quickly agreed and he set it up.

Flagship could be likened to a cross between Command at Sea and General Quarters. Not as complex as the former and not as simple as the latter. The rules are well laid out, there is good attention to detail, and some of the systems have novel concepts.

When you either buy or try out a new set of naval rules, the first thing that you look at is the combat system, namely how does firing the big guns work. Flagship has an interesting approach to naval gunfire. First, you see if the salvo that a ship fires "straddles" the target. There are a range of modifiers that affect the die roll, but if you roll the final number or lower, then you have successfully placed shells in the immediate vicinity of the target. Then you roll on a separate table to see how many of the shells from the salvo actually hit the target. A damage table is consulted and the ship logs are marked off with the results.

The system is much quicker in practice than it takes to describe here. It is definitely one of the more novel approaches to WW2 naval combat and most players were running their own charts in no time at all.

Our scenario was based on a hypothetical action directly after an actual historical battle. Once the Taffy carriers at Leyte had been sunk or driven off, the scenario assumes that the Japanese sur-

The Japanese side decided to pin one side of the U.S. force and hit the other with the main force led by the Yamato and most of the heavy cruisers. Well, as most things go with gamers, the plan didn't survive the first few turns! Both sides closed the range quickly, especially the destroyer squadrons.

The Japanese scored first blood when two 8" shells from the Tone hit the leading U.S. destroyer and sank it, causing the rest to turn tail and fall back towards their heavier consorts. A Japanese destroyer squadron fired a salvo of Long Lance torpedoes on the other flank, hit-



ting the Vincennes and Miami. At this time the Japanese forces were having their way with the U.S. ships and we were beginning to wonder if the scenario was balanced.

Well, no fear there. Two of the larger Japanese destroyers followed their torpedo hits to finish off the U.S. cruisers, but got caught in between the cruisers and a destroyer squadron. At that range it was impossible to miss and they were both left burning and adrift. The U.S. forces were now getting the range on several ships and scoring hits.

The battle now resembled more of barroom brawl than an organized naval

battle as the squadron formations and plans went out the window. The Japanese heavy cruisers pressed the attack and both sides became quickly intermingled. The Yamato and the Iowa class battleships began exchanging fire at long range while the smaller ships raced in between.

When play ended, the two large Japanese battlecruisers were on fire, plus there were several lighter ships in serious trouble. Almost all of the U.S. cruisers were in serious trouble with flooding, fires, and no functioning armament. The battle was called a draw as the heavy ships still weren't scratched and were now just coming into range where their shells could do some damage.

For having 10+ players the system held up well and everyone had a good time. As with most large games the action quickly degenerates into a series of smaller actions which slows the game down as the referee has to adjudicate all of them until the players become familiar with the system. I would definitely like to try the game with fewer players and trying to keep the ships in battle formations for as long as possible, which is what happened historically.

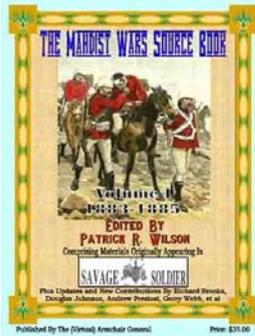
Overall, everyone had a positive outlook on the rules, especially since they were still in playtest mode. The combat system seemed to work well and after the first hour or so everyone was getting the hang of the charts. I think that some players may have reservations about the time scale (six minutes a turn) and the effectiveness or lack thereof of torpedoes, but overall, it was a positive experience.

I think that Flagship would be ideal for campaigns as it seems as if it can handle small and large scenarios fairly quickly. We are looking forward to its actual publication later this year.



Mahdist Wars Source Book

Eons ago, there was a great little magazine for colonial wargaming called *Savage & Soldier*. Several issues had excellent articles about events and forces in the Sudan campaigns. Much of this information was unavailable until The Virtual Armchair General published this incredible resource.



The Mahdist Wars Source Book was offered as a subscription only, one time deal for \$65. I was a little put off by the steep price, but now that I have it I am glad that I decided to invest in this. It is actually two books, with the first book focusing on the Early Sudan campaigns and the second on the final

campaigns of 1896-98.

Not only are there the old articles from *Savage & Soldier*, but a wealth of new material on some fascinating aspects of the Sudan campaigns. There are features on the Bashi-Bazouks, Graham's Eastern Sudan campaign, the Nile River expedition, the run to Khartoum by the steamers, the siege of Khartoum, and

more.

The back of each book also offers color uniform plates of the major forces, plus there is a very useful plate of Mahdist jibbas and flags. I think the most incredible thing about the books are the orders of battle for both campaigns,

Product Review

which are very well detailed, such as listing a Lt. Brody who led the Cairo cuirassier, a detail that I've never seen in my 25 years of gaming the Sudan. Not only that, but there is a chart showing which units participated in all of the battles. In fact, there is so much information that I will need to read it through several times to absorb it all.

My only complaint is that the back cover colors were a little washed out and don't look too good in bright light. Other than that there's not much to complain about.

If you are a Sudan gamer and didn't get this, shame on you! Hopefully TVAG will offer it a second time as this is an invaluable resource that is well worth the price tag.

Wargames Illustrated #233 & #234

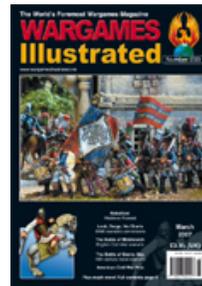
I just received my WI #233 and 234 (things are a little slower to reach Utah!) and I am glad that they are continuing the new format of full color everywhere and more large battle type scenes.

These two issues had two part features on the Battle of Marengo and The Forgotten Army (Burma) that were both well done articles. Both issues also continued the 2000 Years of Wargaming feature, which doesn't do much for me, but is well presented. There were also

several nice ACW battle scenes, a good look at the Look Sarge, No Charts WW2 rules, and more.

Certainly, the quality of the magazine has reached a point where I'm not sure it can go any further. Everything is well presented, nice color images, and a wide variety of topics.

I think the bigger question is should I



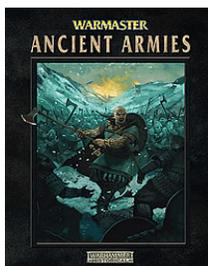
continue to spend \$8 for each issue, flip through it once, and actually use something out of it every sixth or seventh issue. It's not WI's fault, but the hobby is so large I think that you would have to do a 250 page magazine to cover everything anymore.

Anyway, two good issues that are well done and hopefully WI will keep this high standard.

Warmaster Ancient Armies

The first supplement to the popular Warmaster Ancient rules, Warmaster Ancient Armies packs a lot of info into a supplement. Besides the rule changes and errata, which are presented nicely with commentary on why they were changed, there are new armies.

They have also changed the format on how the ar-



mies are presented, so you don't only get a new army list, but a full page or more on the background and forces of that army. In this supplement there are lists for the Egyptian Old Kingdom, Sumerians, Arabs, Arthurians, Rus, and extending as far as Qin China! All in all, there are 20 new armies to build forces for.

There is also a wonderful campaign system included, which looks to

Product Review

be based off the popular WAB system. There are extra charts and tables to add leader skills, intrigue, and unit attributes. This campaign system looks to be very good for generating tabletop battles and our group is going to try it out with Biblical armies when we get the chance.

The Warmster system continues to grow and more gamers seem to be catching on, which is a good thing. This supplement is highly recommended.

Disposable Heroes Playtest Game

Scenario Replay

In our endless quest to find the perfect set of WW2 skirmish rules for our 25mm collections, we now turn to Disposable Heroes. We had previously tried Price of Glory for WW1 and liked it, so members of our group purchased the WW2 set and some of the supplements.



any Allied defenders and seize a road exit in a small town. The defenders are a mixed bag of British and French infantry with some AT and armor support.

The Germans had the following forces:

- Command Group: (4) command figures and two staff cars.
- (2) PZ II, (2) PZ-38, and (4) PZ IVD
- (3) SDKFZ 251 with (1) infantry squad and (2) LMGs
- Recon element of (2) PZ Is and (1) squad

The scenario was set in France 1940 and the Germans have broken through all along the front. A German armor heavy battle group is attempting to move past

The Allied force consisted of the following:

- (2) British infantry squads with (1) 2lb. AT gun and (1) Bren carrier
- (3) French infantry squads with (2) 25mm AT guns
- (3) R35 tanks

The Allied forces set up their defenses hidden from view, then the Germans were allowed to select several areas as a result of pre-game recon, so the Germans ended up knowing where about 50% of the Allied forces were at the start.

The Germans planned to pin the left and strike hard at the center-right, using the speed of the armor.



Opening Action

Things did not go well for the Germans from the start. An R-35 with some French infantry were holed up in a graveyard and opened fire on the advancing German armor. Another R-35 on the opposite flank opened fire as well, forcing the German infantry and halftracks to break for cover while the armor moved up to slug it out.

The Allies drew first blood when the

R-35 in the graveyard knocked out a PZ II, quickly followed by a burning PZ-38. The PZ Is moved out to work around the flank and were fired on by a hidden R-35 in a tree line. After several turns the Germans had lost four tanks, so the PZ IVs were unleashed to break the logjam and get the



attack rolling again.

Meanwhile, the German infantry in a dismantled capacity were clearing out the Allied infantry. One of the R-35s was knocked out, followed by a French AT gun and the second R-35 as well. The German infantry advanced and things looked better.

Disposable Heroes Playtest Game (cont.)

Scenario Replay

The big problem is that the R-35 in the graveyard would not go away, despite being hit several times! It knocked out a PZ IV, then the French 25mm AT gun on that same side knocked out the second PZIV. Clearly that flank was secured for the French as all of the German armor was burning furiously!



tracks, and two squads. Most of the Allied infantry was dead or running away and their forces were seriously depleted.

Just then the British 2lb. AT gun comes out of nowhere and immobilizes a PZ

IV. Then the remaining British infantry squad ambushes the German infantry, causing heavy casualties. The Germans, in a last ditch effort to save the game, commit the last two PZ IVs to run around

the flank and break through.

Just one problem, though. The R-35 from the graveyard that had heroically defended the entire Allied right flank had reversed itself out of the graveyard and had moved to the lower slope of a hill, daring anyone to come over the crest. The Germans, with few options remaining, decided to charge in and blow through that side of the defenses.

The R-35 knocked out one of the PZ IVs and the remaining 25mm AT gun got the other one. With all of their armor on fire and the infantry force severely depleted, the Germans decided to withdraw. Although the Allied force had suffered 50% casualties, they had held the board.

The remaining German forces pushed on, hoping to make a breakthrough to the town and still hoping to win the game. They still had three PZ IVs, two half-



Battle Summary and Rules Thoughts

We really liked the armor combat system in these rules and with the early war tanks, it is possible to have close range tank battles, unlike in '44 or '45 where almost any hit could be fatal.

The key to the entire game was the French R35 in the graveyard which defied all at-



tempts to knock it out. It kept coming back and knocking out German armor as fast as they appeared!

Overall, this was a fun

game and this period offers some unusual challenges and weapons. The group had a very favorable impression of the Disposable Heroes rules and we are going to try them out for Late War next time. We did see, however, that the increased lethality of WW2 weapons means that each player should get at least a platoon of infantry as individual squads are fragile. The rules, however, are well worth the money spent.



WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meets every other Friday night in Salt Lake City, Utah. We currently play Age of Eagles, Age of Reason, Age of Discovery, Flames of War, Blitzkrieg Commander, Mustangs, Phantoms, Battles For Empire, Sword and Flame, plus too many others!

Comments to the editor:
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**Warning Order is the official
publication of WFHGS.**

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Lately on TMP there have been several threads about online magazines such as this and print wargame magazines. Surprisingly, the hobby print magazines are still going strong with quite a few choices, which is the exact opposite of what is happening in the newspaper/magazine industry where sagging sales are creating layoffs and lower ad revenues. My only guess is that gamers are a different breed of folk who like to have something in their hands. While many of the pictures are incredible, you certainly aren't reading these magazines for the historical content of the articles, which is usually quite poor. Many of the online magazines are featuring scenarios, battle reports, and more, plus they're free and seem to be improving all the time. They are not quite up to the standard of the print magazines and perhaps they will never get there. They do, however, seem to be finding a niche in the wargaming community. It could be that some gamers like that "common man" type theme that is prevalent in most of the online content that reminds them of MWAN in its heyday. I doubt that you will see the numerous ads cross over to the online versions and this no doubt is still fueling the desire for the print magazines. Although I own several hundred wargame magazines, I myself find that I am buying fewer and fewer of them. Most of them have topics that I am not interested in, I can find their ads and products online, plus once you've seen Waterloo in 15mm done 50 times over the last 20 years it kind of loses its appeal. It will be interesting to see where this facet of the hobby goes in the future, especially on the historical side.

The 300

With the imminent release of the DVD, I thought I would write a review of "300", which is Frank Miller's retelling of the Battle of Thermopylae. Shot in the "Sin City" style where background colors are accentuated and the actors are portrayed in sepia/ brown shading, the film crosses the genres of historical and action movies.

When I first saw the trailer for the film I was greatly impressed by the cinematic style and the subject, but was less than thrilled with the "Lord of the Rings refugees" that were in the clips. Suffice to say, those parts take up less than a few minutes of the entire film.

Now there have been numerous arguments on almost every forum known to mankind about the historical accuracy of



the movie, so I won't go into a blow by blow account of that. I will say that you do get to see the Oracle consulted, the meeting with the allies, the Persian Immortals, a brief history of Spartan children turned into warriors, and a good look at the Spartan political system. You can argue how those things were presented, but the attempt was at least made to put them into the movie.

But we're here for the action and fortunately, there's a lot of it. Superb camera work captures the battle scenes in the movie that are show the brutality of combat in that era. Heads, legs, and arms are lopped off in alarming numbers, but the fighting scenes work well for the movie.

Movie Review

If you're going to this film for the historical accuracy, then you've pretty much wasted your money. I would recommend Last Stand of the 300 from The History Channel as a much better alternative. Yes, there are Spartans and Persians in this movie, but the accuracy part kind of diverges from there.

What you do get, however, is a well done action movie. The scenes of the Spartans marching off to war, the overviews of the battlefield, and the close ups are remarkably well done. Would I have liked to have seen a historically accurate movie about this battle? Yes, of course. However, Hollywood isn't interested in that and those kinds of movies are a hard sell to the studios, so 300 is probably the best that you're going to get.

So buy it when it comes out on DVD or rent a copy. It is certainly worth a viewing, if just for the style that the movie was made in.