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WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

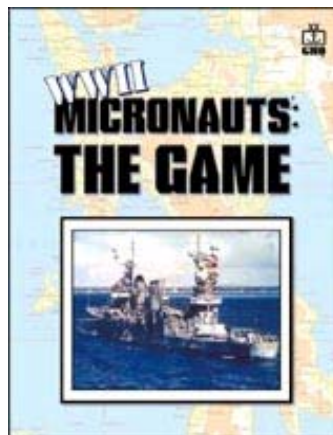
Warning Order

Micronauts: The Game WW2

WW2 naval gaming has been around a long time and is one of those periods that doesn't get the "rock star" treatment that Ancients and Napoleonic does. There are all kinds of rules sets, figures and models in several scales, and it has the advantage that there must be over 10,000 books available on the subject. The period is exciting and challenging, featuring famous battles such as Leyte Gulf, Midway, Coral Sea, The Slot at Guadalcanal, and more. So why hasn't this period emerged in the upper tier of wargaming?

Mainly this has been due to rules. Either they are too simple, too complex, or gamers can't agree on the historical accuracy in the rules regarding gunnery, armor, speed, and more of the ships portrayed in this period of naval warfare.

Micronauts The Game: WW2 attempts to bridge these gaps by providing a set of rules that isn't rolling a handful of D6s with each 6 scored sinking a ship, but not to the level of detail seen in Seekrieg V. The rules are for the WW2 naval gamer that wants to run a historical scenario in a club setting on a gaming



night, but have a level of detail where the ships, weapons, and tactics aren't all the same as in many games.

The rules book runs 130 pages, of which only 48 pages are the rules themselves. Since a large chunk of this involves aircraft, submarines, mines, etc., the actual rules for moving and firing your ships is quite manageable. Most gamers should be able to get through the first 20 or so pages and be able to run a surface action in no time at all. The rules are printed on glossy paper with thick card covers and they contain numerous pictures, illustrations, and charts all in color. For those of you who like rulebooks such as Flames of War or Warhammer Ancient Battles, this

set of rules compares favorably in terms of production, layout, and quality.

The big plus in the rules are the inclusion of scenarios and campaigns. This covers the middle part of the rule book and takes up some 20 pages. You get scenarios for Midway, Coral Sea, Java Sea, Denmark Strait, and more. The campaign is based on Operation Pedestal to get a convoy through to Malta. All of the scenarios and the campaign are well laid out, have complete orders of battle, along with special rules and victory conditions. There is also a very good scenario generation system that could be used with many other sets of rules.

The final part of the book is taken up by around 50 pages of aircraft and ship data, including color ship damage/info charts for the major combatants. You get German, Italian, British, Japanese, and United States forces that cover everything from destroyers to auxiliaries to merchant ships. With this list you can pretty much play out most of the more notable surface engagements or campaigns during WW2. (cont. on page 6)

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Special points of interest:

- Several boardgame and figure reviews.
- Warmaster Ancients battle report.
- Blitzkrieg Commander battle report.
- Warpaint battle report.
- Regular features Blast from the Past and Memoirs....

Warmaster Ancients: Assyrians vs. Egyptians

Battle Report

Warmaster Ancients has quickly turned into one of our favorite games. The combination of command & control, fluid gameplay, and the fact that it looks great on the tabletop in 10mm is convincing gamers in our group to paint more armies. As we still only have Assyrians and Egyptians we set up another battle in the Ancient Middle East.

Both sides had around 1500 points, with the Egyptians having an almost 3:2 edge in units. This is due to the Egyptian units being unarmored with light chariots and mercenaries which creates an army list of cheap units. The Assyrians had four heavy chariots and several cavalry units backed by good armored infantry. Both sides had three commanders, which in hindsight was probably not enough for

as many units were deployed on the tabletop.

Both sides deployed cavalry and chariots on their wings with the infantry, archers, and skirmishers in the center. The Egyptians, having a lot more units were able to deploy some extra archers and skirmishers on the flanks as well.

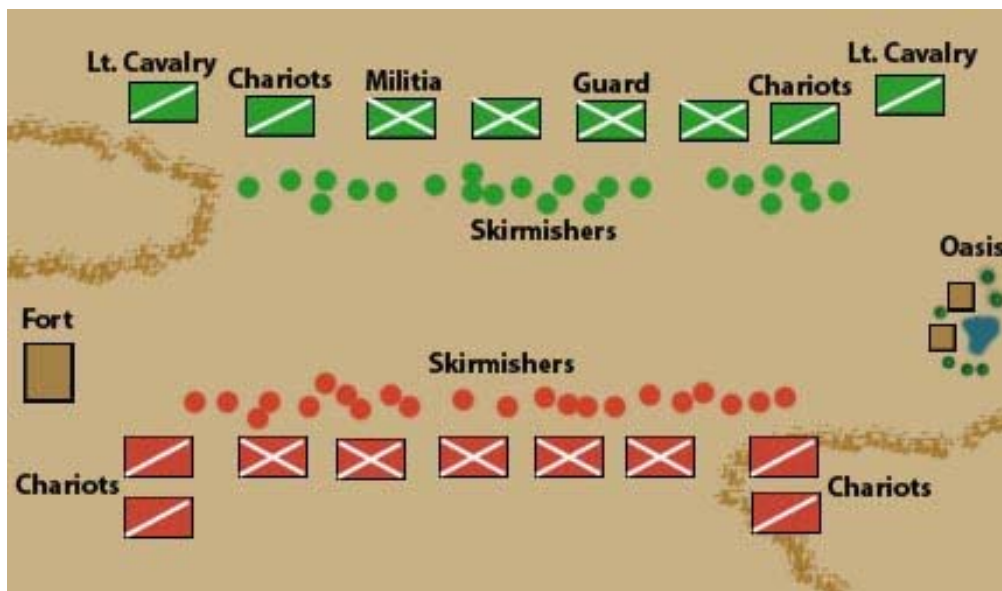
The Egyptians hoped to hold on one flank and in the center while overwhelming the right flank with chariots. The



Assyrians were determined to hold both flanks and let their infantry be the decisive edge in the center of the board.

With the deployment finished we went over the rules one more time to make sure everyone was on the same page and the game began.

For once the Egyptians got a good series of command rolls and were able to move out from their deployment area fairly quickly. The Assyrians tried to match the Egyptian movements, but poor command rolls slowed their forward deployment.



Opening Moves

The action started on the Egyptian left flank where some chariots, archers, and infantry ran into a unit of Assyrian heavy chariots and some militia infantry. After several indecisive combats the Egyptians triumphed and things were looking pretty good on that side of the board!

In the center both sides were having command roll problems which meant a slow, grinding deployment towards the

enemy. The Egyptian right flank got going in fits and starts, but the Assyrians were unable to capitalize on any of these problems as they were having numerous command die roll issues as well.

The Assyrians were able to transfer troops over to their threatened

right flank and contain the Egyptians. After several more exchanges of archery, some skirmish combat, and a few charges

by the Egyptian light chariots, both sides were too beat up to continue further offensive operations. If the battle was going to be won by either side it would be in the center or the other flank.



Warmaster Ancients

The Assyrians next tried the center, where another unit of heavy chariots crashed into a brigade of Egyptian infantry. This was supposed to be a coordinated attack with the armored Assyrian infantry, but it fell behind and then became embroiled in a series of individual combats.

The Egyptians did better than they thought, surviving a series of attacks and although bloodied, they still held the center. More archer units moved up and the left-center became a no man's land where anything that ventured out into it from either side was met by a hail of arrows! The Egyptians meanwhile, launched an attack on the Assyrian left with chariots. Although initially successful, they too met with some disastrous die rolls in

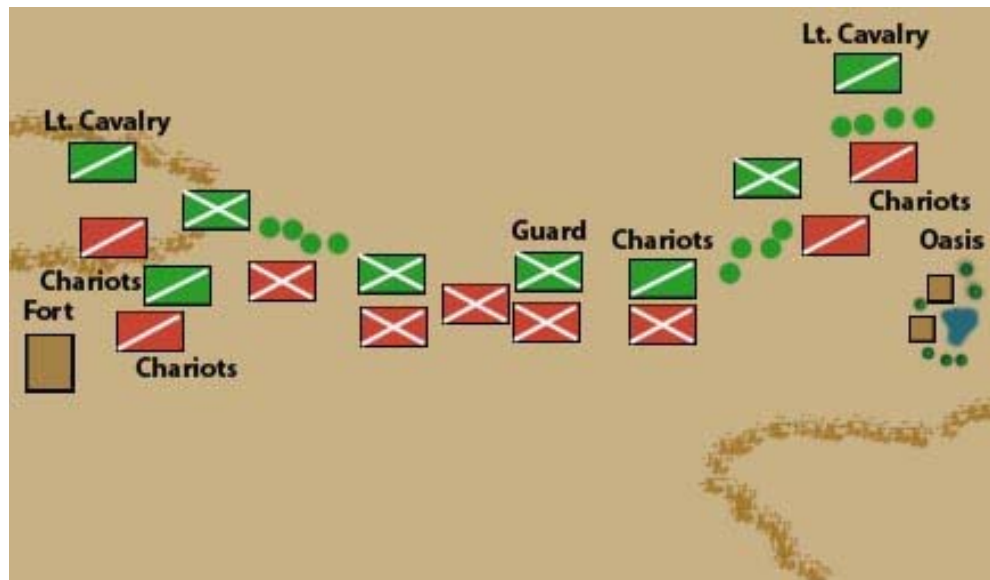
combat and were forced back.

By this time both sides were nearing exhaustion and close to their army's breaking point. There were few units that were still fresh and these finally made their way to the front lines. The Assyrians gathered their heavy infantry and guard units in the center, then moved forward. The Egyptians countered with a mercenary brigade and the remaining fresh infantry units. Although there was still ongoing combat on the flanks, the main event was definitely in the center.

The Assyrians attacked and drove the Egyptians back onto their supports. This was followed by a see-saw affair that saw



both sides get to within one unit of their break point. Finally, another bad series of combat rolls by the Egyptians and this pushed the Egyptian army past the break point and they were forced to withdraw.



Summary

Another outstanding game of Warmaster! Every time we've played this game it has literally come down to the last turn with one army or the other needing to break one more enemy unit. The Egyptians definitely have the advantage in numbers while the Assyrians have a decisive advantage in staying power, making this a classic "quantity vs. quality" matchup.

Again, it's hard to fault either battle plan as both were well thought out, but the ever changing situation with the command system meant that the plans were discarded by turn 3! After that it was trying to get fresh units to plug in holes and minimize

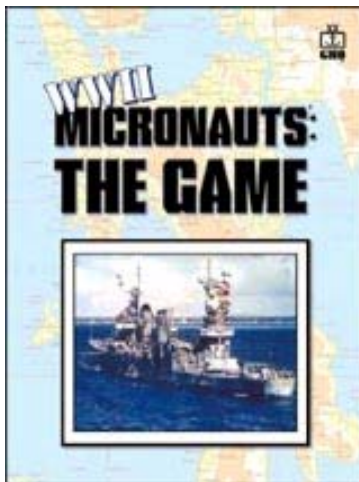


losses wherever possible.

A fun game that not only plays great, but the large numbers of troops in Biblical armies looks fantastic on the tabletop and 10mm is the ideal scale for this game. On to Seleucids and Romans next time!

Interview With Russ Jensen-Micronauts The Game WW2

Russ Jensen, one of the authors of the new *Micronauts The Game: WW2* naval rules was kind enough to answer some questions about the rules and naval gaming in general. While naval gaming in general is popular, releases of new rules for these eras are few and far between, so when a new set comes out it's only fitting that some attention be paid to it! In this interview Russ explains why he loves this period, what makes his rules different from what has come before, and what it took to get these rules published.



grew out of little kids books and shows. As in the previous answer I have always had ship models to game with in my collection. To me, the best unit to game with is a division of IJN heavy cruisers, although a brigade of T-34's comes in a very close second.

3) Why did you think that the hobby needed another set of WW2 naval rules?

I had played GQ1 & 2, for many years, and thought is a little too simple for our taste. Having tried out Command at Sea and Seekreig, I thought they were way too complex to complete a game in one night. So I took the "Goldilocks" approach to find a set of rules that were "just right". I bounced ideas off of our gaming group (They guys who met at Eagle & Empire Game Shop, in Alexandria, VA) of making up our own set of rules. John Drye said he had dabbled a bit with the idea years ago, and would dig up his notes on the project

for a discussion. It just blossomed from there.

4) There's been a lot of debate about combat systems for WW2 naval gaming. What is so different about your set of rules?

There are three major areas that in my mind make MNTG: WW2 stand out. Firstly I believe that the one true piece of genius in MNTG: WW2 is the Gunnery Straddle Chart. As it is a combination of; to hit, armor penetration, range, and hull or deck hit, all rolled into one smooth working table. Second would be the integration of air operations with surface combat. Rules I have played in the past have dealt with surface action as the main focus of combat, with leaving the air combat as somewhat of a secondary action without much detail, or way too much detail as to almost overwhelm the average wargamer (I consider myself a very average wargamer). Vince Stella, a former Army AH-64 pilot, helped out immensely with the air rules and the aircraft charts and tables. Thirdly, would be the command level MNTG: WW2 is played at. We don't ask the players to be the gunnery officer, torpedo officer or the ships helmsman.

1) How did you get started in the hobby?

When I was 12 years old. After playing many, many games of Risk and Stratego with a close friend of mine, we moved on to gaming with the 1/72 scale tank and 1/600 to 1/700 scale ship models we had been collecting. One day we had a large set up in my friends front yard, using about 30 to 40 tanks, when a guy drives slowly by and later stopped to talked to us (many parents would be scared to death at this these days) to tell us about war games, using rules and dice. I have been hooked ever since.

2) Has naval gaming always been a big part of your hobby?

The first military history book I chose to read was JFK's PT-109 when I was about 8 years old and my dad was in the Navy. I also remember watching the old Victory at Sea and World at War re-runs on TV which kept me riveted and my interest piqued. So I have had an interest of naval warfare back as far as when I

Gunnery Straddle Table

		Range (kyds)																
Category	Caliber	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	
Very Light	3-3.5"	20	19	17	14	11	7	1/4	1/2	1/-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	4-4.5"	20	19	18	17	14	11	7	1/4	1/2	1/-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	4.7-5.25"	20	19	18	17	15	12	9	1/5	1/2	1/-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Light	5.5-5.9"	20	19	18	17	15	13	10	6	1-3	1/-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	5.9-6.5"	20	20	19	18	16	14	11	7	1/4	1/2	1/-	-	-	-	-	-	
Medium	7-8"	20	20	19	18	17	16	14	11	7	1/4	1/2	1/-	-	-	-	-	
	9-10"	20	20	20	19	18	17	15	12	8	5	1/3	1/2	1/-	-	-	-	
	11-12"	[1]	20	20	19	18	17	15	12	9	6	1/3	1/2	1/-	-	-	-	
Heavy	13-14"	[2]	[1]	20	19	18	17	16	14	11	8	1/4	1/2	1/-	-	-	-	
	15"	[2]	[1]	20	20	19	18	17	15	12	9	6	1/3	1/2	1/-	-	-	
	16"	[2]	[1]	20	20	19	18	17	16	14	11	7	1/4	1/2	1/-	-	-	
	18"	[2]	[2]	[1]	20	20	19	18	17	16	14	10	6	1/4	1/2	1/-	-	

FINAL

Armor penetrated:



1/4: Deck Hit/Belt Hit

One of the many charts and tables used in the rules. Most of the charts and ship records are done in color and represent great value for the price of the rules.

Interview With Russ Jensen-Micronauts The Game WW2 (cont.)



We want the players to be the unit commander, be it a division, squadron, flotilla, or overall task force commander.

5) Not many gamers know the production timeline of a set of rules. Could you describe how the rules were written, playtested, and how long it took for them to be published?

The process started in earnest about 8 years ago. We had a pretty good handle with the basic rules and needed to expand the rules further, when the idea came to mind about actually publishing the rules when we were done. I had heard nightmare stories from folks doing it on their own. Then, I noticed that GHQ, had put out their own rules to use with their MicroArmor line of figs, and I thought, why not ask GHQ if they would be interested in publishing a set of rules for use for their MicroNauts line of 1/2400 scale ships. Play-testing has been quite extensive with John and I getting together about once a month over this time and putting many games at conventions. About the last three years we worked pretty hard on putting on the finishing touches and fleshing out the rules to make them complete, and with Jim Moffit of GHQ cracking the whip and yelling "hurry up!".

6) Do you have any opinion on which scale of miniatures is best for WW2 naval combat?

Long before ever starting MNTG: WW2, I collected a number of different scales of ships, 1/700, 1/1200, 1/2400, 1/3000, 1/4800 before finally settling on 1/2400. The Skytrex line of 1/3000 ships seemed more comprehensive in including all the major classes and types, but the detail level of the models left a lot to be desired. Conversely, the look of the GHQ and CinC models are very eye pleasing, especially to those who really like to paint details. However with that said, my trigger finger is getting very itchy towards 1/6000 scale.

7) Your set of rules are not as complex as Seekrieg or Harpoon 4, but they're not exactly for beginners, either. Was this taken into account and what is your opinion on the simple vs. complex rules debate going on in the hobby?



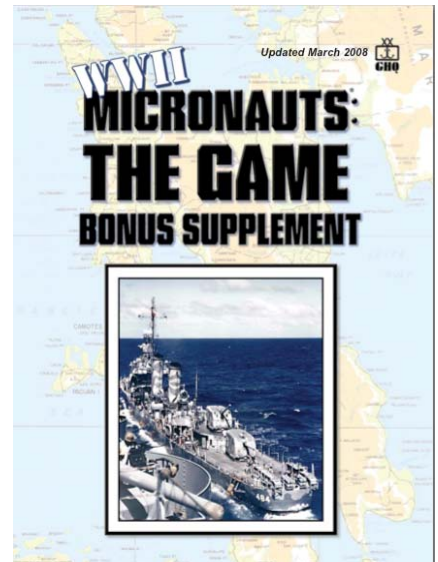
Our goal was a "middle of the road", set of rules. We had played GQ1 & 2, for many years, as well as trying out Seekrieg and Command at Sea, and decided that something was needed between these pillars of naval gaming. John Drye and I both feel we have accomplished our goal with MNTG:WW2.

8) Are there any other periods that you would like to try to write a set of rules for?

Oh yes! I would love to do WW1, Pre-Dreadnought era, the late 1800's navies, and Ironclads naval rules. WW2 Air combat rules also are also on my radar screen, but are a very distant target.

9) What does the future hold for your set of rules?

Well, at present we are working on a second supplement for MNTG: WW2. We are also in the research phase of working up a set of rules for the Great War (a period I actually like the most).



With the backing of GHQ this rules set should be well supported. There is already an 80 page supplement with additional ship charts and a bonus scenario. The combat tables (in full color) are already available as a separate download. Russ assured me that they are already working on additional supplements, so there should be no worries that this will end up as an unfinished project.

Our group has played this set of rules a couple of times and it has received favorable reviews from many long time WW2 naval gamers.



Recent game at our club with a Japanese resupply effort to Guadalcanal being intercepted by a USN force.

Sot the rules are well done, there are plenty of scenarios, a campaign, scenario generation system, and tons of ship data that every naval game loves. This leads to the big question, "How do the rules play?"

MNTG: WW2 uses a scale of 1 inch=1000 yards/meters and 1 tactical turn = 6 minutes. The sequence of play is pretty straightforward with an Initiative Phase, Damage Control Phase, Detection Phase, Torpedo Impact Phase, Tactical Movement Phase, Gunnery Combat Phase, Torpedo Launch Phase, and ends with Air Combat. While this sounds like a lot of different phases in reality the game goes by pretty fast.

As many of you who are regular readers of this publication know by now, I am big on command and control. MNTG: WW2 attempts to portray this by having each force broken up into a number of formations and a Cohesion Table, which tries to at least mimic the realities of the time. There are no "every ship for themselves" type of games here that are common in naval gaming. Rather, ships attempt to stay in some type of formation until contact and the shells start flying.

If you've played several sets of naval rules there is nothing new under the sun in terms of movement or detection, so we won't spend a lot of time on this part of the rules. Rather, I would like to focus on everyone's favorite WW2 naval gam-

ing subject and that is how the guns shoot!

MNTG: WW2 uses a unique system for gunnery combat. Basically, each player decides which ships are firing and their targets. Next, each player determines the range and gun caliber for the ship or ships that are firing. You then roll on the Gunnery Straddle Table which after modifiers determines if you've straddled the target. If you have, then you proceed to the Salvo Phase. This determines how many shells

actually hit the target, which is usually 1 or 2 in most cases. You then roll on the Hit Location tables followed by determining the damage that the salvo caused.

In practice this goes pretty fast and once gamers become accustomed to it you can process large surface actions fairly quickly. If you didn't straddle the target, then there's no need to proceed further down the list! This makes the game play fast, is pretty realistic, and a novel approach to gunnery combat.

Torpedoes are handled much the same way and there are no complex charts, geometry, formulas, or any other strange devices I've seen used in other rules.

Here the authors figure that the ships crews knew how to aim the torpedoes and you just need to resolve the action. You simply check the range, see if the target was straddled, roll on the Torpedo Salvo table for the number of hits, then hit location, and finally determine the damage. Again, this is simple, fast, and effective.

There is also an extensive air combat system in MNTG: WW2 that can cover CAP actions, carrier attacks, or raids on convoys. Although I have not

yet tried an air action (only surface actions in the games I've been involved with) the air system seems as if it would easily handle large actions as at Midway.

Finally, for those of you who were wondering, yes there are sections on night fighting, ASW, mines, MTBs, and more. If you can think of a type of naval action that occurred in WW2 then there are rules that can simulate it. The good thing is that the systems are simple and effective. I recently watched our group play a night action in The Slot off of Guadalcanal that ended up being a pretty good fight. Most night actions take a long time, there's problems with detection, rules need to be looked up, etc., but not here. Even with several new players the game went quickly and was resolved in just under three hours.

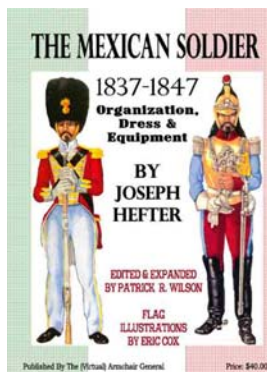
Overall, I think that this is a good set of rules that has something for everyone. If you like carrier battles, then these rules can handle it. You want to play a destroyer action off of Guadalcanal it's all here. I particularly liked the gunnery system as it was pretty novel and seems to work well, at least in the two games I've been involved in. The rules are well done, are reasonably priced, and are worth the money. There is already a free supplement out on the GHQ site with all of the tables, charts, errata, and a scenario with more to come. The authors are working on supplements even as I write this, so hopefully more good stuff is to follow.



1/2400 GHQ USN ships painted by Russ Jensen.

Produced by The Virtual Armchair General, The Mexican Soldier is a must have for anyone interested in the Mexican – American War. If you bought the two volume Mahdist Wars Source Book last year, then you will know what to expect. The book is in an 8 x 11 format with stiff card covers and although not very thick, it contains a lot of useful information.

Originally published as *El Soldado Mexicano, 1837-1847*, by Joseph Hefter, this book has been long sought after by historians and gamers who are interested in the period. Up until this version was published you could expect to see this item go for a good sum on



Ebay. All other works that have come after use this as a primary source and after reading it I can see why.

The book is not just a reprint, but additional artwork has been added along with several former black and white illustrations that have now been colored according to the uniform information in the text.

There are also several pages of flags and standards carried by the units of the Mexican Army. There are 20+ plates of uniforms and flags that serve as a definitive painting guide for anyone wishing to get into this period.

The other amazing thing is that there

are complete orders of battle for the Mexican Army for all of the major battles and much more information on uniforms, equipment, tactics, and more. Apparently, (I've never seen the original) the information has been re-organized into sections and all of the Spanish captions have been translated into English,

I can't say enough about this book and for \$40 it is more than worth it. Information for this period has always been hard to come by and this book fills a significant gap in where previously there was only the Osprey and *FreiKorps* books along with snippets of uniform information here and there. TVAG has done a remarkable job with this reprint and I hope it does well so that further projects can go forward.

Recent Magazines, E-zines, and more...

The last several issues of *Wargames Illustrated* (243,244,245) have at least renewed my faith that big wargames aren't dead yet. There were some truly spectacular pictures in several of the latest issues and the variety and quality of the images was particularly good. I know that I've given WI grief from time to time, but the last few issues and the ongoing WECW 30YW variant have been some of their best.

Wargames Journal is now up to #9 and they do offer them again for free via their web site. The magazine is available as a pdf download and contains something for everyone. There are articles about basing, skirmish games, big games, reviews, lost of ads, and more. The color pictures are pretty good and for free it can't be beat!

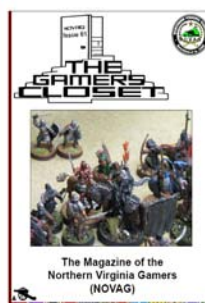
Another good free online publication



is The Gamer's Closet put out by the NOVAG group. Although many of the ads are for local stores and cons, there is a lot of good info, reviews, scenarios, and more in each issue. You can

download issues at their web site:

<http://www.novag.org/newsletter.html>



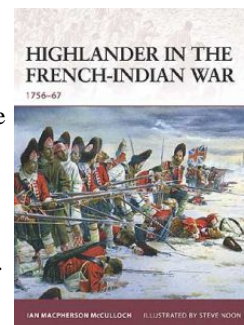
I think a huge problem facing the magazines in the wargaming hobby are the ever increasing prices. With some magazines now going over \$10 per issue here in the U.S. I think that gamers are going to start having second thoughts about the value of these magazines. To their credit the various magazines have improved tremendously in presentation, especially the color pictures and layout. However, having said that I am still astounded by the lack of interesting articles and how-to's that are in the magazines. In the last few issues of *Wargames Illustrated* for example, there

was another Gettysburg series of articles. That makes about 100+ Gettysburg features in the collection of magazines that I own. It would be nice to see something else besides Gettysburg, Waterloo, and D-Day.

The online publications continue to improve and although not as good as their glossy, published counterparts, they are gaining in popularity.

The one bad problem is that if you want to print them it could cost you a small fortune, but being online you can save them for later access.

Finally, I got one of the latest Ospreys on the Highlanders in North America. While the information in it was very helpful, especially since I'm painting units for the F&IW, the art was not as good as the old Ospreys. Still, these are an invaluable resource for figure painting and their collections continue to build.



Race to the Farm!

This Very Ground Battle Report

Several of us in the club have slowly been adding to our French & Indian War collections since the last time that we tried this period. We've added a unit of British light infantry, some more Courier du Bois, and a lot more Indians. We needed a second game put on for a club night when we realized that we had too many players for the original game that was scheduled. Quickly coming up with a scenario we set the board up, chose sides, and began play!

We choose to try This Very Ground again for the rules even though a few of us had some concerns about the melee and morale systems. We really liked the firing system as that presented each gamer with some difficult decisions throughout the game. We also liked the advantages that formed units get over unformed units such as Indians and other light infantry operating in a skirmish role.

The scenario featured a small British light infantry unit holding a farm along the main forces' march route. The game begins with the light infantry unit deployed around the farm and surroundings with the rest of the British force marching along the road towards the farm. There was one unit of 24 Highlanders, a unit of 20 regulars, a unit of 6 grenadiers, and a unit of 10 rangers. The British objective was to link up with the light infantry, secure the farm, and defeat any enemy forces in the area.

The French & Indian forces consisted of a unit of 12 French Marines, 20 Courier du Bois, and 60 Indians. 40 Indians were placed on one side with the remaining French units on the other side. While there wasn't a definite plan on the French side, we decided to go with a "wait and see" attitude to see where the main British forces deployed.

After a brief refresher on the rules (our group plays 20 periods with 20+ rules sets!) the game got started with the British taking the first initiative and trying to get to the farm house with all possible speed.



While the British pushed on to the farm, the French and their Indian allies were trying to make it to the center of the board as fast as possible. Two Indian units drove straight for the farm while the rest positioned themselves to begin sniping at the British columns. The British pressed on in columns at double time, making the trip up the road very quickly and getting into position faster than the French and Indians expected.

The action began when the advancing Indians fired on the light infantry in the farmhouse. This started a several turn firefight that produced few casualties, mainly because the light infantry couldn't hit a thing (2 hits with 30 shots over several turns!). A unit of Courier du Bois moved up to support the Indians while another Indian unit moved to try to flank the farm area.

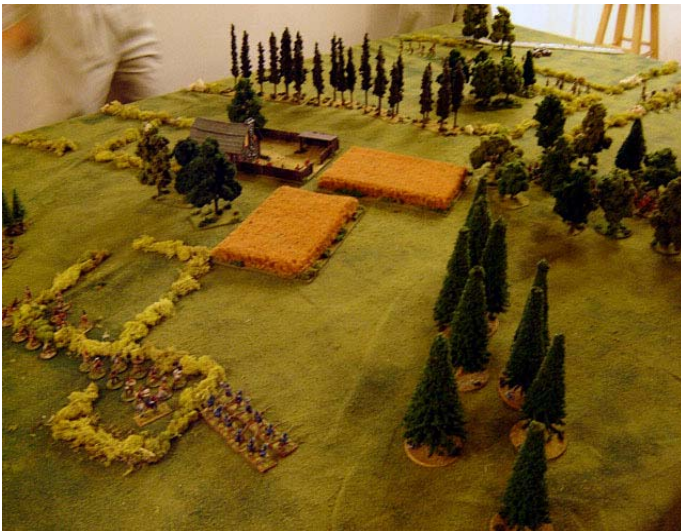
The British Highlanders went front to flank just as the Indians on that side launched their first attack, catching them in the open and driving them back with casualties. The grenadiers had deployed ahead of the regulars and were positioned at the road junction where they too drove off an Indian attack.

After the first few turns the action was just heating up. Both sides had fully deployed and were in range of the enemy. Now it was just a question of staying power.



Race to the Farm!

This Very Ground Battle Report (cont.)



The British regulars now moved up and formed line to assist the Highlanders. This proved deadly for the Indians on that side of the battlefield, but it proved to be a blessing for the French and Indians on the other side as they could now advance against little opposition. A unit of British Indians attempted to flank the unit of French Marines and after causing a few hits they were crushed by a full volley from the Marines. The Marines, however, came under the withering fire of the British Rangers who had already beaten back the advance of a unit of Courier du Bois.

On the opposite flank the Indians continued to try to advance against overwhelming British firepower. Each time they moved forward they were driven back and finally the British regulars and grenadiers advanced against the Indians to finish them off. While the British were very effective on this side, they were unable to influence events around the farm.

The light infantry in the farm was now at 50% casualties and outnumbered 4:1 in the farm area. After a few more rounds of firing they were down to 20% effectives and the victorious Courier du Bois surged into the farm area. Although it had taken several turns to drive the light infantry out of the farm, the attackers had only suffered three casualties, so they were in good shape to continue the fight.

The British now realized how bad

things were around the farm area and the Highlanders, who were already being pressured from the flank, turned to face the expanding threat. The British regulars were still engaged in finishing off the Indians on the other side, but the grenadier unit was hastily rushed

off to aid in the defense of the farm area.

By this time, however, the Highlanders were being pressed on two sides and losing more men each turn. With no reserves available and more enemies coming up from the farm area the British were in trouble and conceded that they would have to withdraw. Although the Indians had taken the brunt of the casualties, the French side won a tactical victory.

Both sides had been very aggressive and pushed the action from the start. I think that the British thought that they could overwhelm one flank with firepower, then shift forces to the other flank, which almost worked. Unfortunately for them it took too long to wrap things up on the first flank.

Overall, another good game set in the F&IW period. I think that This Very Ground has a lot going for it, especially the firing system. Also, the differences between the larger, formed units and the smaller, skirmish units really comes forward thanks to the rules design. I'm still not sold on the melee and the morale system at time makes units stay in the battle way past the time I think that they would have left, but the system plays fast and is suitable for group play.



We are going to continue to build units for this period (we need more French regulars!) and hopefully you'll see another report in future issues.



World at War: Eisenbach Gap & Death of the 1st Panzer Review

Lock 'N Load Publishing has recently expanded its gaming lineup to go back to the 80's with a series called World at War. The first two games, Eisenbach Gap and Death of the First Panzer take a look at the initial Soviet/Warsaw Pact offensives into West Germany.

Eisenbach Gap comes in a nice large box with a set of rules, player's aid cards, beautiful 5/8" counters, and a 17 x 22 mounted mapboard representing an area in Germany near the border. The components are first rate and anyone would have a hard time arguing how they could have been better for a game like this.

The rule book was less complicated than I thought it would be, given the subject material. Not only are the rules in the 16 page booklet, but the scenarios and some notes, so the rules take up barely 2/3rds of the booklet. The designer has done a pretty good job of simplifying modern combat, showing command &



within range of that HQ can move and/or fire. Simple, effective, and most players can catch on quickly within the first turn or so.

Combat is done by rolling a number of dice according to the type of weapon that you are using, then getting a number of hits. The defender gets a number of saves and the final results translates into disrupting the unit on the first hit, flipping it over to its reduced side on the second hit, or eliminating it with the third hit. Again, the system is simple, works well (especially with the tricky nature of ATGMs), and can be figured out rather quickly.

Additional rules cover artillery and choppers, plus there are several good scenarios that cover a variety of actions, from meeting engagements to defending river crossings. The system appears to be pretty flexible so additional advanced rules or sections for specific terrain or scenarios can be quickly bolted on.

Death of the 1st Panzer is the first supplement in the World at War series. The folio type layout (if you remember the old SPI games) is ideal for these kind of expansions and the cover also functions as the map. There is an 11 x 17 map printed on the inside where all of the scenarios take place.

The game comes with an additional 40 counters that represent units of the West German 1st Panzer Division along with additional Soviet counters. The six scenarios represent this formation trying to stop the Soviet advance from defending in depth to vicious counterattacks. If you like armor combat then this supplement is for you as both sides get a lot of heavy metal and the terrain is pretty good tank country!

With the first boxed set and supplement gamers will be able to do brigade sized actions and easily create their own scenarios and possible campaigns.



Overall, the boxed set and the first supplement are well done. The components are good, the rules and scenarios have few, if any problems, and the system has a lot of positives. Most gamers should have no problem opening the boxed set, punching out some counters, reading the rules, and be playing inside of an hour.

So, my big question is, "Where was all of this when I was gaming NATO vs. the Warsaw Pact back in the 80's?" After playing for years with GDW's Assault series, SPI's Red Star/White Star and Mech War 2, plus miniatures with Combat Commander, Tacforce, Challenger, and other rules, this system has most of them beat hands down.

This is where I think the only problem is with this excellent series of games. Obviously they had interest in the product as game companies don't sink capital into boxed games without at least breaking even. This means that there is a dedicated group of gamers who want to go back to the 80's and re-fight the Cold War. Why, I have no idea and I've written about this before, but the subject keeps coming up.

So after playing a couple of scenarios and going through the game system a few times I was left with a funny feeling. The game is good, plays fast, looks good, and the designer did a good job with simulating modern operational level combat. In the end, though, I just didn't care if more supplements came out or not, which side won, and it didn't perk my interest level in following the series development. The war never happened and while playing a game once in awhile is fun, dedicating a lot of time to it feels strange.



control, and weapons differences without having a dozen tables and charts plus a 50 page rulebook!

Basically, counters represent platoons of infantry, 3-5 vehicles, and command elements or assets such as mortar or ATGM platoons. Each HQ gets an activation chit and a unique solution to the advantages that NATO forces have in training, quality, leadership, etc., is that the NATO units get two chits to the Soviets one. When a chit is pulled, all units



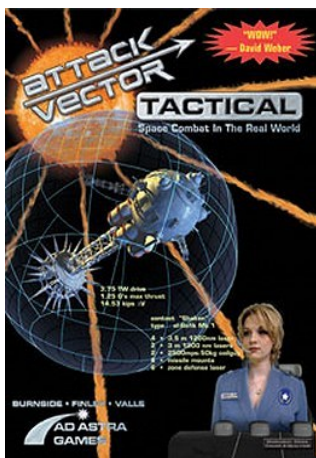
Attack Vector: Tactical

I know that I've mentioned this quite a few times, but I'm a big science-fiction fan and I've recently been reading the Lost Fleet series by Jack Campbell. This series is what is called a hard sci-fi series as the ships are treated with real doses of physics. Naturally, this made me want to do some realistic ship combat and I remembered seeing a lot about Attack Vector: Tactical from Ad Astra Games. I ordered a copy from an Ebay store and eagerly awaited its arrival.

First off, it's a big box and packed with goodies. You get two paper hex mats, a Core rulebook, a ship guide, and a booklet on the Ten Worlds universe. You also get four ship counter sheets with 3D box ships, laminated charts, stacking tiles, and plastic tilt blocks. Whew! The printing alone for this stuff would cost you separately more than the boxed set!

The ship guide and the Ten Worlds guide provided me with several hours of good reading. I haven't seen this kind of detail since I played RPG games back in the early 80's. Anytime a guide to worlds list GNP and external debt, you know that people are treating this thing seriously! Basically, something has happened to Earth and the Ten Worlds are cut off. You have remnants and client states of China, the UK, France, Arab nations and more all with their own fleets. Naturally, control of trade routes, resources, etc., gradually lead to warfare and this game provides everything to slug it out.

This is not Full Thrust or Star Trek! Critical battles that could decide the fate of a system might only be a three on three engagement with fragile fighting vessels. There are no



fighters, photon torpedoes, or anything else that you've seen in the movies. What there are are ships armed with lasers, seeking weapons (missiles), and coil guns (kinetic projectiles). Getting your ship into position to fire, thrusting, using 3D vector movement, and managing heat are the essentials in the game.

To do this you have a pretty solid set of rules in the core rulebook. You also have this wonderful play aid called the AVID, which shows your position relative to the plane of the hex grid, where enemies are, thrust numbers, heat management, and on the back is a series of displays to track weapons. Ad Astra designers have done all of the math for you and they even include a range chart in the new rulebook to quickly figure out how far an enemy is from you. Essentially, everything is there for you and all you have to do is figure it out to play the game.

Now this is where some gamers are going to have problems. This is not the easiest set of rules I've ever played and I would liken it to Harpoon 4 or The Speed of Heat. Both are excellent games with a lot of material, but they, like Attack Vector: Tactical, are going to take some work to get used to playing.

Each turn is broken down into eight segments and players can issue a series of long or short orders.

The AVID is marked for movement, thrust, and position, plus players must be continually on top of their fuel and heat status. Now as if that's not enough you have movement in 3D which is where the stacking tiles and tilt blocks come in, so that you can show a ship's height and angle relative to their enemies. This is the section that I spent the most time on as the rest of the rules (especially if you've

Board Game Review

ever played Starfleet Battles) is not that difficult to understand, although the shell-star diagram took some work.

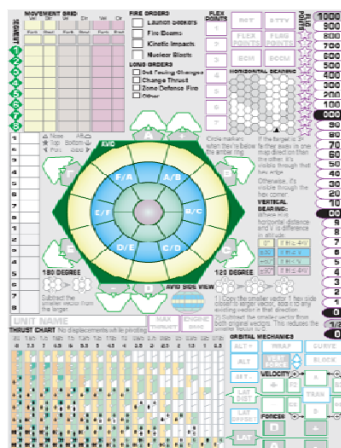
What you get in the end is a realistic space battle with true 3D vector movement. Ships pivot, roll, and thrust to thwart their enemy's weapons while maneuvering to bring theirs to bear. It is truly an unusual experience as you need to be thinking several moves ahead and you are faced with some very tough decisions about heat management and seeking weapons.

There is a four part tutorial at the start of the book that attempts to explain the basics of relative positions, thrust, plus lasers and damage that was most helpful. I would have preferred to have had the tutorials at the end of each rules section so that you could build upon each new item learned, but it works as is.



Now, any set of rules where you have missile launch exercises and answers in the rule book is not going to be for people who think that Flames of War or Warhammer 40K are already too complicated. This system, while outstanding, is not for the faint of heart and it can well be argued about whether or not it is a lot of fun. My personal opinion is that you must see it for what it is, i.e., a bundle of hard science, physics, and mathematics that attempts to portray what starship combat will be like. If you are trying to refight a scene from the Clone Wars in Star Wars then you've come to the wrong place. However, if you want to put some time into this system and learn it well, it can be a rewarding experience. I, for one, think it is worth every penny and I look forward to more ships, additional supplements and more.

Reproduction is permitted for personal use only. Print out 6 1/2" and stack, double-sided, to use as the hex grid. Also print out the pages of the AVID. See the source of page 1 and page 2 on the source of page 2. Laminated the AVID, and the hex grid of the AVID. Thanks to the...



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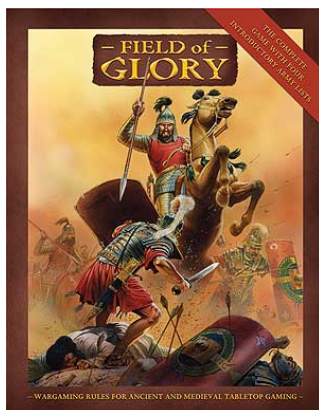
It's always been a part of our hobby. A gamer that you know sees a new range of figures and then spends the next two weeks trying to convince you and others to join him in his next project and they go on and on about all of their plans for buying the figs, organizing them into units, and what kind of scenarios they're going to run. We've all experienced this in one form or the other and are probably guilty of it ourselves.

Now "Back in the Day..." this phenomenon was restricted to few periods as there simply weren't that many companies, sets of rules, or possibilities in the 70s and 80s. If someone saw that, for example, Ral Partha was coming out with a new Sudan range, a few of us would talk it over with a good chance that someone would pick up some figures, paint them, and we would get a game in at some point in the future.

Now contrast that with today and you get a totally different viewpoint. As new ranges, additions to existing ranges, new rules, supplements, terrain pieces, and more scroll continuously down The Miniatures Page it has created a new type of gamer. This "All Talk & No Do" type gamer has really risen to the forefront of the hobby lately. They can be described as a kid in a candy store with no focus, limited if any planning, and will post a comment about everything.

They are the gamer who just posted on the news story about Firm A is making giant yellow flying saucers saying that, "Hell yeah...I'll take five!". Then you go a little further down and see that they've posted that they can't wait for Range 18 of T-Rexes in Flames, followed by another comment further down about how they will be buying an entire Roman legion of some new 20mm line coming out soon. Finally, way down the list you'll see a thread about new projects and they're on there, too, posting about how they will be taking several boxes of the new Perry ACW plastics and converting them for use in their undead ACW zombie game.

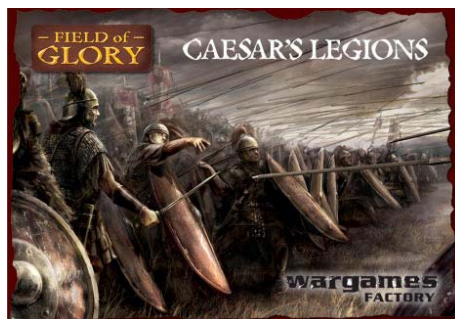
The hobby has unintentionally created an entire mass of gamers who do a lot of



long as gamers have funds available in their bank accounts!

The problem for many gamers is that there is so much stuff coming out that for many it is impossible to stay focused on one, two, or even three projects. I've been with four different clubs and in the 70s, 80s, and 90s everyone always had their favorite periods, but club projects were the norm. Today, this simply isn't so anymore. Trying to get people to do a club project is almost impossible as there are simply too many distractions. The amount of new products coming out is simply staggering and gamers can't help but get swept up in it as the gaming marketing tidal wave rolls along.

Now many of you are by this time wondering why there is a Fields of Glory cover and a shot of the boxed plastic sets from Wargames Factory in this article. Well, this is two great examples of what I'm trying to convey here. First, Fields of Glory arrived to all sorts of hype, articles, reviews, and numerous threads on TMP. Sure enough, within the first few minutes of the first thread the trend started with Gamer ABC, etc..., all saying how they were going to drop several hundred dollars on a Roman army from so and so,



talking, but very little action. True, gamers are buying like never before and all of these new ranges wouldn't be coming out if there wasn't some kind of interest in them. This is definitely good for the manufacturers as they could care less if the figs ever get painted, just so

they would re-base their existing armies and add hundreds of new figs and so on. Right. Sure. Can't wait to see them. The truth is that most games of FOG will be played with existing painted armies as by the time that these other gamers get their figs, clean them, base them, and start painting them, something else will come along and the FOG project will get dropped quickly.

Second, the Wargames Factory and Perry boxed plastic sets are a great idea. But how many sets will actually get painted? My guess is probably one box out of every 30 and that's on the high side. Both companies are going to be selling these things right and left, but my guess is that few pictures of painted box sets will emerge over the next few years. The manufacturers won't care, but it just continues to add more and more stuff to the piles of stuff that will never get done.

So is the hobby moving to where plastic modelers and train modeling clubs are currently, with lots of hobbyists spending millions of dollars on hobby items, but very little if anything is actually getting finished? I have friends in the plastic modeling hobby (I do a few models myself every now and then) where their closets are stacked high with models and they keep adding more, but they've been working on the same kit for the last five years!

While it is definitely a buyer's paradise, I feel that the gaming community at times is becoming a parody of itself. You have all of these great products coming out and thousands of gamers talking about their projects, campaigns, how many figs they're going to buy for their army, requesting painting information, and more. But then you see the latest pics from some convention where there's a Sudan game with 25mm Minifigs units, buildings made from Legos, and masking tape roads.

Where are the Perry Sudan figures? Where are all of the incredible terrain features that everyone keeps talking about? That's right, sitting on a shelf along with the other 10,000 figs and things that will never get done. Obviously in gaming, talking about it and doing it are two different things.

Magistar Militum 10mm Successors

Figure Review

When I started my third WMA army, which is Seleucids, I looked around for suitable 10mm figures. I had already used quite a few Old Glory packs for my Assyrians and Egyptians, but because of the Seleucid army lists I didn't need all of the extra figures that come in the OG packs.

I had also read some complaints about the size of the OG elephants, so I decided to try some Magistar Militum 10mm ancient figures. I ordered them from Great Hall Games who had my order to me in 72 hours which is pretty good. The MM packs are 30 infantry or 12 cavalry per pack for anywhere from \$7.50-8.00 per pack, which isn't too bad. I also ordered a three pack of armored elephants as well.

First, the range is pretty good and with the Alexandrian Greek range you can build a wide variety of Seleucid/Successor armies. My only complaint is that the packs don't come with command figs, so you need to make some from

other figures or ranges.

I received some Thorakites, Companions, cataphracts, Tarantine cavalry, elephants, scythed chariots, and some skirmishers. All of the figures were relatively clean of flash and trimmed up quickly. They have a little more heft than the OG figs, but I was able to mix figs on the same stand with no problems.

I like the fact that the figs are packaged in WMA unit sizes and the elephants came out looking great. I had some problems assembling the scythed chariots and getting them to look

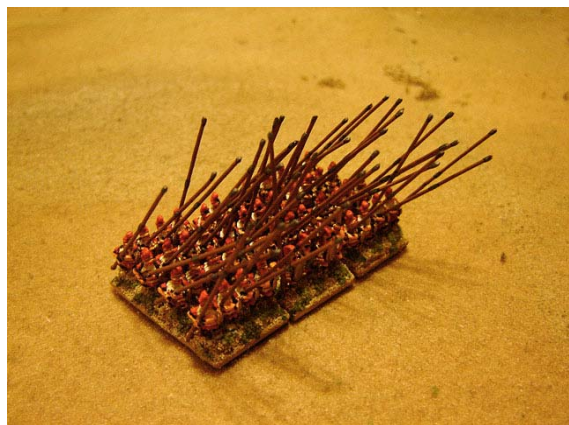


10mm Companions and cataphracts from Magistar Militum.

right, but overall this range is pretty good and worth the money spent.

Old Glory 10mm Macedonians

Figure Review



10mm Old Glory Greek pikeman with 48 figs per unit.

As I mentioned above I am currently building a WMA Seleucid army. Naturally every type of Successor army needs a large quantity of pikeman, so I decided to go with the Old Glory 10mm range. I almost went with the Magistar Militum range because I liked the shields (the OG ones look a little small), but I didn't think that I could get that "wall of pikes" look

with the individually based figs.

I ordered in the command pack, a couple of pikeman bags, and a generals bag. I like the OG infantry for one simple reason and that is that are sold in strips. I've found that the strip infantry in 10mm paint up at least twice as quickly as individual figs in this scale. Also, the OG command and general packs are great for adding extra officers to units to give the army some extra flavor.

Well, I was not disappointed. The command packs and the generals pack were first rate. The mounted officers have already been used for command stands and to lead my units of Companions and cataphracts! The pike figures were good, except I believe that the smaller shield did not come into use until

the end of the Successors period. You do have to drill out the hands to take a pike (I use thin floral wire which is dirt cheap and works well) which can be a chore.

Overall, if you need masses of troops for your armies then the OG 10mm packs for the price can't be beat if you belong to the OG Army with the 40% discount.



Command stands made from a combination of Old Glory and Magistar Militum figures.

Gunfight at Milford

Warpaint Battle Report

Every so often as a break from our more “serious” games of AOE, AOR, and many others, we do a skirmish set in either the Old West or the Victorian Colonial period. These two gaming eras seem to bring out the best jokes and craziest situations, plus you don’t have to focus on tons of rules and charts to play the game. It’s not something that all of us could do every gaming night, but two or three times a year seems just right!

Although we had used The Rules With No Name and Legends of the Old West in our previous games, it was decided to try the old Warpaint rules. These rules are a little bit more detailed than the previous two as you have roster sheets for your group with their stats, but once you’ve played a few turns the system is pretty easy to pick up.

As we normally like chaos in these type of games, each player had a group of 4-5 figures with a separate objective for each player. This game featured a group of banditos who wanted to rob the bank. A group of lawmen who were protecting the bank, a group of cowboys who were protecting their horses at the ranch, a woman led gang protecting the saloon, and several groups of Indians who were hell bent on burning down the town and stealing horses! The desired result was a lot of chaos, mayhem, and fun which is exactly what happened.

The action began quickly as the cowboys moved to take up positions around the ranch and corral while “Rose” as she was affectionately called, and her boys



got off the streets before the shooting began. The banditos moved to the bank where they attempted to negotiate with the lawmen hiding inside. Claiming that they were simply misunderstood and the kind of banditos that would start a chess club, they attempted to work out a deal. The lawmen responded by opening fire and the mayhem began.

The Indians broke from cover and started moving towards the middle of the town and the corral. This touched off a series of firefights all around the edge of the town with pretty much everyone except the lawmen and the banditos, who

were killing each other, trying to hold off the Indians. Two Indians went down with serious wounds from the cowboys, but their attack kept going forward. By this time bullets were flying everywhere and it got to the situation where if you were in doubt who was on who’s side, it was safer to shoot them!

The banditos somehow broke into the safe and started running off with the money under a hail of lead from the lawmen. They quickly ducked into the General Store to avoid the chaos on the street. When asked by the game referee what they were doing in the store, before the



Gunfight at Milford

Warpaint Battle Report (cont.)



This two story outhouse is S scale and was made for the lawyer in our group who introduced us to this period. The sign on the top door says "Lawyers" and the sign on the bottom door says "Clients"!

down with multiple wounds. The Indians then swarmed into the corral and took all of the horses.

This left one side of the board completely undefended, so naturally the banditos took that course and were able to escape off the board. The gunfights slowly wound down as two groups had met their scenario objectives, the cowboys were all dead, and there wasn't much reason for the other groups to continue fighting. With that the Mexican bandito

player and the two Indian players were deemed to have won

the game. bandito player could answer, the lawmen player said, "...shoplifting!"

The Indians by this time had set fire to two buildings and were closing in on the corral on two sides. Two of the cowboys went down with multiple wounds, but not before wounding two more Indians. The Mexican banditos were scrambling out from the General Store and trying to avoid the numerous firefights in the town.

The Indians then decided to rush the remaining cowboys defending the barn and the corral. The Indians easily took the barn and from there began to pour fire towards the cowboys in the corral. The cowboys scored a kill on the Indians, but then were simply overwhelmed by the amount of fire and they eventually went

the game.

These kind of periods make for good group games as it is easy for players who have no experience with the rules to quickly pick things up and there just aren't that many complex situations that can arise during the game, making it easy on the referee as well. The games are quick, fun, and everyone gets a chance to roll the dice a few times. As I've stated before in this magazine many times, it's not something I could do every gaming night, but it's a good in-between type game for every so often, much like TSATF is.

A further comment on the rules for this period in general. Warpaint was not too bad, although in the interest in time the referee had made many of the characters pretty generic to enable the game to flow quicker. It is interesting that something as simple as an Old West gunfight could become much more complex if needed.

The other two sets of rules that we've used (The Rules With No Name and Legends of the Old West) were pretty basic with just enough rules to cover movement and shooting. Warpaint goes a little be-



yond that, but not much more. However, you could get much more involved in the game by varying the stats. In my view you want to keep the game as basic as possible as you're playing this period for a fun break, not to be too realistic!



British Armored Attack

This fictional scenario is set during the British advance in early August of 1944. A strong British mechanized force is trying to break through the German defenses and exploit the German rear areas. The British force consisted of one battalion of Shermans, one battalion of mech infantry, and one recon battalion with Cromwells, infantry in M3 halftracks, and several recon elements. There were also two batteries of 25 pounders off board for fire support.



Blitzkrieg Commander Replay

The Germans were deployed near the center of the board, trying to protect the village crossroads, the road exits and the railway area where the warehouses and loading platforms were

artillery located off board.

Since the German force was smaller and had to cover a lot of ground, they placed the infantry at the crossroads and the railway area. The AT batteries were deployed to cover the open ground on the German right, with the Stugs and Jgpz-IVs providing support. The Panthers and Tigers guarded the German left and would be used as a mobile reserve if the British decided to concentrate their attack in only one direction.

The British, meanwhile, decided to attack with their armor up the middle towards the crossroads with the mech infantry going for the railway area. The recon detachments would screen the area in between the two main thrusts. With setup completed the British began Turn 1.

located. The Germans had two companies of regular infantry, one company of panzergrenadiers, one 75mm AT battery, an 88mm AT battery, three Stug-IIIAs, three JGPZ-IVs, five Panthers, and one Tiger plus two batteries of 100mm



Opening Moves

The British attack opened up with surprising success, advancing quickly in the center and knocking out an 88mm AT battery in the woods. British recon elements pushed out in front and the supporting Cromwells engaged German armor positioned around a farm. A strong German counterattack by three platoons of Jgpz-IVs was defeated, leaving all of them in flames.

The British mech infantry, however, was going nowhere fast despite a fast start on Turn 1. They continued to move towards the railyard area, but ran into German defenses in



the woods nearby. A 75mm AT battery hidden in the woods took out several Bren carriers and held up the advance for several turns.

Meanwhile, the main German armor force prepared to move and cut off the British attack.

British Armored Attack

Blitzkrieg Commander Replay (cont.)

British forces were by this time heavily engaged all along the main axis of attack. The German defenders in the village had opened up with AT weapons on the approaching Shermans and knocked out two of them, despite taking serious casualties in return. The Stug-IIIs around the farm on the British left flank were still engaged with both Shermans and recon elements.

The British mech infantry and support finally drove off the defenders and began dismounting infantry around the railroad. This was met with counterattacks by the German infantry in the area and heavy fire from buildings, forcing the British to hold onto a small strip of land around the railroad. The Churchills in support were having difficulties moving up, so the

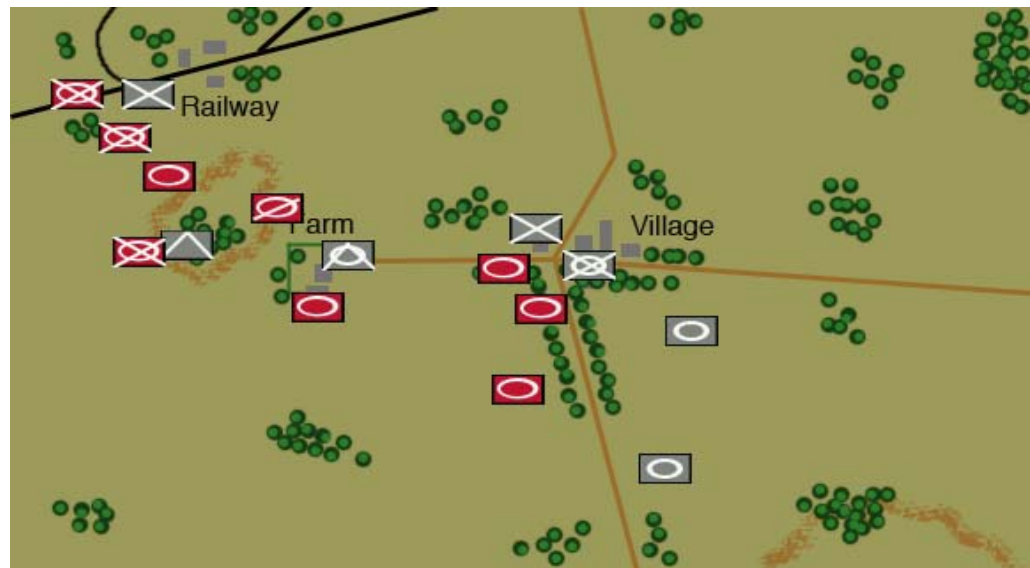


British infantry were on their own and getting the worst of the exchange of fire.

The British attack continued towards the village center, but was met by ever increasing fire. Just when it looked as if

the British would break through the command rolls, which had been good so far, began to go bad and the British advance ground to a halt.

Now the Panthers and Tigers emerged from the British right flank and began to engage the Shermans at long range. Although not initially successful and after losing one Panther, the Germans began to find the range. The remaining Shermans positioned themselves in the hedges along the main road and prepared for an all around defense. Their only chance was that the British would break through and win the game quickly in the other two areas. Unfortunately, things weren't looking good all over for the remaining British forces.



Finale & Summary

The final British attack on the railyard stalled as the armor needed for support was still engaged with the Stug-IIIs around the farm. The attack into the village had been beaten back, and the German armor was counterattacking and threatening to cut off the remaining Shermans.

With no clear path to victory the game was called as a German victory.



Although the British attack started off well, nothing went right after that! Both sides fought a desperate battle, but the British attack ran out of gas at the worst possible time. The inability of the British mech infantry to get to the railyard in full strength with support ultimately doomed the overall attack. Once the German heavy armor units began to move and attack the game was seriously in doubt, but everyone had a good time.

Memoirs of a Miniature & Board Wargamer Pt. 8

Air Combat Games

Time and time again I am drawn into air combat games. Whether it is the notion of two warriors dueling it out in the sky, reading a lot of WW2, Korea, and Vietnam books, or just a love of combat aircraft I'll never know. But, I do love air combat games and they have been a huge part of my gaming life.

Probably the third wargame I ever bought was the old SPI Foxbat & Phantom. At that time the Foxbat was thought of as the ultimate fighter (that was soon put to rest by the Israelis a few years later!) and no game company had stats yet for the F-15 or F-16, so you were forced to use Phantoms. The game was fun and I spent hours playing all kinds of scenarios. I liked it so much that I bought the WW2 version called Spitfire, although that game never seemed as good as the jet version.

The natural leap after that was to SPI's Air War, which is still regarded as one of the most complex wargames ever produced. I can remember all of us sitting around trying to learn how to fly jets using that system. In those days we were no strangers to complexity, having played games like SPI's NATO Division Commander, Mech War 2, and so on, but this was definitely going to new levels! After several attempts to play the game the interest in our gaming group plunged into the abyss and that was it for Air War.

I went for a few years without trying jet combat again after that, although that call to do air combat kept coming back. Mustangs & Messerschmitts was big in our area as the rules author was from our city, so we got into that. At that time many of us were into building plastic models and since they were used in the game it seemed a natural fit. If you've ever seen an M&M game it is pretty interesting. There are triangular shaped



blocks of wood with wheels on them and large wooden sticks that signify the altitude. 1/72nd scale aircraft are attached to the poles and they can be turned to represent different attitudes in combat. For a 3D game it was surprisingly not as complex as you would think. The big problem? The game lends itself to cheating in the worst way as the triangular bases, rolling marks, turn mechanisms, etc..., create a lot of problems.

This is something else I've seen about air combat gaming that is pretty interesting. There are always gamers who have to "get a kill", no matter what the cost. They will fudge movement, change data sheets, etc., to get that extra edge for the sake of a kill. I've seen it at conventions, group meetings, visiting gamers to our group, and so on. For some extraordinary reason air combat gaming seems to bring out the worst in gamers.

I still played Blue Max and Richtofen's War, two of the best air combat board games ever made, but that longing for jet combat still kept me searching for something else. The something else finally arrived in the form of Avalon Hill's Flight Leader. Our group jumped on that fast and we were playing large scenarios in no time at all. Unfortunately, we all felt that the game was too generic and it seemed like it was Foxbat and Phantom, but with nicer components.

However, this gave us the urge to immediately get into GDW's Air Superiority series which came out shortly after Flight Leader. Finally, here was a game that took jet combat seriously. Not only did you have all of the major jets in the world, but the flight systems and missile firing worked pretty well. The designer who was a military pilot knew what he was talking about and the game had been designed to be complex, but still had playability.

Our group played countless

scenarios of this for a few years and when the sequel, Air Strike came out we played even more.

This is where my old group went their separate ways and although I still had an interest in air combat I couldn't find too many others that did. After The Speed of Heat came out from Clash of Arms games I got back into the era pretty heavily and convinced several of my group to play a few games with me.

As the hobby has progressed to simpler, faster games, air combat, especially modern air combat has been given the simplified treatment. I've seen rules where there is no altitude, all heat seeking weapons classified into one group, and countless other things that I consider to be heresies done all in the name for getting in a game quicker.

After a long period of no air combat, our group did get into the Phantoms rules and we regularly play Vietnam era scenarios with a large group. The game uses miniatures with flight stands and altitude, but it plays fast and we can get gamers who aren't that interested in the period to try it out. It's not The Speed of Heat, but it will do.



Now it looks like air combat has come full circle with the upcoming release of Birds of Prey. This complex game where aircraft are shown at different angles using tilt blocks and stacking tiles along with unique data cards for the aircraft will

take the period to the next level. I doubt that it will appeal to all but the real air combat grognards as it will take quite an investment in time to learn the game. I am looking forward to it as you can never have enough air combat games!

I think that I will always love air combat, although the advent of aircraft like the F-22 make it more of a slaughter than actual dogfighting, so I'll stick to the early jets. There are enough Korean, Vietnam, and Arab-Israeli scenarios and campaigns to keep me interested for the next 15-20 years!



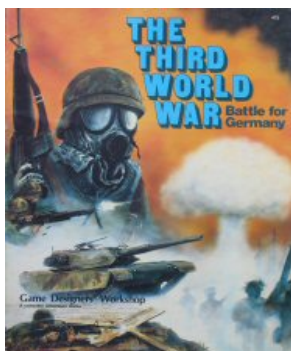
Blast From The Past Pt. 7: Monster Games

If you've been in the wargaming hobby for any length of time you've probably heard of the term "monster game". No, this isn't about games featuring Godzilla vs. Tokyo, but rather board or miniatures games on a vast scale. The trend was started in the 70's when SPI introduced some truly large games.

These games came in pretty good sized boxes, had multiple maps, thousands of counters, turn tracks, reinforcement displays, multiple game charts, and tables, and rules that took awhile to read. Many of these games are now legendary, such as Campaign for North Africa and War in the Pacific (which has recently been re-released by Decision Games for around \$400!). It was said that in Campaign for North Africa you needed a staff of gamers just to run the supply portion of the game! Many of these games were virtually unplayable except by the most devoted gamers of all and they have retained their value as evidenced by high prices on Ebay.

However, many of these monster games were played or at least set up and attempted to be played. I can remember in the 70s and 80 playing a few of these with other gamers either in homes or at club meetings. My first exposure to a monster game was SPI's Highway to the Reich about Operation Market Garden. Back in the 70s complexity was merely shrugged off so we had no problems getting into the game and had many enjoyable hours playing it, although I can never remember finishing one game!

Another game that we tried was Godsfire from Metagaming that was empire building in the far future. A good, but long game that could be played with a lot of people. We also tried the merger of SPI's Starforce and Starsoldier, which by themselves weren't monster games, but when added together became a book-keeping nightmare. We also tried SPI's Terrible Swift Sword, Welington's Victory, and a few of the



Europa games, although the problem with those was the large stacks of counters that had to be continually moved!

Now that I reflect back upon monster games I find it interesting that we always could find time to play, time to read the rules, and could always find a large enough place to set up. Contrast that to today where most gamers can't find time to play a two or three hour game and complain about having nowhere to put a 22 x 34 map!

One of the best monster games and still one of my most memorable gaming experiences is that we were able to play the entire GDW Third World War series not once, but twice. With maps that stretched from Norway to the Persian Gulf, masses of counters, and multiple theaters to keep track of, it is surprising that it played so well. This, I believe, is the secret to a successful monster game. You can't just make a monster game for the sake of making it, but it has to have some legitimate chance of being played.

By the mid 80s monster games were going the way of the dodo as the wargame industry as a whole fell on hard times and went through a purging of the old guard. When the next generation of board wargaming started in the mid-90s monster games were slow to make a reappearance, but now in the last few years more have come out.

Currently, one of the best monster game series I own is the Struggle For Europe series from Clash of Arms games. The series consists of War Without Mercy (East Front), Brute Force (West Front), and The Med

(North Africa/Med). The system is well done with nice graphics, beautiful counters, and the rules let the players focus on combat operations and leave the politics/alliances out of the game. Although I still

haven't tried all three hooked together, I've played the larger scenarios and East Front campaign which were very enjoyable.

A monster game I would like to get into, but still haven't is World of Flames. I actually owned one of the Classic editions with Patton in Flames, but gave up when faced with the bewildering variations and versions of the game. Yes, it could cost you several hundred dollars to get all of the supplements, but it would be nice if they had some information about what you actually needed to play the game! I like the concept, but the company and its supporters could do a better job of selling the product.

This last year has seen a Leyte Gulf game from Avalanche Press, Case Blue from MMP, and Devil's Cauldron, among others enter the realm of monster games. All have done pretty well in sales, so it's obvious that gamers still have a soft spot for these kinds of games. The new War in the Pacific by Decision Games is probably what I would call the ultimate monster game and I would love to see if a gaming group could actually finish a campaign shorter than the actual war itself! The increasing quality of graphics, research, online support, and the introduction of living rules have helped these type of games grow tremendously in my opinion.

In the end I think that there is just something about seeing a monster game laid out and gamers actually playing them. The topics are usually interesting, the multiple maps have that "moth to the flame" attraction, and they

can't help but draw gamers to them. I also think that one of the big advantages is that you usually must play these games in a group or with at least 3-4 people. The hobby is definitely a social activity and these games are a way to bring gamers together.





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Something that I've noticed over the last year or so, but that has gotten decidedly worse recently are the Yahoo Groups for gaming. Years ago they used to be a tremendous resource, there was civility, great discussion, and most members were genuinely helpful with research. Some, like the Age of Eagles group still represent the best of the Yahoo Groups and how those groups should function. However, there are others that have turned into almost private clubs within clubs. The same people post over and over again, carry on private conversations, and then pooh-pooh anyone's ideas who don't agree with them. It's not uncommon to see a thread go 20 or 30 emails where 3 and 4 people are talking and making comments or jokes that only they would understand and unfortunately the remaining 90% of the group have to sort through their crap. The other bad behavior I'm seeing is people who now have moved on to a different rules system than the group focuses on (for whatever reason), but stay on that egroup and argue with anyone who is either just getting started with the rules are who asks questions about the rules. They chime in, saying, "Well, that's why I gave these rules up, the designer won't listen to me, etc...", and so on. Take a hint: if you don't like the rules and have moved on, leave the egroup! Their snide and arrogant comments aren't making any friends, but they have to get their two cents in. It just reinforces my theory that for every one or two good gamers there are at least double that number who are total jerks. At some point Yahoo may pull the plug on these groups (they've come close a few times) and if they do, I won't lose any sleep over it.

Venexia 15mm Renaissance

In my ongoing quest to add a few units here and there to my Renaissance collection I decided that I needed some more Swiss to offset the Spanish tercio I did last year. Also, I needed a few more units of light cavalry as I already had too many of the more heavily armored units.

I decided to go with Venexia this time and I ordered several bags to give them a try. I ordered three of the unit packs of Swiss infantry plus a few bags of mounted arquebusiers and stradiots/ginettes. The price was comparable to most 15mm manufacturers and my shipment from Olde Rivertowne in the U.S. arrived quickly.

First, these figures fit in well with existing ranges such as Old Glory and



Essex. The figs are on the whole about 1-2mm larger, but the difference is not very noticeable. There was hardly any flash on the figures I received and they cleaned up quickly.

The Swiss unit packs had approximately 23-24 figures in each pack, with a good selection of armored and unarmored pikeman, command, and they come with a flag. Depending upon the rules that you use you may have to order additional figures, but overall it is good value for the money.

The figures have a slim appearance, but I was impressed by the amount of detail on the figures. The arquebusiers on foot have numerous straps and equipment on them, plus some of the hats are full of feathers, all sculpted to a level that will

challenge most painters.

The mounted figures came with two types of horses and again, both the horses and riders are sculpted well, leaving little to complain about.

In summary, this is a very good range of 15mm figures that covers the Italian Wars. There is a wide selection of troop types, multiple castings, flags, and the choice of buying in bags or units is a big plus.



Images from the Venexia web site.