

Warning Order

Issue #28

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Warning Order

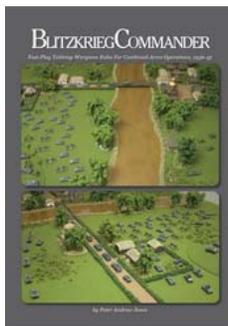
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Blitzkrieg Commander 2

When Blitzkrieg Commander first arrived on the scene it entered riding a wave of enthusiasm for the Warmaster system. The fantasy version had enjoyed great success and the ancients version also made huge inroads into the ancient gaming community. Although it was initially surprising that it could be adapted to WW2, BKC quickly gathered a large following. The system was obviously successful as it spawned a modern version called Cold War Commander and a sci-fi version entitled Future War Commander.

There was a great deal learned in the interval between BKC and BKC 2 that started showing up as rules in the other two books. As the system continued to be popular, battle reports were posted, and numerous rules were hashed out in the forums, author Pete Jones incorporated these things into the design of BKC 2.

For those who have seen the term BKC on various forums and hobby sites, BKC stands for Blitzkrieg Commander. The game system uses the com-



mand mechanism from what is termed the Warmaster system. Basically, each commander (represented by a command stand)

is rated for their command skill, usually from 6-9. Commanders issue orders to their units by rolling 2D6 and if the number is equal to or less than their command value, then the unit or group of units can move, deploy, fire, call in a barrage, and more. If you roll a 12 then there is a blunder which is rolled for or if you roll a 2 then the unit (s) can take two actions. Each successive order subtracts one from the command value and the further a unit moves form its commander decreases the value as well. Once



you fail a command roll then that command stand cannot issue any more orders for that turn. Simple, very effective, and it creates the ebb and flow of an armored battle on the tabletop.

Firing, artillery, air-strikes, engineering, and more were topped off by a quite impressive collection of army lists. So after several years of being in the hands of gamers, numerous discussions online, and two additional sets of rules with a common system having been published, what is BKC 2 all about.

First, the book is very similar to the original rules. The contents follow the same setup, so gamers use to the first edition should have no problem transitioning to the second. The army lists have been expanded and the format has changed slightly, so if you have lists already prepared from the first edition you will need to make a few changes. One of the more positive aspects of the new edition are better pictures and several concepts are explained better with the use of images. In fact, you could say that the new edition focuses on trying to make it easier (cont. on p3)

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Special points of interest:

- Review of Blitzkrieg Commander 2 and several articles on 1/285th gaming with BKC2.
- Battle reports for Fire & Fury, General de Brigade, and Age of Reason.
- Several boardgame reviews.
- Regular features

Blitzkrieg Commander 2 (cont.)

for gamers to understand the basic concepts of command, movement, and firing.

Don't let the length of the rules fool you as although there are many pages, it is laid out in a clear and concise manner which will allow gamers to quickly get into the game. After a game or two all you will need are the army list for your forces and the quick reference sheet.

Naturally, if you're going to be asked to drop \$40-50 on a new edition (depending upon where you order it) you may want to know what has changed. The answer is a lot, but in a good way.

First, let's talk about the army lists, which have been greatly expanded. Units are now rated for both AP (anti-personnel) and AT (anti-tank) fire. In my mind this was a necessary change as the original combat system was a little too generic for my tastes. The second change is that the limits on units that can be chosen have been altered so that you can better create more historical orders of battle. Infantry now have several classifications, such as veterans, so you can pay points for better troops in your force.

The basic command system has been slightly modified to reflect tactical doctrine. Instead of having the same command ranges for everyone, there are now limits depending upon country. I think this was a great addition as again, everything seemed a little too general in the first edition of the rules. Knocked out command stands can now be replaced, the blunder table has been expanded, and the overall commander can attempt to reissue orders to those units that failed to receive an order. Basically, the command system has been upgraded substantially by these changes and for the better.

Opportunity fire is now no longer an optional rule. Any unit can use it in the opposing side's turn, but there are consequences, such as being unable to act in the Initiative Phase and suffering a -1



command penalty during that side's turn. There is also now an Air Superiority determination phase added to the start of the game which can greatly influence request for air support and the effectiveness of that support.

Other changes include artillery spotting and deviation which cuts down on the wild results you could sometimes get when calling in artillery or airstrikes. Cover and visibility have been clarified better along with better explanations for how things like recon, infantry support, direct and indirect fire, and an expanded section on field defenses.

The Initiative Phase has been expanded as well, giving troops that start close to the enemy additional options. What was called the Combat Phase has now been changed to Close Assault and this can take place during the Initiative Phase at the start of the turn. I like this change and it gives commanders a lot more flexibility in attacking enemy posi-



tions then exploiting them during movement.

As you can tell by the above items, we're not just talking about a new edition with a few added pictures and one or two items added into the references list at the end of the rules. This is taking the base system and expanding upon it greatly. It's not quite a new game, but the many changes will definitely make players who are familiar with the system check their

rules to see what has changed.

The previous issue of Warning Order had a battle report where we played with BKC2 for the first time and reactions were generally positive. We did a great many things wrong, but then again we only had two copies of the rules for five of us and those two sets had just arrived a few days before the game! We did notice that some of the blunders were painful, the artillery rules worked better, the having to work out AP and AT dice throws took a bit longer than the old generic combat system, and we liked the changes with tactical doctrine.

I think at this point BKC has gone far beyond the original Warmaster system. It has successfully taken the command, movement, and shooting core rules and morphed them into something suitable for WW2 combined arms operations. For a long time BCK was seen as an alternative to Flames of War or for those who had moved on from rules such as Command Decision. The biggest complaint about the rules were that they could be generic at times and that there were limited, if any differences between the armies. The game was fun, played quickly, but you were left with the feeling that it could have been better.

In my opinion, BKC 2 has moved past the original rules to the next level of complexity, past Flames of War and many other similar systems. The addition of air superiority, tactical doctrine, separation of AP and AT fire, and many other additions has the rules progressing from game to dare I say it, simulation. It is still easy to pick up and play, but there are changes in the new edition that set these rules apart from the current crop of "throw large numbers of toys on the tabletop and let's blow things up" type of rules that permeate the hobby today.

In summary, BKC 2 is a huge improvement on an already popular rules system. The author deserves credit for listening to fans of the game, taking the time to tweak rules, and expanding the game to make it better. Highly recommended.

Images from the Specialist Military Publishing Ltd. Site where you can order BKC 2.

BKC 2 : Russian Armored Attack

Battle Report

If you've been following this magazine for a long time then you know that each Friday after Thanksgiving we have a game, whether it's our regular game night or not! This year we had players with a lot of other commitments so three of us gathered at GAJO in Sandy for a game of Blitzkrieg Commander 2. GAJO is an excellent gaming store located in Sandy, Utah that has historical miniatures, terrain, paint, magazines, terrain, paint, and plenty of gaming space.



The scenario was for a Russian armored force to seize a vital railway station and exit units off the road at the far edge of the board. The Russians started with two battalions of T-34/85s, two battalions of T-34/76s, a battery of SU-76s, a battery of SU-85s, and a mechanized infantry battalion in trucks. The Russian force also had a recon asset plus an artillery group of two 122mm batteries and BM-13 rockets on trucks.

The Germans were a mixed lot, with a battalion of Luftwaffe Field troops in entrenchments on a hill along with a Stug-IIIH battery supporting them. There was a mixed armor battalion consisting of a company of Panthers and PZ Mk.IVHs entering the board, one 88mm AT gun, a company of Jgpz-IVs, and an under strength panzergrenadier battalion also deployed along the roads. The Germans had two 100mm batteries and a Nebelwerfer battery in support.

The terrain would play an important part of the battlefield, so it needs to be described here so that everyone can appreciate the position the Russians were in! The hill near the Russian entry point was held by a battalion of Luftwaffe troops in entrenchments. In BKC2 troops in entrenchments are tough customers and you really need infantry to flush them out, which the Russians didn't have enough of as this was a mobile assault then exploitation. The Russian players, including myself, didn't realize how tough this position was until we started to engage it!

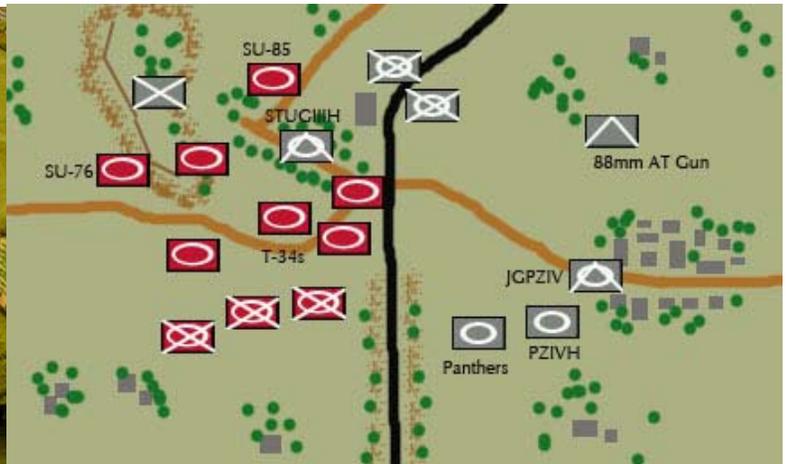
Then there was a series of railway tracks across the center of the board and half the board were these tracks in a cut. The cut functioned as an anti-tank ditch in that armored vehicles couldn't cross it. Naturally, this created a gap through which any attacking force would have to get through to enter the open

country beyond the railway cut. The Russians would need to push hard to clear the gap before the remaining German forces could cut them off.

The game started well for the Russians as most of the armor and mech infantry got on the board and began to move towards the gap. A battalion of T-34/76s screened the Luftwaffe troops so that they wouldn't get any ideas about counterattacking the Russian armor moving along the road. The second turn, however, had some serious command failures and the Russian forces barely moved. Fortunately, the Germans were having command problems of their own and barely moved any of their reinforcements. So, after the first two turns it still looked hopeful for the Russians as they began to spread out in preparation for forcing their way through the gap. It was beginning to



look like if the Russians didn't get into the open area within the next two turns that they could be facing most of the German armor now moving up to the front.





The third turn found the leading T-34/85 battalion now at the gap and under fire from the Stug-IIIHs in the woods that were supporting the Luftwaffe troops on the hill. More T-34s joined in the fight, but the Stugs continued to slug it out in this unequal fight. A T-34/76 battalion and the SU-76 battery tried to pound the Luftwaffe troops and got brutalized in the process. After several turns of exchanges two T-34s and three SU-76s were left burning in exchange for a 75mm AT gun and one platoon of Luftwaffe troops.

The German reinforcements were finally moving towards the front, but the question was whether or not the Stugs could hold out. They did. Several T-34/85s were left on fire as a testament to their dogged defense of the woods. Only

when down to one Stug left were the Russians finally able to start to flow through the gap. T-34s moved around the burning hulk and broke towards the railway station while still others moved around the hill and flanked the remaining Stug. The mechanized infantry battalion moved up ready to attack the railway station which was now securely in the hands of a depleted panzergrenadier battalion.

Then all hell broke loose on the Russians. The artillery spotter for the Germans could only see the front of the gap, but a great roll on deviation dropped an artillery barrage right on the loaded trucks of the Russian mech infantry battalion! This coupled with the Panthers and PZIVHs which had moved up now

brought fire on the Russian armor milling about.

The Russians were now firing in several directions and trying to move to better ground, but failed continuously on command rolls. Several German attacks forced some of the armor back into other formations, creating a huge traffic jam at the gap. Another artillery barrage deviated right on top of the remnants of the mech infantry battalion, which was sheltering near the railway cut and got finished off.

With the Russians now having no infantry to tackle the railway station, half of the T-34s and supporting armor on fire, and German armor formed up in an L-shaped killing zone we deemed that the game was over as a German victory.



Prussian Assault

I guess that our group should feel blessed that we have enough figures and terrain to not only play large Age of Eagles scenarios, but we can also play General de Brigade or pretty much any other system! One of



our members had recently finished up several more units of Prussians and was anxious to use them, which led to this scenario.

It is the spring of 1813 and the Prussians are on the move. A French and Saxon force has taken up positions near a vital town and road network. There are very good defensible positions in the area, including a low ridge between two crossroads and a forested area on one of the flanks. The terrain also includes some streams, making it difficult to attack in some areas and forcing the attackers in some areas to be channeled towards the defenses.

The Prussians had several strong infantry brigades spread across the board for the attack, but were woefully weak in cavalry, with just one unit attached to each division. The French had several infantry brigades which were spread thin along the main defense line, but they had a brigade of Young Guard in reserve with a brigade of Saxon cavalry.

The French plan was pretty simple; hold the ridge and forest for as long as possible, then make the Prussians attack



through the gaps in the terrain under heavy fire. Also, use their advantage in cavalry to threaten and hopefully pin down one of the flanks. The Prussians for their part would attack with infantry columns at four different points, hoping to create a break-

through which would hopefully dislodge the defenders somewhere and make the rest fall back or be in danger of being cut off. The French held ridge looked like a particularly tough nut to crack with a battery of artillery deployed along the top and two infantry battalions flanking the position. Not only that, but the three regiments of the Saxon cavalry brigade were positioned close by to offer immediate support.

The action began almost immediately near the forest on the Prussian right. The attacking battalions engaged the French infantry and artillery almost immediately, beginning a life and death struggle in that area that would last almost the entire game. Two Prussian battalions in column charged into the forest and pushed back the French infantry, but they in turn were met by counterattacks and barely held on to the gains they had made. More and more units began to get sucked into the bloodbath at the forest as the battle progressed.

In the center the Prussian attack was met by several French battalions and a series of firefights broke out which would last several turns. The Prussians couldn't get any momentum in the center at this point as

every time they prepared for an attack units would get disordered and it would get postponed.

On the Prussian left the leading brigade ran into trouble near the ridge. First, they had to cross the stream and woods under fire from the French artillery, then were met by musket fire from the French battalions on top of the ridge. Miraculously, they made it across and charged up the ridge, driving the French infantry back and creating a huge hole in the French defenses. At this point it looked like the game might end early, but the combination of a counterattack by two Young Guard battalions and taking so many casualties crossing the stream



caused the Prussian brigade to break. The supporting artillery battery broke with them and suddenly there was a major gap in the Prussian lines! The shattered units fell back to regroup and the focus of the attack moved elsewhere.

The Prussian left was moving very slowly due to the threat of the Saxon cavalry near by. They had already defeated the Prussian cavalry which forced the infantry brigade to form square and advance very slowly down the road. The Saxon cavalry charged again and again, but were repulsed by the Prussian squares with a few of the charges almost succeeding and they would have ended the game by rolling up the entire Prussian force!

The attack and counterattack in the



forest on the Prussian right continued. The Prussians burst out of the forest only to be met by the French reserves and driven back. Both sides had already lost several battalions and there looked to be no ending the battle early as more units continued to join the attack.

The Prussian left continued to have one brigade regroup and take up blocking positions while the second steadily advanced in square, driving the Saxon cavalry further and further back. The infantry brigade began to get the support of the Prussian artillery which had returned to the battle and since the French were already spread thin they were forced to give ground, although slowly.

Now it came time for the main event. The Prussian center, which had troubles

getting going, now surged forward, driving a wedge in the French defenses. Two Young Guard battalions moved forward to fill the gap and were met by a regiment of Prussian cavalry. The cavalry overran one battalion, then turned on the Young Guard and despite a gallant defense where the Young Guard killed about half of the Prussian cavalry, they were shattered and fell back.

The Prussian center and left now surged forward, finally moving beyond the forest and carrying the attack towards the town while various French units tried to make a stand at several places. With no reserves left and most units either heavily engaged or down 25-50%, the French decided to withdraw and the game was ruled as a Prussian victory.

The Prussians certainly earned the victory and both sides had played well. The game went two nights, or almost 7 1/2 hours. Even though at times it looked as if one side or the other had won or could have won the game, both sides recovered and the game went on. Certainly if one of the Prussian squares had been broken, the first attack on the forest defeated, or if the French had not had to commit their reserves so early, the game could have ended much differently.

General de Brigade is certainly different than Age of Eagles or when we used to play Empire back in the day. The game does a good job of focusing the action at the battalion level and best of all, you can use Age of Eagles basing for the games!



1/285th Terrain: A Glimpse of What is Available

For as long as I've been involved with miniatures gaming, 1/285th has been the red-headed stepchild in regards to terrain availability. I can remember ages ago in the late 70s and early 80s when we would do massive armor battles, be it WW2 Eastern Front or NATO vs. the Warsaw Pact, with GHQ miniatures that still hold up well today. Our problem back then was trying to find terrain in that scale. Felt roads, bottle brush trees or items scavenged from craft stores or still worse lichen for forests, was the norm back then. There were a few buildings here and there, but the quality was not very good and so wood blocks with sheet plastic roofs were sometime used.

Surely then, with the Internet, modern production techniques, and a much larger gaming audience, things have changed for the better in 1/285th scale? Well, yes and no. There are more offerings and you can definitely search online for terrain and ideas about how to build it, but in comparison to 15mm and 25mm, it is still way behind in terms of choices. This article will hopefully highlight some of the better terrain options for the small scale gamer.

JR Miniatures

This is one of the major terrain manufacturers in terms of buildings for all scales. In 1/285th they have a large number of offerings, including buildings suitable for the Middle East, European, and East European regions. They are available directly from the manufacturer and I've seen them sold on Ebay, Warweb, and many more online sites, so you should have no problem finding them.

One of the huge advantages of this

range is that they are inexpensive. \$5 or \$6 will get you a small bag of 2-3 buildings (usually identical) and if you get a few bags of different types you can assemble a good looking village in no time at all. The buildings are made of a dry, whitish-gray plaster that paint up well, but if you're looking for intricate detail you will need to look elsewhere. Overall, they're good value for the money and I use them as filler buildings for my large villages.



JR Miniatures offers a wide range of inexpensive buildings in this scale.



One of the detailed buildings available through GHQ.

GHQ

GHQ is naturally known for their outstanding 1/285th scale micro-armor ranges and their 1/2400th scale ships. They also have a range of 1/285th scale buildings that are similar to their miniatures in that they are very detailed. Each building will easily cost you double what many other companies charge, but with a

good paint job they do stand out on the tabletop.

GHQ also makes the Terrain Maker line of terrain which use Styrofoam hexes that can be cut, modified, and painted to represent almost any terrain on the planet. I've seen some spectacular examples of this terrain system, but it does take time, a sizeable investment of money, and trying to make a large number of reusable hexes can be a challenge.

Timecast

I do not own any buildings from this company, although I do plan to order some in the near future. However, they do have one of the more spectacular gaming sites in the business. Maybe not from a graphics/functionality standpoint, but their gallery pages will definitely provide

the small scale gamer with inspiration!

Timecast sells a wide variety of buildings for Western and Eastern Europe in several scales, but we will confine ourselves to talking about the 1/285th offerings. There are farms, single story houses, two story stores, houses, and much more. They seem reasonably priced, but I'm sure the shipping from England will greatly add to the total cost if you're ordering from the U.S.

Again, where they score some huge points is with the pictures on their site of large villages, Italian towns, modern villages, and much more. The pictures of village blocks with tiny walls, sheds, greenhouses, and much more will provide the gamer with so many ideas that you cannot help but want to get started immediately on some kind of building project!



One of the many striking examples of terrain building from the Timecast site.

Leva/Wargamer-Poland

Determining who or what company owns this line of resin 1/285th scale buildings and terrain is difficult at times. It is available from Poland at: www.wargamer.pl and you can regularly see these products on Ebay, but sometimes sold by different companies. Regardless of who is selling them, these are some of the best 1/285th scale products around. They make an extensive line of fortifications, railway items (both track and trackside buildings), and village/city buildings. The items are made out of resin and are very well sculpted. The prices are reasonable and even though they are usually shipped from Poland, I've had pretty good success working with them and they will combine shipping.

1/285th Terrain: A Glimpse of What is Available (cont.)



This is one of the track sections from the Leva line (?). They make an extensive assortment of railway track and buildings.

Paper Terrain

This company offers a wide variety of 1/285th scale buildings printed on cardstock. The buildings are in color with several per sheet and include walls, out-buildings, and more. The challenge is having the patience to do the cutting and folding, but if you can then you will be able to produce spectacular results as in the image below. I've ordered and built some of the 15mm sets and they offer very fast service plus a good product for the money that gives you a lot of options for creating terrain.



One of the many fine examples you will see at the Paper Terrain site.

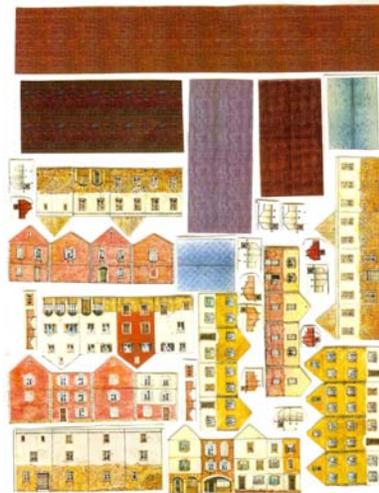
Other Manufacturers

There are enough odds & ends in the gaming world for this scale that it deserves mention. Many companies that regularly do 15mm or 25mm terrain will offer a few items in 1/285th scale. Listing all of them here would be near impos-

sible, but you can do a search on the Internet or check out Ebay. I've found many one off type of buildings that can add flavor to a village block or break up what looks like a line of the same buildings. I've even seen some of the old Galia buildings (slabs of plaster!) available on Ebay.

Free Paper Terrain

I came across several sheets of free 1/285th scale buildings and if you do an Internet search you can come up with a few more. I could be mistaken, but these look like the sets that were sold by Ros Heroics way back in the 70s and 80s.



One of the many 1/285th scale paper building sets that are available online.

I printed these off on cardstock, then cut and glue the various buildings together. If reinforced with balsa or sheet plastic and attached to bases with flocking they produce a very acceptable village. I also found someone who had taken pictures of actual European buildings, then created a set of 1/285th scale paper buildings. There were only a few in the set, but they quickly became factories and industry buildings near my railway lines! Because of the small scale, they look as good as resin or plaster buildings on the tabletop.

Other Sites

One of the incredible 6mm or 1/285th sites is the 6mm Wargaming site that has



One of the outstanding examples of terrain building on the 6mm wargaming site:

<http://6mm.wargaming.info/index.htm>

a number of tutorials and examples on it. The pictures of the highways and Middle East cities are inspiring to say the least. You can easily get a number of ideas for your own designs by visiting this site.



Perhaps beyond the realm of ability for most gamers, the Z-scale buildings on this site show what can be done in this scale with some effort:

<http://zscalebuildings.com>

Another great site is the Z Scale Building site listed above. Although primarily designed for use with model railroads, Z scale is close enough to 1/285th to be of interest. Again, there are some inspiring models and they are all scratchbuilt!

I'm sure I missed a few companies, web sites, etc., but this should at least get you pointed in the right direction if you are just getting into this scale. You can create some incredible layouts by spending a little time and effort with your terrain to go along with the miniatures!

Building Command Stands for BKC

I've found that when playing any variant of the Warmaster system, whether it's the fantasy, Ancients, or WW2 version, it's good to have the commanders stand out. Not only does it look good on the tabletop, but you can quickly see where they are and it helps with game-play.

For this article I'm going to focus on command stands for 1/285th scale for use with Blitzkrieg Commander. For this system you need command stands to represent the overall commander, the commanders of various companies and battalions, forward air controllers, forward artillery observers, and recon assets.

I decided long ago that all of my command stands for any of the Warmaster games would be on round bases. This would definitely set them apart from the other "regular" combat units that are usually rectangular or square based. For the bases the cheapest option are the wooden circles sold in packs at craft stores that come in various sizes. Two or three dollars will get you a good assortment and quantity, plus they are thicker than the usual basing material which also works well. My only complaint about them is that they don't take super glue well as the surfaces have a smooth finish. A few swipes with some sandpaper, however, takes care of that.

For the overall commanders on both sides I tend to use the larger circles to make them stand out on the tabletop. These commanders are extremely important in the Warmaster system, so they should be highly visible. For the late war, 1944-5 Russian overall commander in the middle picture I went with what



was probably a common scene in East Prussia, Hungary, or around Berlin. A T-34/85 has smashed its way through a house and the regimental commander has arrived in a jeep to go over the next phase of an attack with the maps spread out on the front of the tank.

The house is made of spare balsa scraps and you only need to do part of the house. Cut out the area where the tank will sit and add a few walls to the back side. You can build the roof by taking a few strips of balsa or sheet plastic to make the framework, then a piece of stiff cardboard with the tiles scored with an X-Acto blade is glued over the framework. This gives the appearance that part of the roof has been blown away by fire or an explosion.

The rubble is made from a spare piece of balsa wood that has been cut into various chunks. These are glued haphazardly around the building, painted black, then dry-brushed gray. The fence is from CinC and then you just need to add some vehicles and a command staff.

The German command stand to the left is something similar. Here, an Sdkfz-251 has stopped near a destroyed house. The kampgruppe commander is look-

ing at his maps at the front of the vehicle while the rest of the crew/staff are in the immediate vicinity. In this instance the roof was made from single strips of cardboard that are overlaid, giving it a "stepped" tile-like appearance and is easier to drybrush.

The command stand in front of the overall commander's stand is for an FAO. The Sdkfz-251 is hidden behind a ridge or on a sunken road (your pick) while the artillery observer is lying prone on top of the ridge. The rear command stand is a Jgpz-IV with a commander in the tank and officers at the side of the tank. Tank commanders require few things to make, but tweezers and patience is definitely needed. Take pretty much any single figure and cut it in half, then glue it on one of the hatches after scraping the hatch off with an X-Acto blade. Then, look at some pictures of the actual



vehicles to see how the hatches were shaped. Cut one out of thin sheet plastic, then glue it either in front or rear of the tank commander. Not always easy to do and it may take you more than one try, but the overall effect is terrific.

Finally, to the left is a command stand for a Russian motorcycle, or recon battalion

which had a variety of organizations and equipment. A BA-64 and a jeep have stopped one a crossroads near a wall with a tree to discuss the next attack. Again, simple to make with only the wall needing to be scratchbuilt.

The important thing to remember is that your FAOs, overall commanders, and FACs are going to be using less than glamorous vehicles. This is a chance for the gamer/modeler to use trucks, tractors, jeeps, etc., to enhance a command stand. Remember, you're going for an effect and to make these pieces stand out on the tabletop. By searching through your bits and scraps, you can make houses, walls, bridges, and more for your commanders!



Alone Against The Bugs

My copy of Avalon Hill's Starship Troopers had been sitting on the shelf for a long, long time and I couldn't even remember the last time I opened it up and probably even longer from when I played it last. The main problem is that you really need two players for any of the bug scenarios as mapping the underground tunnels doesn't work well solitaire.

I was cruising around Boardgamegeek.com and under the Starship Troopers entry found a file called

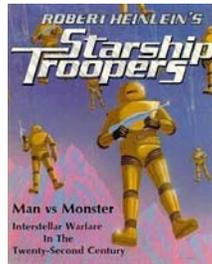


The initial drop with the platoon spread out over the six sectors.

Alone Against the Bugs. AAB is designed for solo play where a platoon drops on a bug planet and attempts to carry out a series of missions. Intrigued, I printed off the two page file, dusted off the Starship Troopers game, and went over the rules again prior to playing.

There is no set order of battle (except for the bugs) that is recommended, so I took a standard MI platoon of around 50 troopers plus a few HE rocket launchers and several DAR and DAP for each squad. I thought that would be enough, but I was horribly wrong!

Basically, the game is played in "sectors", with each half of the three game boards designated as a sector. Five of the sectors have one of three missions assigned to them and the sixth is unassigned, meaning that the squad that drops there can move to another sector to assist the mission there. The missions include killing all enemy forces in the sector, capturing a brain bug, and retrieving human prison-



ers. The goal is to achieve success in more than half the sectors while keeping the Arachnids under 100 points. The Arachnids score points by killing or wounding troopers, keeping breaches open, and for how long their combat forces are functioning on the surface. The MI make their drop, scatter, then the game begins and you start rolling for the Arachnid reaction.

Each sector has a combat brain cell, one beam weapon, five warriors, and five workers. First, you roll if there is a breach and the location of the breach. Next, any beam weapons move to the surface and fire. Then, if there are troopers close enough to the breach you roll for the number of warrior bugs that will attack. Also, you roll to see if any demolitions go off in each sector modified by which turn it is. In my experience the first three turns are brutal for the MI player and I finally toned it down to only one successful attack per sector per turn.

Once the MI start to descend into the tunnels there are rolls to see where the tunnels lead, if you find a brain cell, and if you find any prisoners. The rules are pretty easy to use and if you've played Starship Troopers you get the hang of the sequence of play pretty quickly.

On one of my playtests I dropped the MI platoon with two sectors having mis-



Bug warriors and a beam weapon emerge from a breach to attack.

sions of killing all enemy forces, two were looking for prisoners, and one sector had to capture a brain cell. The drop was pretty good, but the second turn was

Starship Troopers Variant

a nightmare. I lost four troopers to bug demolitions, including a Nuc 6 burst that took out two troopers! Also, three breaches opened up and beam weapons came out and took out more troopers. The third turn wasn't much better, with more breaches opening up, demolitions going off everywhere, and the MI positioning themselves for various assaults.

By the end of turn four most of the beam weapons were destroyed and the MI were going down two breaches into the tunnels. The really bad sector was B, where two breaches opened up next to each other and warrior bugs came out and attacked, killing one trooper and wound-



Sectors C & D showing several troopers either KIA or WIA and getting ready to go down into the tunnels.

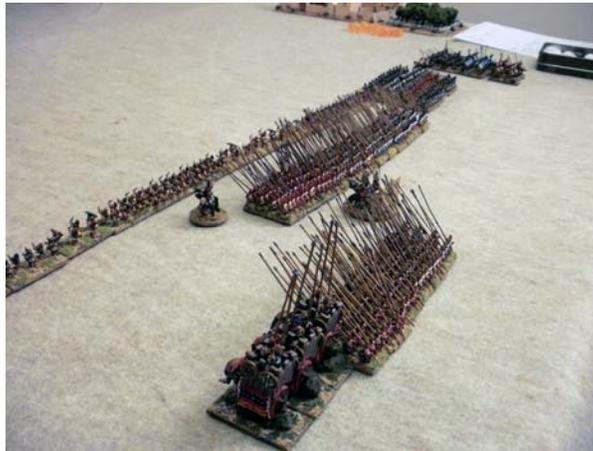
ing another. The beam weapon was still functioning after three turns on the surface and even with the extra squad brought over from the empty board it was tough going.

In A sector a prisoner was found and in C the enemy were finished off, but D and E were taking a beating in the tunnels. Continuous bug attacks stalled the exploration of the tunnels and finally the wounded needed to be pulled out. When the retrieval boat arrived the MI were successful in 3 of the 5 sectors, but had given up 125 points, meaning I had lost the battle.

Overall, I think this is a fun way to play the game and get it onto the table. I think more variety could be added to the tunnel exploration and my advice is to bring everything, including engineers, extra demolitions, etc., as you are going to need them!

WMA Battle Report: 2,000 pt. Romans vs. Seleucids

If you've been a regular reader of this publication you've probably figured out by this time that we like Warmaster Ancients...a lot. I'm not sure if it's the look of the game, the unpredictability of the command system, the exciting combat system, the ability to change the composition of your army each time, or a combination of all of these things. I do know that we enjoy playing it and most games come down to the final few die rolls, keeping everyone interested in the game until the very end.



around keeping things from getting out of hand on the flanks and pressing forward in the center with the legions. With both sides deployed and commands sorted out, the game began.

The Seleucid forces started out fast, with almost all of their units moving on the first turn while the Romans weren't so lucky and were only able to move a few. The second turn was a virtual replay of the first, with the Romans moving a few units, but failing miserably in the center. By turn three both sides had cavalry in position for a few attacks along with the archers of each side finally in range to start shooting.

We do have some large forces, so we usually go with 2,000 points per side, which lets us have 4-6 players, making it ideal for some of our club nights. Since most of our armies at this time fought in the Middle East, terrain isn't that critical, so we usually throw out some villages and a few hills which makes the set up pretty easy.

graded to cataphracts) along with several light cavalry units.

The Romans went with plenty of legions as is to be expected. They also had a unit of artillery, several units of archers and skirmishers, plenty of auxiliary infantry, and a few units of heavy cavalry.

The action began on the Seleucid left with the light cavalry charging into some

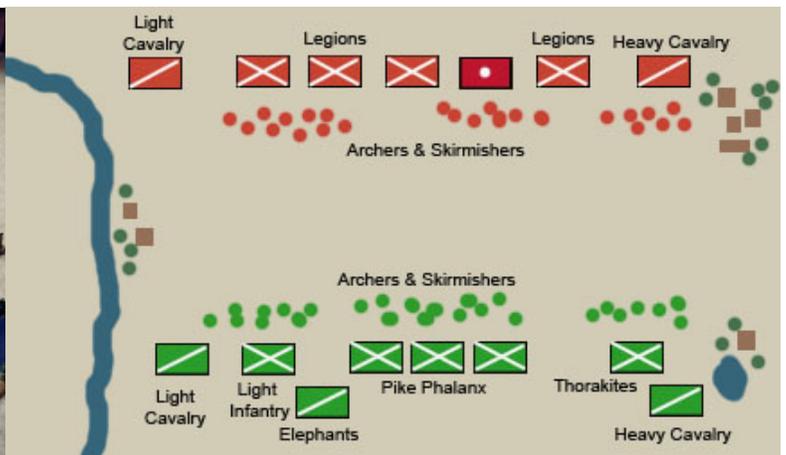
This time I chose an army list for the Seleucids that featured more cavalry than usual. The last time I had used Seleucids I had gone with an elephant heavy army, with which gave me tremendous striking power, but far fewer units and a lower break point. That experiment didn't work out so well, so time to try something else. There were six units of pikes, two Imitation Roman units (in place of pikes-an option for Late Seleucid armies), some Thorakites, several units of archers and skirmishers, some light infantry units, and only one unit of elephants this time. The main striking force would be the three heavy cavalry units (with one up-

The Seleucids definitely had the advantage in cavalry and the light forces were pretty well balanced. The Romans had the edge in the quality of infantry, even though the Seleucid pike units are very good, their supports in terms of light infantry and Thorakites were pretty average. Overall, this was a pretty even matchup with break points being pretty even.



Roman cavalry posted on that flank. The back and forth went on for several turns with both sides charging and counter-charging, but not really getting anywhere. When the archers and skirmishers began to get involved things started to die and

The Seleucid plan was to skirmish on the left flank, achieve parity in the center by keeping the Legions busy, and crushing the right flank with the heavy cavalry. The Roman strategy seemed to revolve



WMA Battle Report: 2,000 pt. Romans vs. Seleucids (cont.)



by the end of the seventh turn both sides had their forces on that flank wrecked and unable to continue on. Essentially, both sides strategy was going exactly as planned.

In the center both sides were engaged in an archery and skirmish duel that went on for several turns, with the main infantry units unable to move into contact. By the start of the sixth turn the archers and skirmishers had cleared themselves out and it was time for the main event.

On the Seleucid right the heavy cavalry, after a fast start then sitting idle for a few turns, began to make their presence felt. They launched several charges that severely weakened the Roman flank, even though they did take heavy casualties themselves. Finally, on the eighth turn the Seleucids rolled very well and

the Romans poorly, resulting in the destruction of several units on that flank. The two remaining Seleucid heavy cav units, including the Guard Cavalry and the cataphracts poured through the holes and began to attack units in the rear.

Faced with the prospect of having their flank turned, the Romans sent the legions into combat all along the center. They were met by pikes along with elephants and several large melees broke out. Both sides were dealing out a lot of damage and several units were quickly eliminated. However, time was running out for the Romans. With the Seleucid heavy cavalry picking off weakened units behind the front lines, the Romans were losing the break point battle.

The combat between the pikes and legions continued on, with both sides

adding more units to the ever growing melee. By this time the Seleucids were barely ahead in break points, so a few lost combats could have easily resulted in a Seleucid loss. Once again, though, the Roman die rolls failed them at the wrong time, resulting in some counterattacks that didn't succeed and leaving damaged units exposed. The Seleucid heavy cavalry, now down to just a few stands, charged in and finished off several Roman units. The Romans reached their break point first and would have to withdraw, leaving the Seleucids as victors.

Again, a very close battle that went down to the last few die rolls and that could have been won by either side. Romans and Seleucids are two closely matched armies with each side having a counter to the strengths of each army.



When I first got into gaming in the 70s, my first board game was SPI's Sixth Fleet, which was about a hypothetical confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw pact in the Med. Over the years I bought games such as NATO Division Commander, Fulda Gap, Red Star/White Star, and too many others to be mentioned here. One of my fondest gaming memories is playing GDW's Third World Series with all of the games fitted together not once, but twice!



World War Three gaming was a staple for many companies in the 70s and 80s, with games coming out continuously and attracting a wide audience. On top of that you had many gamers, including myself, who had large collections of modern micro-armor and we would wage titanic battles between the NATO forces and the Warsaw Pact in Germany. Even though many of the rules/game systems were complex by today's standards, everyone had a lot of fun, whether it was hunting for convoys in the North Atlantic with Harpoon, playing an all night game of Gulf Strike by Victory Games, or using Challenger or Enola's Combat Commander to move around hundreds of tanks in a micro-armor battle on a Saturday afternoon.

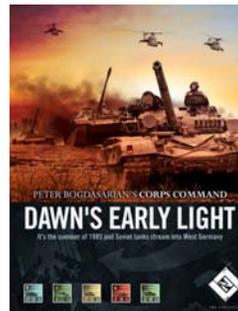
Then all of a sudden the Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet Union pretty much collapsed, and these games and rules became outdated almost overnight. The gaming companies took a huge hit as all of a sudden one of their popular areas that could be counted on to produce sales was gone. In the late 90s I parted with my 30+ games on the topic through Ebay and thought that was the end of that gaming era. I was wrong.

True, there was a quiet period from about 1995-2003 where few, if any games or rules came out for the period. Anything that did come out was picked up at the local store, looked at for a minute, then usually put down again with the thinking, "Been there, done that". After

all, why play something that never happened and obviously was never going to happen? At the time I thought any company producing anything related to a hypothetical NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation was nuts. Even Desert Storm didn't really generate that much interest.

Then followed a brief period where game designers tried to get everyone interested in non NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontations such as China invading Taiwan, a new Russian civil war, NATO in the Balkans, and similar conflicts, but again, it didn't generate that much interest. Now we haven't come full circle, but we're beginning to see some movement back towards this once popular gaming subject.

I think the game that said to everyone, "It's OK to start making games about this subject again", is when S&T put out an issue several years ago called Group Soviet Forces Germany. It was well received and sells fast when it appears on Ebay.



Lock 'N Load Publishing then produced their World at War series, which is sort of an AH Panzerblitz/AP Panzergrenadier type game based upon a Third World War in Germany in the 80s. It must be popular as it has spawned several supplements and it looks as if it won't be stopping anytime soon. I reviewed a few of them several issues ago and they have very nice components, the system works well, and it should have come out 25 years ago!

LNL also just released Dawn's Early Light, which takes the Corp Command series to 1980s Germany. Again, very nice components and it has been well received, so there is the possibility that more games could be forthcoming.

Just recently, S&T released Cold War Battles 2 which has for one of the games Wurzburg Pentomic. This is about a Warsaw Pact attack against NATO before the M-1s, AH-64s, etc., make their appearance and the US Army was still using the Pentomic organization for its combat units! So now, not only can you play the

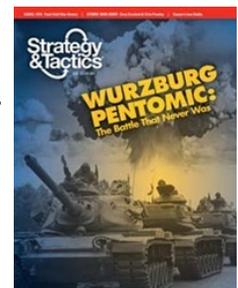
1980s type invasions with numerous games, but you can even go back further!

Now this article doesn't include the numerous Arab-Israeli War games that are out there, the air combat games for Vietnam, or even successful games like Red Dragon Rising (which is going to be produced in a deluxe format soon). The games we are talking about deal with a Russian/Warsaw Pact attack on NATO in Europe.

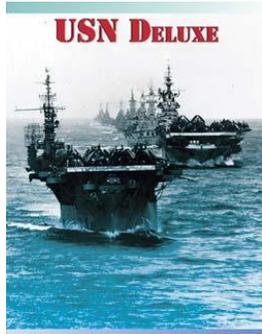
So the big question is why bother? It never happened. Period. Everyone spent trillions of dollars gearing up for the next war and no one came to the dance. For gamers who spent possibly years of their lives (I know I did) gaming out naval, air, and land battles for this era, all of a sudden it was gone and your gaming stuff was obsolete. It has been consigned to the realm where other gamer fantasies lie, such as Operation Sea Lion, Napoleon's invasion of England, War Plan Orange, U.S. forces invading Mexico after the Civil War, Germany fighting on into 1946, and a whole host of others.

I myself have a hard time getting excited for anything dealing with this era anymore. There is something that gnaws at you during the game that says this never happened and you may as well be playing a sci-fi or fantasy game. Even though I have great memories of gaming this era, I find it hard to go forward and revisit it. I do admit with each new release it gets more and more tempting!

For some gamers, however, it still holds possibilities and excitement. I think it's why we keep buying East Front games over and over. There's something about masses of tanks, ships, and aircraft dueling it out that sets it apart from skirmish, card-driven, or horse & musket games. I think many gamers love this stuff and there's nothing wrong with that.



In an early issue of Strategy & Tactics back in the 70s was a game called USN. With one map and over 400 counters it was definitely a “mini-monster and one of the more complex games of that era. Recently, Decision Games has re-issued USN as USN Deluxe. I’ve been reading a few books on the carrier battles in the Pacific during WW2, so I thought I would try this game out.



makes using them a challenge. Overall, the components are pretty good and once you get the hang of the systems you are ready to start play.

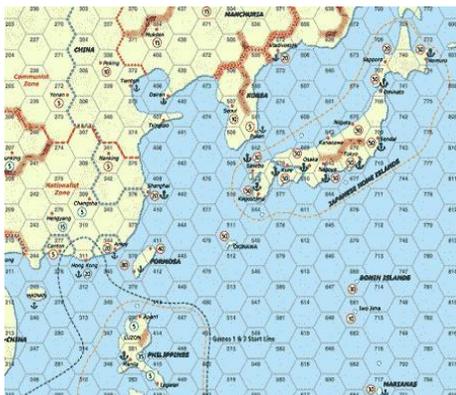
Fortunately, the scenario book gives you quite a few smaller battles which are ideal to learn the system. There are two turn Coral Sea, Midway, and Solomons scenarios along with an eight turn Burma scenario. Then you have the yearly campaigns and in a big change from USN, USND has the entire 1941-1945 campaign along with a War Plan Orange campaign of the U.S. vs. Japan in the 30’s. Certainly, there is plenty here to keep gamers occupied for quite some time. The full campaign is 192 turns!

The boxed game comes with two nicely done 22 x 34 maps showing the area from Pearl harbor up to Dutch harbor and across to the border of India. This is a big change from USN which only had one map. However, there is a LOT of blank space on the sides of the map that could have been used for other things. There are around 800 counters that represent individual carriers, pairs of battleships, or squadrons of cruisers and destroyers. Air units are divided into land based, naval, and long-range with each point representing roughly 10 aircraft. The land units range from defense battalions to entire fronts for the Russian-Japanese border. My biggest complaint here is that all of the Allied forces are one color, with no way to differentiate between British, Australian, or Indian forces.

The sequence of play is long and will take a few trial turns to get the hang of it. Basically you have the Japanese player move units, then the Allied player, followed by a joint air strike phase, then the Allies move again, then the Japanese move again, followed by a second joint air strike phase. Each of those phases has up to eight parts, so you’re talking about some long turns. I played the two turn scenarios and the shortest of those took me two hours. Add into that you can have naval bombardment, naval engagement, and land combat in many of those phases and it can get quite complicated quickly.

The rules and charts are typical SPI, thorough, but long and with too few examples. The mission chart needs to be studied thoroughly as it details what each unit can do and the combat tables are printed on a folded reference card which

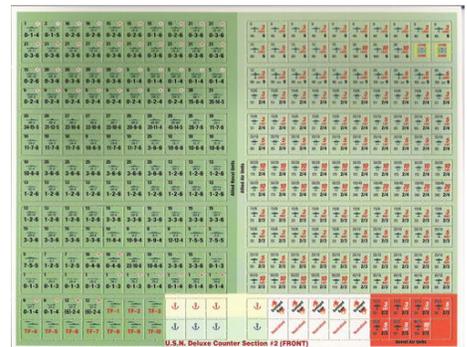
The air strike phase is the most interesting as you have to designate what each unit is going to do, i.e., CAP, attack bases, etc., and there is a mission planning chart for that (although I recommend the optional rule to just place the aircraft to save a lot of time.) which can take some time to fill out twice each turn. Air combat definitely shows that the Japanese side is in trouble as they replace their losses very slowly as the Allies can load up transports and carriers from the West Coast box with as many as they can carry each turn!



The other essential part of USND is logistics. Yes, there are oil tankers with oil remaining markers, engineers, bases, ports, and airfields. The Pacific was a war of logistics and USND attempts to show this in the best way possible. Every

offensive has to be planned carefully, transports need to be marshaled, oilers and ships topped off at bases, then the attack can begin. The game forces you to look at capturing forward bases, constructing airfields, and many other things that most games skip over.

Add on optional rules for the China front, Japanese submarines, task force markers, kamikazes, etc., and you have a very detailed game with large stacks of counters and a lot to deal with each turn. The smaller scenarios should be played before you attempt one of the larger campaigns.



So, the big question, is this fun to play? Well, that is debatable. Unlike AH’s Victory in the Pacific or GMT’s Empire of the Sun where there are decisive results each turn, USND presents you with the view of a long, grinding campaign. There will be numerous turns of combat where neither side does much than shoot down a few points of aircraft which took some time to figure out. Disappointing at first, but the cumulative result may pay dividends 20 or 30 turns down the road. The question is, do you want to game that out? The answer is that this is not for everyone or gamers looking for a quick Pacific game.

In the end USND accomplishes one thing very well, namely showing the scope of the Pacific theater and the long campaign it was. The game is about organization, planning, logistics, and coming up with a strategy across a huge area, which isn’t easy to do. The game is a realistic simulation of the theater, but it is definitely for grognards and those who have time to leave up the game for several weeks or months.

Memoirs of a Miniature & Board Wargamer Pt. 15

Gamers Have The Best Sayings

What the hobby eventually boils down to for many of us is the social aspect. Friends sitting around having fun playing military style games with either miniatures or cardboard counters. During the game play there is a lot of discussion (at least in the games I've been in over the last 35 years!) and most of it has nothing to do with the game! Topics range from football back to miniatures then on to sci-fi movies and back to the latest wargame magazines. During a typical night you can easily broach 30+ topics while still gaming!

For me, what I remember the most from the hundreds, if not thousands of games I've played, are the memories of what we talked about during those games. Long after the memory of the game is gone, some of the sayings and comments will stay with me forever.

For some reason, air combat games bring out the best comments from gamers and by now you've noticed the images from Star Wars and Top Gun in the article as that's where most of the quotes originate from. "Stay on the leader", "Never tell me the odds", "We're going in full throttle", "Too close for missiles, I'm switching to guns", and "I feel the need for speed" can be heard regularly at any kind of air combat game, whether it's Fokkers vs. Spads in WW1 or F-4s vs. Mig-21s over the skies of North Vietnam.



On one night one of our newer gamers was not doing well in Phantoms and had already lost one aircraft. His second jet was in trouble as he kept circling around while his opponent climbed and dove to get into better firing positions. At one point he shouted out, "He keeps using that 3D thing on me!" Naturally that brought out another quote from Wrath of Kahn; "He's intelligent, but not experienced. His pattern shows two dimensional thinking." Just goes to show you that gamers can pull out movie quotes from anywhere at any time!

During another game a player kept plotting maneuvers that took him further and further out from the action until he was almost at the end of the board and several feet from the closest enemy jet or for that matter any aircraft on his side as well! This prompted everyone to give him his new call sign; Lonesome Dove. There was another game where a player who had a jet being tailed closely by another player said something to the effect that he was going to try a "special" maneuver to turn the tables on his opponent. In the next turn he got knocked down and

his opponent said, "Yes, the falling down to earth in a flaming ball of debris maneuver worked well!"

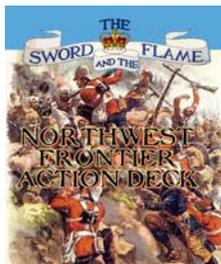
We were playing a Renaissance scenario and a player moved off board around a forest at the board edge, then appeared further up the board ahead of the forest. Several of us said that we shouldn't allow that as no one knew what terrain/obstacles were off the board. The player said that the board edge wasn't the end of the world and you don't fall off the edge. Another player said, "Actually, this is the Renaissance and that is the end of the world!"

If anyone ever gets hot with the dice then the inevitable cheating comments start showing up, including two favorites. "If you ain't cheatin' you ain't tryin'" and "Cheat early and cheat often!" Just shows you that as long as there are gamers around the table there will be an unending stream of quotes to go with the game!



TSATF Action Decks

The Virtual Armchair General has released a series of action decks for use with The Sword & The Flame rules. Each deck has roughly 60+ cards and is designed to be used instead of a regular deck of playing cards.



of hits, which is a great idea. In my opinion this deck is essential for anyone playing TSATF. There are decks for the Zulu War, Sudan, Northwest Frontier, a generic deck, and more are promised in the future.

If I had any complaints it would be that the backgrounds on the cards needed to be lightened even more as the text can be hard to read on



some of the cards. Also, I would have liked to have seen a card marked "Event" since they also sell event decks to be used with TSATF. Anyway, these are small quibbles with what is otherwise a fine product.

TVAG is to be commended for creating these kinds of supplements for a popular game and for \$10 each you can't go wrong!

Blast From The Past Pt. 14: Dusting Off Some Old Sci-Fi Games

Along with the Starship Troopers article in this issue you can see I'm delving into my gaming past! Actually, I used to own all of these games and for some strange reason when the trend shifted towards simpler games I got rid of them. Now having gotten sick of simpler games, I'm going back and re-purchasing some older games and playing them again. I thought for this issue I would feature three games that many of us have either owned, played, or at least heard about from times gone by.

The first of these is *Godsfire* by Metagaming, who also gave us classics like *Ogre/GEV*, and *Melee/Wizard*. This is the version by Task Force Games which was kind of a second edition. The game features 3D movement, economics, and multiple scenarios/campaigns. The components are pure 70s, but are functional, so don't expect any GMT/MMP style maps and graphics with this game. The rulebook is smaller than you would expect, but when you consider it is in type 7 font, there is a lot there!

Basically, you are running a faction that consists of a series of worlds. You control production, the military, and for good measure there is a political aspect to this as well. It's hard enough running your own planets without worrying about wars! This can be a long game and by that I mean that a four player game may go 12-14 hours. In this day and age it will be near impossible to find a group to play this, but back in the day we did and had fun with it. The game is complex, but once everything gets started it's not too bad and it flows pretty smoothly.

The second game, *Warpwar*, was part of Metagaming's very successful Microgame series. In terms of components you don't get much with a small blue map and one sheet of very thin counters. The rulebook is easy to digest and you can be up and playing in no time at all.

Each side gets a number of build points that can be used for engines, beams, missiles, etc., so designing your



ships is a big part of the game, but it's fairly straightforward to do. This is important as *Warpwar* uses a diceless combat system, instead matching up speed and weapons on a chart to determine hits. Simple, takes little time, and very effective.

You can also add technology levels to the ships and the map has its own choke points and bases/objectives which forces the action.

All in all, this is a good little game and well worth the money. It would be nice someday to see a larger version with a campaign system, better components, more ships, etc, as I think the game holds up well even today.

The last game is one of my favorites and one of the first sci-fi games I ever owned. *Imperium*, first by Conflict Games and later by GDW, is still regarded as one of the best sci-fi games of all time. In the box you get a set of rules, a board that's not much to look at with stars and jump lines going across it, and lots of ship counters. The components, like many games from this era, are adequate, but nothing more. Ships are rated for beam weapons, missiles, and armor/shields. You get scouts, destroyers, light cruisers, heavy cruisers, dreadnaughts in several sizes, carriers, fighters, ground troops, and more. There are a dozen strategies about what to buy for your fleet and how they will be used, which gives this game good replay value. Empire units tend to be missile heavy while Terran forces favor beams, making this a contest between two forces with opposite strategies.



Imperium is played as a series of wars, with each war lasting a number of turns depending upon how much territory is seized. Each turn has several movement, combat, and reaction phases which sounds complex, but in practice it flows smoothly. Each side gets a number of resource points each turn that are spent on forces which is one of the more fun parts of the game, basi-

cally deciding if you should buy plenty of light units or go for heavy cruisers and dreadnaughts.

Combat is by rounds with the range (close or long) determined by die roll. Terran forces naturally want to close the range while Empire forces want to stand off and lob missiles. Ships die fast in this game, so it's good to have reserves at various choke points on the map. The Empire also benefits by having destroyed ships placed back in a production line, so they will usually grind down the Terrans in a long war. The Empire can also call on Imperial Intervention and ask for more money or ships to fight the upstart Terrans.

Once the war ends, there is a peace phase where the winning side usually takes a beating. Ships become outdated or not maintained, production slows, etc., which gives the losing side a chance to gear up to get revenge at the start of the next war. This is one of the more clever aspects of the game and shows the effects of a long peace between wars.

Although this can be a long game and you can go through several wars, it is in my opinion, one of the best sci-fi based games out there and fun to play. *Avalanche Press* put out their version several years ago and while graphically it was beautiful, the 3D map didn't work, the combat system was contrived at best, and what should have been the ultimate version of the game ended up being extraordinarily average. GDW also released *Dark Nebula*, which was in their smaller boxed game series and based off of *Imperium*.

There are plenty of other older sci-fi games such as AH's *Stellar Conquest*, GDW's *Triplanetary*, and the SPI series with *Starsoldier*, *Outreach*, etc., but I think that these three are still the best of the bunch. Again, these games, with the exception of *Warpwar*, take some time to play and in this day and age that's not everyone's thing any more. Still, if you get a chance to try these out, everyone should at least once.

Age of Reason: Meeting Engagement

Every so often we set up a big game and this scenario was no exception. We went with 25 strength points per side and for those who don't play AOR, that's 25 battalions of infantry or regiments of cavalry with about 8-10 artillery batteries per side as well. We rarely finish these big games (naturally that brings up the question about why do we try to play them?), but it certainly looks good on the tabletop and it gives everyone a lot to do, so boredom during the game never sets in!

The Prussians went with a cavalry heavy force, using several units of dragoons, a hussar brigade, and a cuirassier brigade. They definitely outnumbered the French cavalry and had better quality overall. The French for their part went with an infantry heavy force with a lot of artillery. It would definitely be a contrast in styles as the Prussians would try to defeat the French cavalry quickly, then try to threaten the flanks of the infantry.

The Prussians deployed a brigade of cavalry on both flanks with the hussars in the center/left as a reserve/exploitation force. The infantry was spread out, but the better units were given to the commander on the Prussian right as the plan was to move in force on the right and hold in the center.

The French deployed what cavalry they had on their flanks and stacked the center with infantry. Three heavy batteries deployed on the hill in the center for support and it appeared that the French



Prussian cuirassier regiments move up on the Prussian left. 15mm figures by Essex and Old Glory.

strategy was to hold on both flanks and drive through the Prussian center.

The first few turns went by quickly as both sides tried to move their infantry and artillery to make their attacks. On the flanks the inevitable cavalry clashes occurred. I say inevitable as I've played AOR probably over 50 times and in about 95% of those games there are cavalry battles on the flanks in the first 2-3 turns! Yes, it was a common occurrence in 18th century warfare, but it would be nice to see a change every so often!

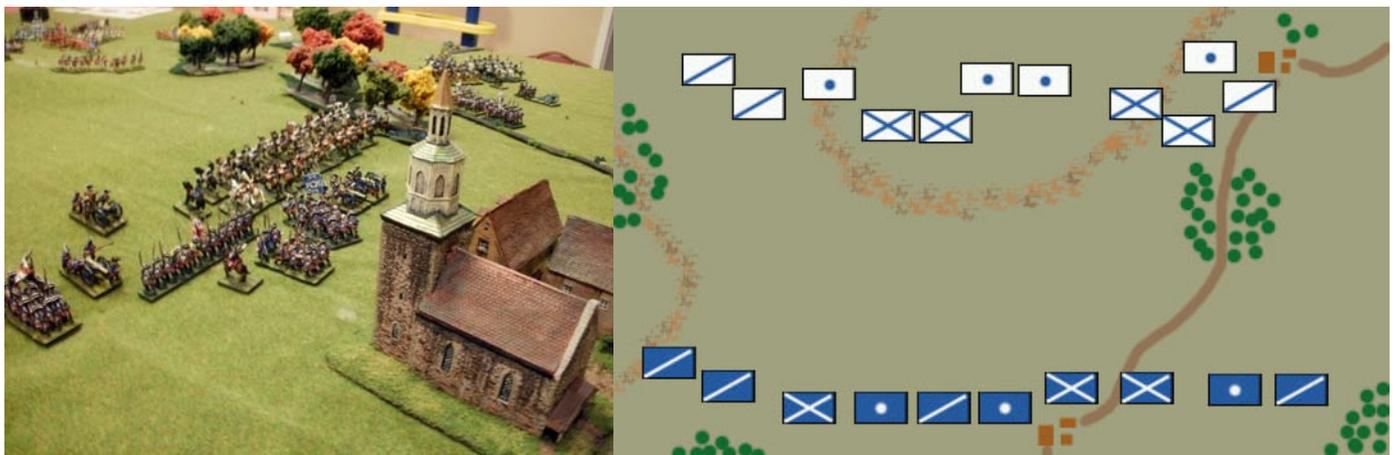
The Prussians had success on the left, but it was quickly negated by a strong French counterattack. The Prussians reformed and charged again, defeating the French on that flank and forcing them to fall back and rally. On the right flank the Prussians met with mixed success. Their first charges forced the French back and it looked like the Prussians might

chase the French cavalry entirely off the board, thus creating an opening for the Prussians to turn the flanks and end the game. However, the French rallied, counterattacked, and with some really bad die rolls forced the Prussians to temporarily withdraw. This left a Prussian infantry brigade exposed and the French cavalry smartly turned and overran an artillery battery and shattered a Prussian infantry battalion. By the time the Prussian cavalry reformed and came back to the fight the damage had been done.

With the Prussian right in a bloody stalemate and the Prussian left victorious, but bloodied, it was time to turn attention to the center for the main event with the infantry. With Prussian cavalry threatening on the flank the French did have to detach and extend some of their infantry to cover against a flank attack. This offset their superiority in numbers to where it was about even.

Now this is probably where the Prussians made a mistake and that was taking the fight to the French infantry and artillery in the center. The French were set on the crest of a hill and deployed to meet the Prussian attack. Long range artillery fire, especially from the three heavy batteries (yes, there were jokes made about the French "grand" battery in the center) started to tear holes in the Prussian attack.

In AOR the Prussians do have certain advantages in moving at the oblique and firing while moving, which is very historical. The Prussian players, including myself, thought that this may be the deciding factor in our attack, but we were wrong!



Age of Reason: Meeting Engagement (cont.)



The Prussians stormed up the slope and tried to deploy their artillery to support the attack. They were met by a murderous crossfire from the French infantry and artillery. The Prussians fired back, doing some serious damage to the French infantry. One of the Prussian artillery batteries was quickly knocked out, but the Prussian attack continued on. There were now at least six infantry firefights raging along the line with both sides doing damage to their opposite number.

The Prussian artillery, especially the siege guns which had been lagging behind, now were deployed and started to fire at the French infantry at the end of the lines. After a few barrages one of the French battalions nearly disintegrated, but time was running out in the center for the hard pressed Prussian infantry. Another artillery battery got knocked out and two of the infantry battalions faltered and fell back.

The Prussian cavalry on the left had reformed by now and with the help of the reserve Hussar brigade, now moved forward to try to help the main attack in the center. However, the French infantry on that side had formed up into squares and were now supported by artillery while the French cavalry tried to get itself straightened out. In the end the action on the left died down as neither side had the strength to do anything substantial. The Prussians still had a powerful cavalry force, but there was nowhere for it to go other than to run a gauntlet of artillery fire and crash headlong into a series of infantry squares.

The Prussian right had also changed into a quiet sector of the battlefield as well. The cavalry of both sides was pretty worn down and no one really

wanted to risk a decisive battle that could result in immediate disaster!

This left the center and the epic battle that was going on with the Prussian infantry trying to carry the hill position. By this time the Prussian infantry had lost the equivalent of a brigade and things weren't looking any better. The French had taken some serious losses, but were in a much better position than the Prussians. With both flanks now in a kind of stalemate, the issue would be decided here.

The Prussians gave it one last go, shifting several battalions and trying to overwhelm one part of the French line. They were met by a murderous fire (actually, good die rolling!) and forced back. They inflicted some losses, but now had nowhere near the strength to force the position. With that we had run out of time and although the Prussians could have shifted forces we had to pick the game and call it a French victory.

One of the problems of running a multi-player game with a lot of forces is that you may need a second night and because of various commitments we couldn't do that, which is a shame as I think the game still had several more turns to go and the Prussians could have pulled it out. The French did a great job of realizing the strength of their position and letting the Prussians come to them.



The Prussian cavalry reserve in the center. 15mm figs by Old Glory (left) and Essex (right).



Prussian cavalry have had success on the flanks, but the French artillery in the center pushes back the Prussian infantry. Below, the Prussian reserve cavalry rush to contain a French counterattack in the center.



Union Attack

Fire & Fury Battle Report

It's been a long time since we last played an ACW battle, so we dusted off our Fire & Fury rules and played a scenario loosely based on the Battle of Bentonville. Although all of us have played Johnny Reb since the dawn of time, we switched to F&F several years ago when it started to become impossible to get a 5-8 player game of JR3 finished in anything under two nights.

The Confederates had several divisions composed of small brigades, but plenty of leaders! The brigades were spread out in entrenchments covering most of the width of the board except for a small farm area that had stone walls bordering a road. While the position looked strong, there were no reserves and not enough artillery to mass against any attackers. Not only that, there were several brigades rated as green troops.

The Union forces consisted of several divisions, but although they barely outnumbered the CSA forces, they were composed of veteran troops and would have the advantage of determining their point of attack. The Union forces also had little artillery and both sides had no cavalry present for the battle.

Most of the first few turns were spent with the Union forces moving up in a series of columns and the CSA forces reacting to the deployment. The Union players appeared as if they would try to overwhelm the CSA left while pinning the center, but with everything coming down the central road it was difficult for



the CSA players to gauge where the main attack would fall. It wasn't until several Union brigades went off the road and formed line that the CSA side knew where the heaviest action would be.

The CSA artillery opened up on the mass of Union troops preparing to attack the CSA left, causing several disorder results and delaying the attack by a turn or two. The other Union troops moved to the center and stopped to deploy. When the first Union attack went in it swept away the two small CSA brigades holding the works on that side and in one instance opened up a serious gap in the defenses.

The Southern troops on that side counterattacked and drove back one brigade, but the position was lost, so the lone reserve brigade was moved as quickly as possible to reinforce that side. The remaining CSA troops in that area spread out to cover the defenses along the

road and farms in case there was a Union breakthrough.

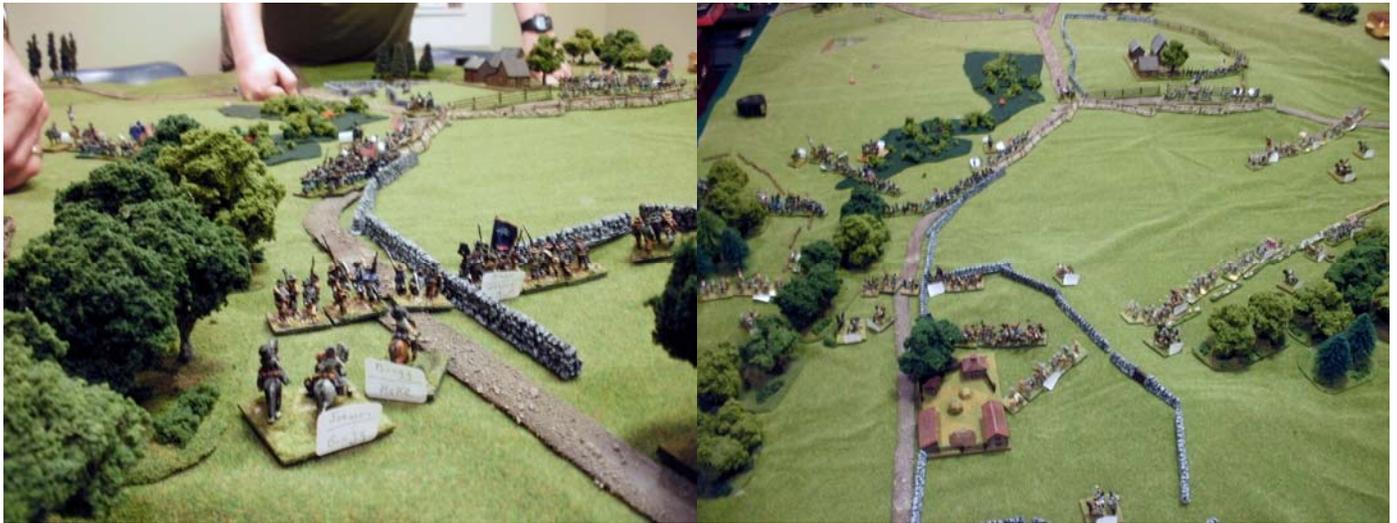
The Union forces attacked again on the CSA left, driving the remaining defenders through the woods and down the crest of the hill. The CSA reserve brigade got there just in time to prevent a complete rout and the next few turns saw the CSA defenders time and time again disorder the Union troops and throw back the charges against their position. By this time, however, the CSA brigades on that side were down almost 50% and it looked like there would be a breakthrough and off the road by the Union side at any moment.

With the main Union attack still going on, the CSA troops spread out along the fortifications decided to counterat-



tack. The first brigades were hit and disordered by artillery, so the offensive didn't exactly get off to a great start! The CSA brigades pressed on towards the hill in the center and engaged the Union troops who were obviously stationed there to protect against just such a move.





Another group of CSA brigades moved toward the road junction in what looked like a suicidal attack, but it did have one positive outcome for the Southern side and that was it drew off Union troops that could have finished off the CSA left flank.

The fight for the center hill picked up steam, with both sides launching furious charges and countercharges up and down the hill. When the dust had settled the Union still had control of the hill, but their brigades had been considerably weakened and could not be used for any kind of offensive operations. The CSA attack towards the road junction met with an equal fate in that the attacking brigades were bloodied, but the Union forces took losses as well. So with both sides decidedly weaker than they were a

few turns previously, the CSA forces retreated back to their fortifications.

On the CSA left the Union attack came several times to within an inch of ripping a huge hole in the defenses and pouring through to end the game. The CSA brigades, although on their last legs, kept disrupting the Union attacks and hanging around for a few more turns. The Union forces on that side had one more chance to break through, but although they finished off the CSA defenders and took control of the hill, the CSA were able to redeploy forces and some artillery to check the Union attack.

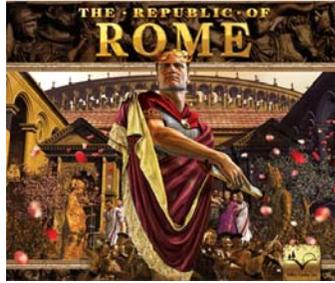
With the Union forces already at half strength in some areas, they were unable to continue the attack. Although the CSA forces had taken a beating on the left and

the counterattacks had cost their side a few brigades, there were still a few fresh brigades in strong positions. At this point the Union side figured that they did not have the strength to force the positions and the game was called as a CSA victory.

This was an interesting battle as the Union could dictate the time and place of their main attack. When the attack came it was successful, but then the breakthrough slowed to a crawl, giving the CSA side a chance to attack elsewhere on the field. This drew off valuable Union troops that could have been used to deliver a killing blow. Although I still prefer Johnny Reb for ACW I find that the F&F system is fun to play and does a good job of portraying combat at this level.



Republic of Rome (or ROR as it is fondly referred to as) was one of the most popular games ever published by Avalon Hill. It has retained its popularity over the years and has recently been republished by Valley Games. Valley has also reprinted other AH classics such as Titan and Hannibal.



is so much going on. The designer states in the notes that he created ROR as he thought that the game Diplomacy (also from Avalon Hill) was too tame! Now I've seen Diplomacy games that almost ended in fights, so how could ROR get any worse than that?

The box is big and heavy, filled to the brim with components. There is a huge game board with several tables, holding areas, and game tracks to record various items. There are also multiple counter sheets for legions, fleets, events, several denominations of coins, and other various markers that are well done in a Euro game type style. Next comes the 200+ cards that show senatorial families, prominent leaders, events, wars, etc., that are broken into three decks representing various era of Roman history. Then there are the province cards that have little dials and the players treasury boxes that need to be assembled which hold coins and show the number of votes per player. All in all, a very impressive array of game components. There were some errors on the board and cards, but there are files on Boardgamegeek to print and fix these.

The rulebook, however, is one of the densest things I have ever tried to understand! I had to go through it twice just to lay out the solitaire game and just try to play a turn to figure out what was going on. The rules are in fine print and while thorough, they just don't do a good job of getting you started and pointed in the right direction. A step by step approach or learning the game chapter by chapter is definitely needed here. I was greatly helped by a gamer on the site mentioned above who had rewritten the rulebook to give a better understanding of how to play the game. After going through a few turns with that in hand, I was better able to understand the game.

I think the reason that this game is hard to learn (on several forums it is said that first time gamers in ROR are dead meat for experienced gamers) is that there

The answer: easy. Each player is in control of several senatorial families and perhaps a few famous citizens/leaders. Each is ranked for popularity, influence, oratory, and other skills that all play a part in the game. Each turn players draw cards or events, then collect money for their own treasuries plus for Rome in general. Players then need to allocate funds to raise legions and fleets, then decide whether or not to prosecute wars. It is extremely important to note that all of the players lose if Rome falls, which can happen if there are four active wars at any one time. So, as a player you need to work with the other players to make sure that Rome continues on, but you also need to position yourself to win the game by destroying the other players. Sounds difficult? Yes it is.

Consuls and Pro-Consuls need to be decided upon, governors need to be assigned to provinces, land bills need to be passed, the mood of the populace needs to be gauged, and all of this is done by rolling on tables, voting, making deals, and backstabbing. Add on top of all that a military section of the game where wars are being fought across the empire, troops need to be raised and allocated, and gen-

erals need to be appointed and you have quite the mess going on.

For example, two players could conspire to send a player who is getting too popular to lead the effort in one of the Punic Wars. Then, after that player is assigned there, vote to drop the funding for the forces there, hoping that player will fail and lose popularity! You need to be constantly aware of how to take advantages of situations, which deals to make, and how to look helpful while dealing a death blow to your enemies.

I haven't even mentioned the prosecution phase of the turn where former consuls can be named to lead the prosecutions against senators for taking bribes and other concessions. Then you have very popular leaders who can rebel against Rome with their legions, dictators



can be made for critical times in the empire, droughts, and any other number of things that can happen each turn. As a player you are trying to manage the chaos while trying to figure out how to come out on top in the end.

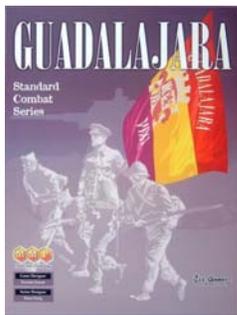
I have only tried the solitaire game and I did a four player game by myself (yes, voting was difficult, so I rolled dice!) to learn the system. There are so many options, paths to victory, cards that can change the game, etc., that the replay value is very high. The game does take a long time and there is no way that you will finish this in an evening. Most game reports I've read happen over two evenings, so you need to set aside a block of time to finish this, which most gamers today don't seem to have.

I am looking forward to someday playing this with a full group of 5 or 6 players as I think it would be a great gaming experience. I would suggest playing this with people you know and who don't hold grudges or it could turn ugly in a hurry. Overall, this is one of the more fascinating games I've ever seen and with beautiful components. Everyone should try this at least once in their gaming lifetime.



Guadalajara

The Gamers SCS, or Standard Combat Series, has proven to be one of the most popular series of wargames over the years. I've favorably reviewed several of them here, including The Mighty Endeavor, Yom Kippur, and Stalingrad Pocket II. First put out by The Gamers and now by MMP, the series continues to expand with Guadalajara, based upon a campaign during the Spanish Civil War.



Guadalajara simulates the commitment of the Italian divisions to the Spanish Civil War and their drive into the Republican positions once they entered the war. This is truly an unusual and interesting battle if for nothing else the strange and unique units like the Anarchists, Foreign brigades, Spanish, Communists, and all sorts of other small groups. It also featured armored combat that would serve as a training ground for WW2.

If you've ever owned or played a SCS game there won't be too many surprises in the box. You get a 22 x 34 map with the terrain graphics that are unique to MMP type wargames, a countersheet, two dice, standard series rules, and the exclusive rules. The map is good, the counters are easy to read, and the rules aren't that difficult to grasp, so you can be up and playing in no time at all, except for one small problem.

Actually, it's a big problem and that's the set up. The game comes with a few scenarios, but let's face it, everyone wants to play the full battle, so we'll focus on that in this review. The set up for most SCS games is painful and although a few of them aren't too bad, Stalingrad Pocket II and this one are some of the worst. You need to find out which units belong to which group, then set them up usually within a few hexes of the listed location, which is difficult because until you get everything on the board you have no idea how to place these units to defend, attack, move, etc., for the first turn. So, you end up stacking all the units, then having to go back through the deployment list afterwards to find out how far they can set up from the deployment hex. Hunting and pecking through the few hundred counters is not much fun as there is literally no way to tell from the counter what turn they come on, what they are attached to, etc., so it's a problem.

The SCS system is a straightforward hex and counter wargame with zones of control, exploitation movement, supply, etc., that are fairly standard. The only difference from most of these types of games is that the combat odds are rounded off, so no having to hunt for that last unit to get three attack factors to make a 3:1 attack!

Although this is mostly an infantry and artillery slugfest, each side has units of armor and armored cars. This is one of the most interesting parts of the special rules as you can have tank to tank combat, you need to check for tank losses after regular combat, and there is a maintenance phase to bring back destroyed units. This definitely adds some flavor to the game as the armor can really help your attacks, but it is so fragile that you need to commit it only at crucial times.

The exclusive rules also feature air support, supply problems, the dividing line for attack by Spanish and Italian forces, trucks, and the limits of cooperation among the various nationalities and groups. All in all, the exclusive rules do a good job of capturing the flavor of the era and the problems that both sides had during the Spanish Civil War.

The battle begins with the Italians blitzing their way through the

Game Review

Republican defenses almost to the end of the board by turn 2! The Spanish attack and begin seizing most of the northern areas and at this point the game looks like it's going to be a Nationalist romp which will be over in a few turns. But here's where both sides begin to realize that whoever controls the roads wins the game. The Italians, dependent upon their trucks and roads for supply, need to advance down certain routes. This naturally creates several points on the board where their forces can concentrate, so all of the Republican reinforcements head for those locations!

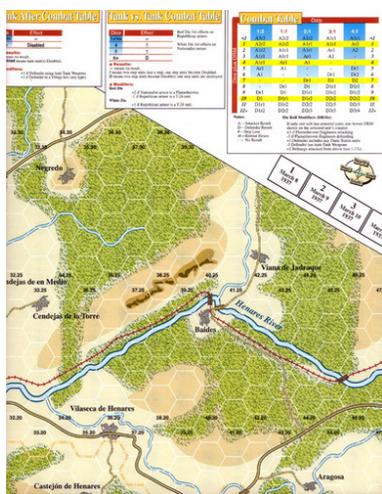
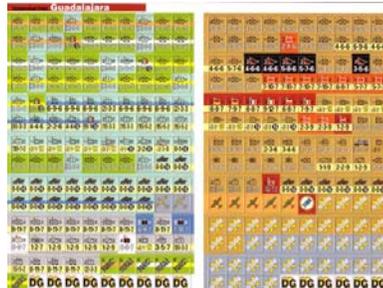
By mid game the Italians are hanging on to their victory point locations, but strung out over the roads trying to protect their supply lines from being cut. In the north, the stronger but fewer Spanish units are getting spread out further and further as the Republican reinforcements

start looking for cracks in the defenses. This sets up the end game where the Republicans are counterattacking with the Italians and Spanish desperately trying

to hang on.

The strength of the SCS system has always been the basics of movement and combat, which in this game works well. The special rules aren't so numerous that you need to refer to them continuously and I really like the tank units along with the rules for them. This game has numerous bits of what I would term "period flavor" that work well.

I think the big problem with this title in the series is the issue of replay value. There aren't many options here as the Italians need to press forward as fast as possible. The reinforcements arrive at fixed points and you can pretty much script out the game except for the die rolls. Overall, I think it is a well done game, but I doubt that you will be taking it down from your games shelf and playing it over and over.



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One of the wargaming terms that I'm getting quite tired of recently has to do when someone describes rules as written in a "relaxed style". To me this is a code phrase meaning that the rules have no depth, players can change them however they feel, and they're set up that way so that the designer doesn't have to explain things like ground scale, how much time a turn represents, or what size in terms of real men are the units? This trend towards simpler, faster, non-descript type games where how good the figures look on the board packed in side by side is more important than what period is trying to be represented seems to be the current trend in gaming right now. At this rate in a few years combat will be decided by flipping a coin! I can see it now, a battalion of French infantry moves from the edge of the table six feet in a single move and charges an Austrian battalion. For period "flavor" the coin has the French tri-color on one side and the Austrian eagle on the other. The coin is flipped and the Austrian eagle ends on the up side. The French battalion is taken off the board and now it's the Austrian player's turn to charge a French unit. Simple, fast, and I'm sure the board looks great with all of those large 28mm figs on it. There will be legions of fans ready to defend the system as the most fun, historical set of rules ever on every gaming forum on the Internet. Is this really what gamers want? Is this where the hobby is heading?

Wargames Illustrated: A Few Thoughts on the New Look

It's been close to a year now where Wargames Illustrated was essentially for all practical purposes taken over by Battlefront. Although the first reports were greeted with cheers, hoping for a better product, or jeers deriding the acquisition thinking it would turn WI into a FOW version of White Dwarf. The actual truth lies somewhere in between.

For one thing, the magazine is definitely thicker and with a lot more color pictures, which is a good thing. WI has also gone the route by having "themes" coupled with FOW features and other articles. The issue I'm using for this review had Ancient Middle East armies as the subject, interspersed with FOW articles and scenarios along with the usual ads, a review of DBMM, and a few odds and ends type articles.

Since I have Egyptian and Assyrian armies for WMA, I didn't mind the theme



of the magazine! There were several articles on the history of the armies, the area they fought in, and on the weapons of the era. They were well done and certainly if you have an interest in this area then this issue will be met with joy. But what if you aren't into Ancients? My only complaint is that the articles were scattered all over the

magazine, rather than having them all in one location. Here is where the problem lies as a good third of the magazine is taken up with articles on the subject.

Also, what if you aren't interested in Flames of War? Again, a large portion of the magazine has features for this game (and since the company who owns this system runs the magazine it's to be expected). So, if you don't like Ancients or FOW then there's not much of the magazine that's going to be worth your while.

Wargaming magazines and the maga-

zine industry in general is in serious trouble right now. Many magazines have gone the digital route (you can subscribe to services that offer hundreds of issues per month) and in the case of wargaming you can find pretty pictures all over the web. True, for certain subjects it would be difficult to get the pictures and images all in one place as WI has done with its themes, but there are alternatives. I know that many people still like to hold onto physical books/magazines (I work at a university library and this gets argued to death), so there is a target audience.

Having given up WI a long time ago because of price, my experience with the new issues hasn't changed my mind that much. I paid \$9 each here in the U.S., so it's not cheap by any means. The presentation has improved, it's bigger, and if you're into FOW or any of the themes it's probably a good deal. In the end, though, it got put onto the stack of other magazines and left me wondering why I bought it!