

WARNING ORDER

ISSUE 61



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WAR OF THE ROSES

AGE OF EAGLES

BKC IV

NEW SCENARIOS



Warning order

W F H G S

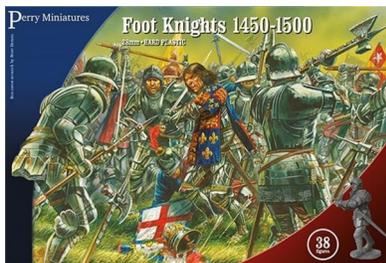
Genesis to First Game: A War of the Roses Project

Once I had finally completed my 8th Seleucid pike unit for Hail Caesar, I figured it was time to move on. I had painted something like 700+ miniatures for my Republican Roman and Seleucid armies over the last 2 1/2 years, which meant I could easily do games with anywhere from 2-10 players. While there were more units that I could do, particularly with cavalry, there's only so many units you can pack onto a 4x8 or 4x10 table!

The project had demonstrated a couple of things to me, however. First, I liked painting the larger figures. I have no plans to redo my 15mm armies, abandon my 1/300th WW2 forces, etc., but this was a good break. Second, the 28mm units look great for convention and larger games, plus the Hail Caesar battles that we've had have been very popular with the group. This caused me to start thinking about what else could I do using the Hail Caesar rules? Rather than force everyone to learn new rules, basing, etc., I determined that it would be best to continue to use the same set of rules to provide some consistency.

So, I started thinking about what would be a good new period or maybe

some new armies to go against the Seleucids and/or Republican Romans. Carthaginians were probably the most obvious answer, but that would be long, sizable project to



match the number of figs for the other two armies. Going to another era such as Imperial Romans vs. Gauls was considered, but due to my nature of liking lesser known/gamed periods, this wouldn't do! I have this aversion to doing the same thing that most gamers on the planet have already done.

Then, there was an intervention by the gaming universe. An Ebay add popped up with 28mm plastic boxed sets, which included Foot Knights 1450-1500 from Perry miniatures for something like 25.00 and free shipping. I already had Renaissance armies in 15mm and the Hundred Years War didn't sound too appealing, so what else could they be used for. A quick search revealed that they could be

used for The War of the Roses (WOTR).

A casual glance across the Internet showed that while WOTR is a period that is gamed around the world, there wasn't much about using Hail Caesar for it. This was my first clue that this was going to me more of a challenge than I thought! There currently is not a WOTR supplement for Hail Caesar, but Rick Priestley, the designer of the game, did post a set of supplemental rules on the Hail Caesar Facebook group. After downloading them I had even more questions about units, which stats to use, etc., as it's a generic list covering WOTR and many of the European conflicts of that era.

Fortunately, I came across some YouTube videos by 7th Son, who had some informative information on WOTR games, painting, basing, etc., using the Hail Caesar rules. Now, he has his own additions to the rules and we don't agree on the men at arms/foot knights basing, but at the time it was pretty insightful. Armed with this knowledge, some reading, etc., I came up with what I felt would be the core unit types of the army. Now it was time to start painting. (cont. on p3)

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Special points of interest:

- Detailed project report and first battle with a new period; the War of the Roses.
- Battle reports for BKC IV, Age of Eagles, two Hail Caesar battles, Honours of War, and Warmaster Ancients.
- Two new Engagements scenarios.
- Board game and product reviews.

Genesis to First Game: A War of the Roses Project (cont.)

(cont. from p2) Basically, I was going to go with 18 figure units on three stands for the household troops and the heavy infantry units. Dismounted knights/men at arms would be in units of 12. After reading a lot about the war I felt that while there were plenty of units that were a mix of bow and bill, there were also plenty of units that consisted of men with bills, some in partial armor, and a few fully armored men. Skirmishers, arquebusiers, and cavalry would be in units of 12 as well.

Looking at the lists that were in the files section of the Facebook Hail Caesar page and written by Rick Priestley, they appeared to be a more generic set of lists that could be used for the 1450-1500 period in England as well as the European continent. Finding unit types that would fit what I was trying to do was a challenge, but I figured it out. Since there is no official Hail Caesar book for the War of the Roses, things could be subject to a lot of interpretation!

Most of the project would feature figures from the Perry Miniatures boxed sets for the period. There are actually five in all; foot knights, infantry, mercenaries, mounted knights/men at arms, and light cavalry. The boxes of foot all have between 36 and 40 figures, which is a pretty good deal. They each come with a booklet that talks about assembly, options, and there is a sheet of flags along with livery/maintenance colors (more on this later). The great thing about these boxed sets outside of the fact that they produce beautiful figures, is that most of the pieces are interchangeable. This allows for a wide variety of armaments and heads, giving the units a lot of variety.

For the first unit I assembled a unit of dismounted knights/men at arms. Most of the knights and heavily armored troops fought on foot, so I just needed 12 figures on two stands. There was some trial and error fitting the arms, poleaxes, heads, etc., but going slowly here at the start would pay dividends down the road when I needed to create more units. I primed them black, then went to find out some more information on colors, flags, etc.

Here is where things got frustrating in a hurry! Despite this war being in the mid 15th century, there is very little

known about it in comparison to other periods. Having just completed a project with the Republican Romans and Seleucids, which has very little to go on as well, this was a bit of a shock. There is one Osprey book on it as well as three book in their battles series.

Even then, most of the flags, colors, livery badges, etc., is conjecture. It's great to look at what art there is in the books, but there were a host of unanswered questions.

For example, did lords/knights wear their colors and/or heraldry on tabards over their armor in battle, or just showed up in their armor? Did the long, swallow tailed flags accompany the cavalry units of a lord, king, knight, etc., or were they used as rallying points for foot troops? What about all of the lesser personalities who were present at the battles. What units were they attached to? Did all men serving a household wear similar colors or have the same livery badges? The answers are all something along the lines of maybe, possibly, we don't know for sure, etc.

Many leaders had troops that could be assembled, ranging from a handful depending upon the person's holdings and station (king, lord, knight, etc.) to a few thousand. There was a system called "livery and maintenance" where each retainer had a coat of certain colors and a badge which identified them. Again, some of the colors and badges are well known, such as for Henry Beaufort, 3rd Duke of Somerset, or King Edward IV, but many others are conjecture.

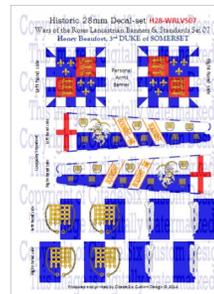
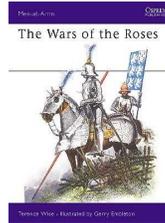
By careful study using various web sites, re-enactment groups, what other clubs had done for games, Ospreys, and the Citadel Six web site (they sell flags and livery badges for most of the major leaders), I was able to figure out where I was going. I ordered a retinue set for Somerset and within two weeks had a set of flags and livery badges. Armored figures paint pretty quickly, so within a few days I had my first unit. After seeing how it came out I was convinced that this was a period worth doing, so now the real work began.

For whatever reason, I decided to do the Lancastrians first. My reasons were all over the place, ranging from that if I finished one side that would compel me to do the other, to it would be easier to just focus on a few leaders, colors, flags, etc., at one time. I also needed to do enough figures for a 6-8 player game, which I didn't quite seem to factor into my planning! I resolved to paint two units a month for a year, which should be enough for a 6 player game, even though everyone would have small commands. About a month into it, I started wondering what I had got myself into!

While the Perry boxed sets were great, assembling the figures with a variety of weapons and heads can take up significant time. I started working out a system where I painted one base of six figures at a time. While that was going on, I would be assembling and priming the next six figures, which sort of set up an assembly line. I tried some variations on this; doing 12-18 figs at a time, starting a second unit, etc., but that always seemed to make the situation worse!

In the midst of all this, I started looking around for other figures that could be used and more importantly, match the several boxes of Perry figs that I had already accumulated. Perry Miniatures did have metal artillery, leaders, and some odds and ends, so that would be helpful somewhere down the line. Old Glory and Foundry had lines, but everything I had read led me to believe that they might be smaller than Perry figs, so I held off on that. Finally, Front Rank has a good range (sold now through Gripping Beast), but the cost of the figs plus shipping made me think twice. It looked as if Perry figs would form the bulk of the

armies. It was at this time that I put out a call for unwanted WOTR figs on the TMP Marketplace. Fortunately, one gamer did respond, saying that he started a project, but didn't need the figs any longer. I was able to get about five boxes of Perry figs, two command packs, two artillery packs, plus various leftover sprues for probably 40% of the retail value! I can't repeat this enough, but always look around when doing large projects as you never know who can help you out! Armed with boxes of figs, flags from Pete's Flags, Citadel Six flags and



Genesis to First Game: A War of the Roses Project (cont.)

decals, it was now where the project should really take off.

It's been my experience that when a project first gets going, there is an adrenaline surge that really helps you to get some much needed work done. However, that needs to be tempered by not trying to do too much, which is what occasionally happened to me on this journey. Fortunately, each time I was able to go back to the standard one base of six figures at a time benchmark, which continually saved the project. In my first two months I did six units and two leader stands! After that the production would tend to ebb and flow, not to mention that real life such as your job, summer holidays, new grandchildren, etc., can really derail your painting schedule!

The household troops in the end proved to be the most troublesome and time consuming. Needing 12 archers per unit and one command stand of 6 armored and partially armored men definitely took the longest. The archers, since they were for the most part unarmored, needed the lord's colors and would need their badges. Also, the bows, arrows, extra arrows stuck in the ground, etc., took up more time than the armored figures. I would usually do one base of archers, then one of command to break it up, then the final base of archers. Since 50% of the armies had to be these units you spend a lot of time assembling and painting archers!

Now this is where the argument of plastic vs. metal for figures comes in. If you only need 20-30 figures for a project, then plastic is the way to go and assembly time is just a small obstacle. When you need to do 144 plastic archers, consideration for metal figs starts to creep into your thinking! I think the only reason

why I stayed with plastic during the project (we'll see when I add on additional units in the future) is that I was able to get a lot of boxes at a good price. However, building 400+ plastic figures is not something I would equate with fun.

This brings me to a small, but critical part of the project and that is the flags and the livery badges. For the WOTR, even in 28mm, many gamers simply paint the livery colors and leave it at that. This was tempting, but my OCD with trying to



Here is a good illustration of the livery badges that go on the back of the coat, which are larger than the front badges. You first must gloss the figure (helps the decal to adhere), then cut the decal out. You can see the white decal backing and sometimes (like in this case) the color starts to flake off. Once the Micro-Set decal solution dries and you paint the edges with matching paint colors, the effect isn't too bad.

be realistic simply would not let me do it. For flags there were two choices; Pete's Flags and Citadel Six. Pete's Flags has some beautiful offerings, which usually include a personal standard, a few unit standards, and then the long banner which were either used by cavalry or as a rallying point when carried by foot troops. The flags are well done, highly colorful, and go on fairly easy since they are paper. The main issue is that some sets only had a few flags, so if you wanted to do more of that lord/leader's units, you would need to order another set, but then the personal standard doesn't get used. The longer flags are drawn with the tattered edging look, which is difficult to cut out and you need matching paint to finish the edges. Overall, however, they look good once finished.

The Citadel Six flags and livery badges are very difficult

to rate as there is a lot of good and a lot of bad with them. There is far more selection than Pete's Flags and they are sold in several formats. You can order just the flag sheet for the leader, just the livery badges, or in some case you can get the retinue set which has flags, badges, and alternate badges. The flags include a package of brass wire for the standard and brass sections cut to the size of the flags. The flags are beautifully done and you usually get a personal standard, the long swallow tail standard, then 3-5 unit standards. So far, so good.

Putting the brass sheet on the standard pole isn't too difficult, but then you need to bend the brass into the shape you want the flag to be in. The reason is that the transfers are done on white (!!!) decal sheet and are very fragile. You need to paint the pole and brass flag backing, then gloss it, then put down some Micro-Set before you put the decal into the water and slide it off. During the cutting process or handling it, sections of color on the flag may rub off or fall apart, so matching the colors and painting those spots can be challenging. When it's finished they look pretty good, but it's a lot of work.

The livery badges are a curse and a blessing. It's great that you don't have to draw/paint lions and other complicated icons, but as you can see from the images at left, it's going to take some work. The badges that go on the front are hard to do and I'm not sure it's worth the trouble. Anything that goes on a white coat works pretty well, but sometimes I just painted some shapes similar to the front badges as they were a lot of work to get right.

Throughout this process I found that it was critical to alternate which units to paint to keep from getting in a rut. I would paint a household unit, then a unit of heavy infantry, then maybe a few command stands, followed by a unit of dismounted knights/men at arms. If you just do household unit after household unit I think that you can burn out quickly, as before I had mentioned that those units take much longer to assemble and paint.

By the time I had finished the Lancastrian side (about 13 units plus leaders) and was halfway through the Yorkist forces, it was time to take a critical look at the Hail Caesar rules for this period. Actually, however, there isn't a separate book for some reason (cont. on p5)



Genesis to First Game: A War of the Roses Project (cont.)

(cont. from p4) (one is coming out in 2023), but Rick Priestley had created a sample list for the 1450-1500 period that covers the War of the Roses.

First off, there were probably too many units on the list, which is understandable given that it covers the wars in Europe and England for a 50 year period. I simply started eliminating things like crossbow units, the catafract notation for heavy cavalry, etc. I then added some suggested basing for household troops, changed some of the unit notes, and presto, I had a War of the Roses list. Granted, it's going to take a few games to see if this all works or not and I suspect that there will need to be some changes. However, I'm hopeful that it will work out as everyone in our group knows Hail Caesar and I'm not really wanting to go to another set of rules!

Speaking of rules, there certainly is not shortage of them for the period, even though you don't see too many WOTR games. In fact, looking back through the 150+ magazines I have from the 70s onward, there weren't too many WOTR battle reports! Hail Caesar was the first priority, due mainly to the group knowing how to play it and you can base things pretty much however you want. If it fails and no one is having fun, there are certainly other options, including To The Strongest and Never Mind The Bill Hooks, not to mention a ton of older



rules.

The one thing that I still need to work on is terrain for the period. I have some generic European terrain that you see in the pictures, which I had mainly been using for WW2 skirmish games, but can do double duty for the 15th century. I would like to add some more farms, hedges, walls, etc., if for nothing else than to create some variety. If I could get a good sized castle (affording it and storing it would be the issues here!) then you could have a siege scenario or two, even though there were very few sieges during the 28 years of the war.

Is there more to do? Defi-

nitely. Just in case I could ever convince the group to do a campaign, I would need more cavalry units, extra household units, artillery, leaders, and skirmishers. The good thing is that once you have the two basic armies, it's easier to just add some units here and there! As mentioned above, I need to work on terrain and we'll continue to review/change the rules to make the

game better.

To sum things up, this was a one year project to create two sides for a new period by attempting to paint 500 28mm figures by myself! Probably not the smartest thing I've ever done, but I somehow got through it. There's definitely some good and bad here, which I'll explain. Yes, I now have two 28mm armies for a period that we've never played before, which is good. The bad is that I literally kept my nose to the grindstone for an entire year, getting very little else done in the hobby. I usually have a couple of side projects going, but those fell by the way side and I also usually have a board game going, but those were far and few between this past year. It can obviously be done, but I wouldn't say that I had a fun adventure with it!

I think that in this day and age where there are just so many periods, products,



and scales, you really have to go the extra mile to take on a new period as the chances of finding some others who are interested in the same thing you are is not very high right now in the hobby. Granted, this project is kind of at the top end, but I think everyone out there knows what I'm talking about. Most gamers have dozens of projects of their own, so it can be hard to get others interested in yours.

So, one year later and a lot of money spent (figs, flags, books, etc., all really add up quickly), we have a new 28mm period to play with rules that we already know. Hopefully, everyone likes it or I'm not sure what I'm going to do if they don't!



After a year's worth of work (described in the preceding pages!) it was time to put together our first War of the Roses game using the Hail Caesar rules. While everyone present had played some medieval skirmishes at some point in their gaming lives, no one had really done a large Medieval or Late Medieval battle, so this would certainly be something new. Not to mention it would be a massive change from our usual Seleucids vs, Republican Roman slugfests!

Each side would roughly have 14 units, of which two were cavalry and also each would have two medium artillery pieces. Some of this was just how I had painted and/or organized the forces into two equal armies. The only difference was that one had a unit of arquebus skirmishers and the other had a unit of bowmen. Outside of that, it would be 50% household troops (bow and bill), heavy infantry, and small units of dismounted knights/men at arms.

To save time for the set up, basically each side had four divisions. Three of the divisions would be infantry consisting of the above units, plus one brigade of cavalry that had one unit of heavily armored knights and a unit of medium cavalry. Each side was allowed to set up within 12 inches of the baseline. The objectives were simple for both sides; take the bridge over the river and cut off the town by holding both sides. In the end, the bridge became the focus as well as trying to destroy the opposing army!

Since this was not only a new period for us as well as having no idea what tactics would work, there were some interesting formations at the initial set up. The Yorkists were a bit more spread out,



while their Lancastrian counterparts were in mutually supporting lines. Which would work the best was yet to be determined. After going over the army lists and special unit attributes, we rolled for who would go first and the game was on.

Both sides moved out fairly quickly, trying to get into bow range (long range for bows is 18"). Once a few of the household units were in range, the arrows started to fly. All of our previous Hail Caesar had some units with bows, slingers, javelins, etc., but they were mostly skirmishers who ended up taking each other out! Here, however, was a bit of a different situation. At long range, however, the -1 modifier as well as firing at heavily armored troops (another -1) made it tough to hit (needed a 6 on a D6 vs. some units). Not only that, most troops save on a 4-6, so getting hits was going to be a challenge.

This was the incentive for the heavy infantry and dismounted knights/men at

arms to close the range. First off, they couldn't really answer the bow fire, but there was no sense in waiting around for the arrow hits to start piling up! The artillery, which was really supposed to be a nuisance, starting scoring some good hits on units, which made it all the more imperative to get into melee.

On the far flank, there were a series of cavalry charges that left the Yorkists in charge of one side of the bridge. However, they had some bad command rolls and could not get across the bridge! By the time they were ready to move, the Lancastrians had put a unit by the bridge, daring an attack in column. This meant that the action shifted to the infantry attacks that were developing in the center of the board. Sure enough, by turn 5 everyone was ready for the dirty work of melee to begin.

From the village to the approach to the bridge, units of both sides started to get into melee, which was only briefly broken up by volleys of arrows when both sides separated for any reason. We quickly found out that the small units of dismounted knights/men at arms packed a serious punch, with their ability to re-roll a hit and a save, plus they're able to ignore their first failed break test. At the same time, however, if they had some bad die rolls they only take 4 hits, which proved to be a serious problem for both sides. The workhorses of the day, the household troops, were in the midst of every fight during the middle turns of the game. (cont. on p7)





(cont. from p6) Both sides gained and lost ground while leaders desperately attempted to rally units that were shaken. With fairly high Clash ratings, several units came close to being shattered, but most fights went multiple turns, with one side or the other being slowly forced back. There was a one turn break from action in which everything that had bows unleashed a volley at short range, then it was right back to the melees. This is where some units went shaken and started to disappear from the board.

By turn 8 the Lancastrians decided to roll the dice one more time and attacked the length of the board, including a heavy cavalry charge against a unit of Yorkist household troops. In what turned out to be a three turn fight, the heavy cavalry were defeated, despite all of their advantages. This was sort of the high water mark for the Lancastrians as across the

board they were losing units faster than the Yorkists. Both sides continued to attack and counterattack, with at least half the forces on the board reaching shaken status.

The Lancastrian side then had a turn where they couldn't roll saves, had few hits, and things went from barely tolerable to not good at all. The Yorkists began to advance and it was at this stage that we called the game as a Yorkist victory.

Definitely an interesting experience! The late medieval type troops are pretty nasty and things die once the melees get going. We struggled all game trying to find the right combination for who should attack, should support units be used, how long should they be kept in the front lines, etc. I'm sure that tactics will change in future battles, especially if we add even more units. Handling cavalry is

a bit tougher in this period as every unit that has bows is aiming for them!

That brings up just about the only issue that we found and that is how much bow fire is too much? I was thinking about introducing some tokens that would allow for full volleys, then once those are gone you only get closing shots. That would definitely force everyone to close the range quickly, one way or the other. The other issue was how to rate the commanders. We gave Edward a 9 rating and 3 in melee, but how to balance the sides is certainly a question worth exploring.

Anyway, it was a successful first battle and everyone had a good time with it. For future battles we'll probably change around some of the forces, add some interesting terrain, and hopefully if there is enough interest we might even get started on a campaign!



Memoirs of a Miniatures and Board Wargamer Pt. 48

Space Combat in Miniature

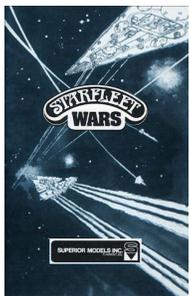
I'm not sure when it happened, but I think in every gamer's hobby life there is an urge to try some science fiction warfare using miniatures. In the late 70s the only science fiction games I had were GDW's Imperium (still a favorite that gets played every so often) and SPI's Starsoldier. When I moved to Salt Lake City in 1978 I had a chance to go to McEwan Miniatures and try Star Wars 2250. While it was fun, the local gamers took things personally with the game and weren't particularly helpful to a high school kid, which left a bad taste about sci-fi miniatures combat.



as there were only a few ship types and it just started to be the same battles over and over.

There was sort of a limbo period for a few years after that. Gaming switched to RPGs, fantasy miniatures, and Modern micro-armor battles with the occasional Harpoon scenario thrown in. Sci-fi space combat was way, way down the priority list. Starfleet Wars was still popular, but it was mainly kids 10-16 now, playing massive games with every ship in their collections, which while probably fun for them, began to look pretty silly to everyone else.

A few years later, the most popular thing played at many game and hobby stores was Starfleet Wars by Superior Models. The rules were basically free (there might have been a small cost) and the miniatures not only looked cool, but



they were readily available. For \$20 you could get several starships and then join other gamers in huge weekend battles. The problem? Well, the rules weren't very good! At the time I was 18-20 and used to playing a lot of SPI and Avalon Hill games,

plus some miniatures rules like WRG 5th and Johnny Reb. It was obvious that the rules were just a mechanism to get gamers to buy more ships!

Next up was the Star Fleet Battle Manual by Lou Zocchi/Gamescience. Now this was more like it! Star Trek ship to ship combat, which played more like a dogfight and with rules that tried to take the subject seriously (even though we're talking about science fiction!). This got played several times, but ran out of steam

As I've reminisced about elsewhere in this magazine, there was a strange confluence of events that caused sci-fi combat to come to the forefront once again. That was The recent Star Trek movies (II & III) along with StarFleet Battles from Task Force Games. My gaming group instantly decided to convert to miniatures, so we bought all of the old Gamescience ships that we could find! By the time supplement #2 and #3 came out, we must have had 100+ miniatures for the game, running huge campaigns, all night battles with 30+ ships and more. This was probably the pinnacle for me in terms of using miniatures for sci-fi combat.



those periods where playing one game takes care of the sci-fi itch for 3-5 years! There's nothing really wrong with the rules, although at times things seem a bit generic. There's all kinds of different ships, beautiful miniatures, etc., but it's something that most gamers seem to not want to get into too deeply. Granted, the system is still popular and no doubt they sell a lot of product, but I never had the urge to really put down a lot of money on it.

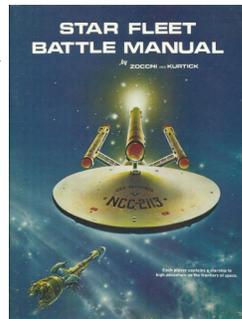
About the only time that I've come close to buying some more starship miniatures was when I got into Attack Vector: Tactical and was looking at the miniatures that were sold as an option to the paper 3D ship blocks that came with the game. The main issue is that you would need to create some special stands as you really need to show angles, pitch, etc., and it looked like a lot of work.

Also, after playing a few engagements solo I determined that it was far too complex for my gaming group. Space combat gaming is more of a casual thing and these rules, while very good, were going to be a lot of work. After figuring that we would need one session to explain the rules, then at the next session have a refresher on the rules then try to play, I put it aside.

I have played Star Wars Armada and X-Wing, both of which are fun, but clearly you need to invest a lot of money for group games, plus there is a tendency to be over saturated by Star Wars. I've looked at some of the other systems that are out there, noted a few Kickstarters here and there, etc., but nothing to really make me want to get back into things the way that we were with Starfleet Battles.

For now, GMT's Space Empires and Twilight Imperium 4 seem to fulfill my sci-fi combat needs. Maybe if something comes along that's really out of the box with cool miniatures I might take a chance. Sci-fi gaming really seems to be one of those periods where you either really get into it or you let others purchase everything and you just show up and play every few years! Back in the day, you're options were pretty limited, so sci-fi was always on the table. Today, there are far too many other options...

Then, as with most things in the gaming hobby, they wind down and its on to new adventures and projects. Probably a decade or more passed with me not playing one game that used starship miniatures. With the rise of the Internet all of a sudden on Ebay, TMP, and other sites there were pictures of miniature starships, which got me into re-thinking that I needed to get back into that period. Fortunately, the gaming group loves science-fiction as well, so when someone said that they had some ships and a set of rules called Full Thrust, it was an easy sell!



We've played Full Thrust since then several times, but it seems to be one of

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Blast From The Past Pt. 47

Remembering John Hill

There have been many remembrances of John Hill over the last few years since his untimely death. To note that he was one of the hobby's greatest game designers would be an understatement. Rather than just add onto what has already been written, I thought I would look at this in a different way, focusing on what it meant to my gaming hobby as well as how I approach the never ending battle of realism vs. complexity.

When Squad Leader by Avalon Hill came out in 1977, no gamer had ever seen anything like it before. I had seen the ad in the previous issue of The General and being a fan of Avalon Hill games at that time (even though I only had a handful), I was determined to get it! I mowed a few extra yards, then went down to the local game store each Saturday for what seemed like an eternity. When the game finally arrived I was not to be disappointed.

For a 15-16 year old at the time, this was quite a step up from some of the games I already owned and it took a few readings of the rules to figure out what was going on. However, after a few scenarios it was obvious (at least to me) this system was genius! At that time, games were coming out slowly, so it was not uncommon to play the same game for months on end until something else new caught your attention. It was of course, much, much later and later in life when you could look back and see just how groundbreaking the system was.

Naturally, everyone wanted tanks, which is what showed up in Cross of Iron, the first Squad Leader supplement. Although adding a bit of complexity, I could not get enough of the system and when the other two supplements came out they got played to death as well. While I have to this date resisted the ASL craze/lifestyle, the first Squad Leader games still stand the test of time. As I read more and more magazines, I started searching for other John Hill designs.

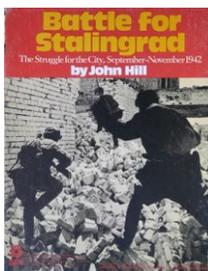


During my infatuation period with Squad Leader I started to get more heavily involved with miniatures, particularly the American Civil War as noted in a past article in this series. I started out with 20mm Airfix, then 6mm Ros Heroics, but was dissatisfied with the rules, which seemed more like an offshoot of WRG Ancients! Out of the blue, I saw a few ads from Adventure Games about a new set of ACW rules called Johnny Reb, designed by John Hill. I instantly ordered them and this started a two decades long love of playing ACW regimental sized battles.

All of a sudden we had huge armies of 15mm figures and when GDW took over production and released Johnny Reb 2, how could your gaming life get any better! My guess is that I must have played in at least 50 Johnny Reb battles in just under 20 years along with three campaigns. When Johnny Reb III came out, we quickly switched to that system. Big mistake. The rebasing, rules changes, and the need to know the rules front and back for formation changes as well as charges proved to be a high hurdle. At that time the gaming group I was with broke apart, so faced with shorter game nights and a smaller gaming space, we switched to Fire & Fury.

John Hill, however, did far more than just design Squad Leader and Johnny Reb, although that's how most gamers remember him today. He had at least 20+ designs that covered board games as well as miniatures rules. His central theme seemed to be "design for effect", which is something that has stuck with me for most of my life and has influenced many of the scenarios and campaigns that you find here in this magazine.

Two good examples of this were his board games Jerusalem and Battle for Stalingrad. Now there's not too many games on the subject of the Israeli drive to relieve Jerusalem in 1948, but this one makes things interesting. Rather than rely

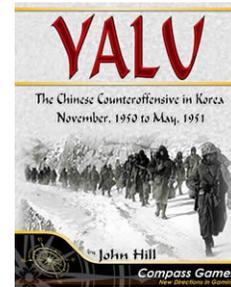
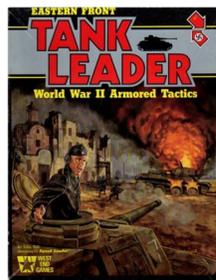


on a lot of tactical combat or set in stone systems, this one presented players with a lot of options and random things, which made the game unpredictable. While there are a ton of Stalingrad games, his design allowed the Germans to attack, attack, attack, but you never knew when the Russians would get their turn, which often came at the worst time for the German player! In both designs he used unusual systems that achieved historical results.

Two more examples would be Bar Lev (the old Conflict and GDW design) as well as Yalu, both now reissued by Compass Games (although Bar Lev is pretty much a whole new design). In both games you had brigades and divisions "firing" at each other, often eliminating huge formations. What? Yes, an unorthodox, but easy to play system that produced the effect he was looking for. In the end, the results are within historical tolerances. There's no 20 step combat process, multiple tables and three charts of modifiers. Find the combat table, roll the dice, and see what happens! Some gamers gravitated towards this, while some ran the other way.

John Hill's game systems and his many interviews over the years really influenced how I thought about games and game design. Yes, I have played my share of complex games and still own quite a few, but my views on this have changed dramatically over the years. My guess is that John Hill could have fixed SPI's Air War (one of the most complex games ever) by using a single table and one die roll! OK, maybe not, but he might have succeeded with something that would have produced the same results.

Today, when I create campaigns or scenarios for the magazine, I still go back to his design philosophy. Rather than 10 pages of tables and charts, it's often easier to settle it with a D6 and a few results! Every time I'm tempted to buy a complex game or look over a set of complicated miniatures rules, I always ask myself how John Hill would have done it. At least to me, his legacy lives on in this hobby.



Engagements 49: Matching Pincer Movements

Situation: Both sides are looking to envelop a town that sits astride a critical road junction and near two bridges. Each side thinks that the other has already seized the town and has more than likely set up a defense. Each side has developed a plan to split their force and converge on the town. Unbeknownst to both sides, however, neither one has reached the town yet and their forces are about to collide in a two pronged meeting engagement.

Period: Designed primarily for the Horse & Musket period or Ancients. The scenario could work with WW2 or Modern forces, but the weapon ranges might necessitate additional terrain features.

Table Size: 6 x 4, but a larger table could be used with more terrain added.

Terrain Notes: Hills are gently sloped and while they should give defensive benefits, they are not major obstacles. Woods are light and will provide some cover. The village buildings are wood/stone and will offer protection against small arms fire. The river can only be crossed at the bridges, which are assumed to be where the roads cross the river on the map.

Red Forces: Red's forces are divided into two groups that will enter the board at their corresponding letter on the map.

Force A

- (4) units of infantry
- (1) unit of heavy cavalry
- (1) unit of light cavalry
- (1) battery of artillery

Force B

- (3) units of infantry
- (1) unit of heavy cavalry
- (2) units of light infantry/skirmishers
- (1) battery of artillery

Red Set Up: Red's units can enter in any formation within 6" of the red A and/or B as listed above.

Red Orders: Seize the town and occupy the crossroads. Prevent Blue from counterattacking and retaking the town.

Blue Forces: Blue has split their forces into two components that will enter the

board at the letter matching their force.

Force C

- (3) units of infantry
- (1) unit of light infantry/skirmishers
- (1) unit of heavy cavalry
- (1) artillery battery

Force D

- (4) units of infantry
- (1) unit of heavy cavalry
- (1) unit of light cavalry
- (1) battery of artillery
- (1) unit of light infantry/skirmishers

Blue Orders: Seize the town as quickly as possible and occupy the crossroads. Prevent Red from counterattacking and retaking the town.

Blue Set Up: Blue's units can enter in any formation within 6" of the blue C and D as listed above.

Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules:

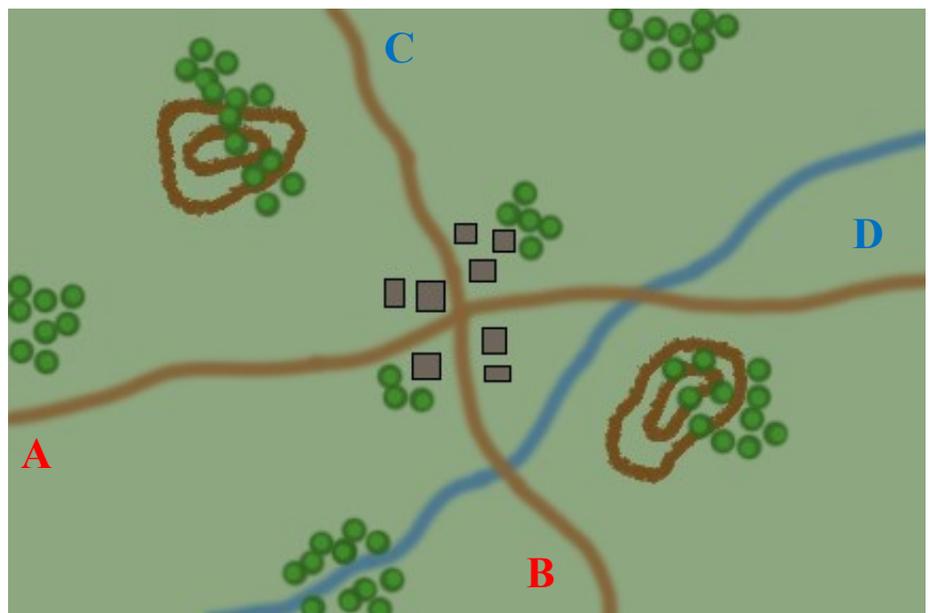
- The bridges over the road should be of fairly sturdy construction that can support artillery and they cannot be destroyed during the scenario.

Victory Conditions: At the end of 12 turns the side that controls the crossroads

is declared the winner.

Variants: There are a large number of variations, terrain, forces, etc., that could be added to this scenario.

- There may be one or more fords along the river. Each turn that a unit moves along the river bank to search for a ford, roll 1D6 and on a 6 they locate one. Treat the ford as rough terrain.
- If playing Horse & Musket eras, exchange some of the infantry units for dragoons, mounted infantry, or cavalry that could dismount (ACW), which would make the scenario a much more mobile affair.
- Give one side 2-3 additional units, then the smaller side gets one unit of militia that is holding the town, possibly with limited fortifications/defenses.
- Have both sides write down their order of appearance for their units, allowing only 2 units per force per turn to enter the board. This would set up a meeting engagement with both sides trying to reinforce the battle the best that they can.
- Have both sides plot their units movement for the first few turns to simulate a night movement followed by a dawn battle. Reveal all forces on the board at the start of turn 3 or 4.



Engagements 50: Preventing a Siege

Situation: Blue is trying to siege a castle/fortress held by Blue. Unfortunately for Red, they have been unable to cut the supply lines to the fortress. Blue is determined to cut the fortress off from supplies and then begin a formal siege.

Period: Designed primarily for Ancients and/or Medieval, but it could be adapted to the Colonial or Horse & Musket periods as well with some work on the forces used.

Table Size: 6 x 4, but a larger table could be used with more terrain added.

Terrain Notes:

Woods are light and will provide some cover. The castle/fortress is stone and will offer hard protection to any units inside of it. Outside of a siege it is impregnable for scenario purposes. Both creeks can be crossed at any point, but it should be considered rough terrain. Where the roads cross both creeks there is a wooden or stone bridge. The marsh area between the castle and creek should be considered rough terrain as well. See the special rules for the defensive works next to the castle.

Red Forces: Red's forces are split into three groups, described below.

Castle/Fortress

- (1) infantry units
- (1) archer unit

Defensive Works

- (2) infantry units
- (1) archer unit

Creek Defense/Reserve

- (4) infantry units
- (2) archer units
- (1) skirmisher unit
- (1) heavy cavalry unit

Set Up: The units in the Castle/Fortress group must set up within the walls. The Defensive Works units must begin the scenario in the line of defensive works. Finally, the Creek Defense/Reserve units may start anywhere east of the creek in any formation.

Red Orders: Prevent Blue's forces from surrounding the castle/fortress and

cutting the road leading to the castle/fortress.

Blue Forces: Blue has assembled two forces to complete the encirclement of the castle/fortress

Main Attack Force

- (6) units of infantry
- (4) units of archers
- (1) unit of light cavalry
- (1) unit of heavy cavalry
- (1) unit of skirmishers

Secondary Force

- (4) units of infantry
- (1) unit of archers
- (1) unit of light cavalry

Blue Orders: Cut the road leading to the back side of the castle/fortress. Eliminate all Red units in the defensive works.

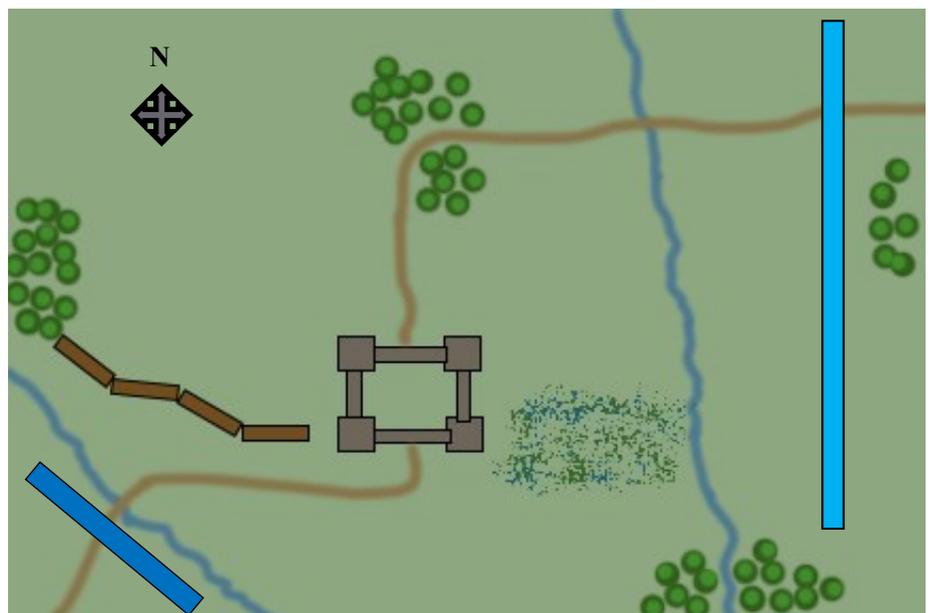
Blue Set Up: Units of the Secondary Force start on the south side of the creek facing Red's defensive works as marked on the map. The Main attack force may set up anywhere no closer than 12 inches from the creek

Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules: There are several special rules for the scenario:

- The defensive works consist of earthworks with stakes pointing towards the enemy positions. They should offer a level of protective cover against archery and a small defensive benefit in melee.
- When moving through the marsh area, roll 1D6. If the result is 1, 2, or 3 then the movement rate is that for rough terrain. On a 4, 5, or 6, the unit is unable to move that turn.
- Blue's units can move into the castle/fortress.
- **Victory Conditions:** At the end of 12 turns if Blue has cut the road leading to the castle/fortress and there are no Red units within 12 inches of the defensive works (not counting those in the castle) then Red wins the scenario. If Red accomplishes only one of these things then the scenario is a draw.

Variants: There are several interesting options that could be considered for this scenario. First, give each side additional forces and allow Blue to storm the castle/fortress if they think that they have enough force. Also, allow both sides to receive reinforcements that could be arriving from some other battlefield. You could also convert the creek into a river that could only be crossed at the bridge, which would be much more challenging for Red! Finally, add a variety of weather options for the battle.



Bad Day to be a Roman



While we've played quite a few Warhammer Ancients battles on our game nights, very few would qualify as blow-outs, major victories, unmitigated disasters, etc. Sure, there's been a few those in the tournaments we run, but those are usually due to the small number of units and when things go bad there's simply no reserves or time for a comeback. For this Imperial Romans vs. Seleucids clash, this would be one of those times where things didn't quite go exactly as planned, especially for the Romans!

This was going to be a 2,000 points per side battle, with three players on the Seleucids and two on the Roman. The Romans came out in their usual legions with auxiliaries in line, with a few skirmishers out front and the few cavalry units on the wings. As has been mentioned here several times before, the Romans want to hold on the flanks, the let the legions do their dirty work in the center. More often than not, this is a winning combination as most enemy infantry units can't withstand the prolonged attacks.



For the Seleucids, they went with the "one elephant unit" option, which makes more points available for other units, such as heavy cavalry. For this battle it would be the pikes and imitation Romans in the center, with a lot of light units and heavy cavalry on the wings. Pike blocks are pretty devastating when they attack first, so the goal was to move into the center and await opportunities. Where possible, the Seleucid heavy cavalry would try to win on one of the flanks, then put pressure on the center. Some-

times the pike attacks go well and sometimes they don't!

We started the game 20cm in from the board edges and set up by brigades. We're still hoping to someday get a curtain or piece of cardboard that will allow us to set up simultaneously, which would save a few minutes here and there. There weren't many surprises as we've used these armies against each other several times. We did, however, go over a few rules that we had either a) forgotten about, or b) wanted some clarification on. It's always interesting that even though you've been playing a system for 10+ years and 40+ battles that you keep finding things in the rules!

The battle did not start out well for the Seleucids. Bad command rolls, then the Romans moved up almost everything in sight! Their artillery started scoring hits on Seleucid units and it looked like it might be a long night for the Seleucid players. Then, in a highlight of things to

WMA Battle Report

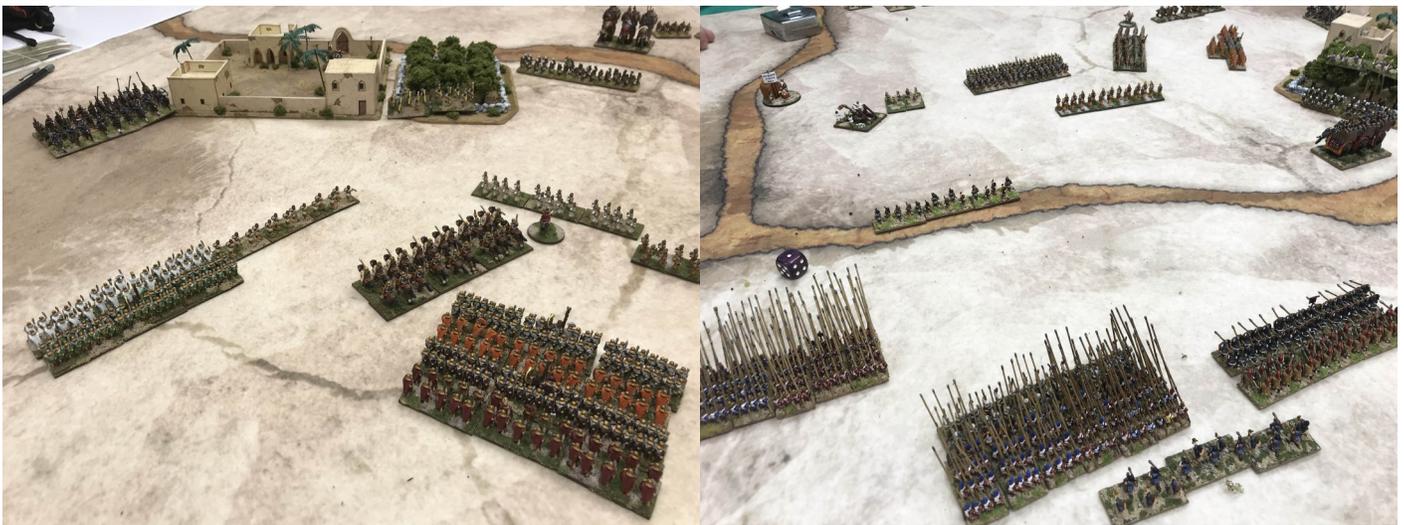
come, the Roman cavalry charged a Seleucid heavy cavalry unit on the Seleucid left flank. Some bad combat rolls saw a Seleucid counterattack, then a second heavy cavalry unit joined in and the Roman cavalry evaporated. The Romans then tried to shift some more units over to that side, but the Seleucid heavy cavalry, although reduced to just two stands each, started to destroy solitary Roman units on that flank. All of a sudden, the Romans were in trouble.

On the Seleucid right flank, despite



some issues moving up, the Seleucid heavy cavalry and cataphracts moved in, attacking the Romans as they tried to advance to help in the center. After a series of charges, counterattacks, more charges, etc., the Romans had taken a beating for the loss of just a few Seleucid stands. Clearly, things weren't going well for the Romans on the flanks, so now it was time to shift to the center and see if things could improve with the legions. (cont. on p13)





(cont. from p12) The legions moved out, but the Seleucid pike was waiting and with a few good command rolls, was able to position themselves to attack some isolated Roman units. The Romans, now getting desperate (on Turn 5 the Romans had lost 7 units and the Seleucids just 1!), started to move out haphazardly, trying to come to grips with the Seleucids. There were already desperate battles occurring on the flanks as the Romans tried to hold things together, so the center was the last true chance to win the game.

At first the Seleucid pike units had things go their way, mainly due to some terrible Roman die rolling. The legions, however, did counterattack and in some instances pushed back and even defeated some pike units. By the end of Turn 7, however, the Romans had lost 10 units and the Seleucids were still at 1 1/2, but it

didn't feel like a mismatched contest as there were battles up and down the lines. The Romans then threw everything into a few attacks, which were defeated and with each side having a break point of 13 (if I remembered right!), the Seleucids picked on a few units and finished them off, winning the game.

So, a bad day to be Roman! The final tally was the Romans losing 13 units and the Seleucids were just hitting 4, so it was as bad as it sounds. There wasn't much else the Romans could have done. A series of bad command rolls, then some terrible die rolling in combat meant that they were in trouble almost from the beginning. Despite that, everyone still had fun, but we did discuss a few things afterwards.

First, there wasn't much that can be done about the end of the game where

each side tries to pick off a few damaged or isolated units to force the enemy to hit its break point. We've tried using a set number of turns, but that has problems as well. It's not a huge issue, but at times towards the end it feels like a cheap victory!

The other issue is that we need to get the Romans some actual historical opponents! The Seleucids do have an Indian army that they can go up against, but at this time we don't really have anything close to the time period of the Roman army outside of the Seleucids, who were a few hundred years too early! We do have on member who has a bunch of unpainted Parthians, so the answer could be for all of us to help out on this project. Also, having several of us pitch in to make a Gaul or Celt army might be beneficial as well, plus we need to start up a campaign at some point.



We've had some pretty good battles set in the Peninsula over the last few years, using the Age of Eagles rules. Mainly this is due to the fact that these battles are usually smaller than their European counterparts and can be completed in one evening. There are also sharply contrasting styles with the large French brigades facing off against smaller, but more firepower heavy British brigades.

This battle would be pretty generic, with one small town at a critical cross-roads. The board was wide open except for a few areas of woods scattered about. We've discussed in the past that we really need a more "arid" cloth mat that better represents the Peninsula area, so that's something definitely on the to do list! Also, I forgot my Hotz farm fields, so the board was pretty bland, but it would work for a 3-4 hour battle.

The premise for the scenario was fairly simple; both sides would enter from opposite ends of the board and try to seize the single town. With little terrain to hinder movement, things couldn't get much more straightforward! However, every time there is a town/village in a horse and musket game that means it's usually time to check the rules. Sure enough, we had to find the appropriate sections about how to move through town, occupy them, defensive benefits, etc. It's one of the great mysteries of the hobby that every time there is a town in a Napoleonic, Seven Years War, or ACW game the interpretations of the rules are all over the place!

The French had six pretty good sized brigades (10-12 stands strong), two cavalry brigades, and several guns. A few of



the brigades were elite, plus they had good commanders. While the force looked fairly small, it packed a pretty good punch. The British had more brigades, but they were fairly small, with most being around 6 stands strong. The British had one very small cavalry brigade (4 stands), but had 6 batteries of artillery (although 2 were rated as conscript).

Both sides were allowed to start some of their forces on the board, with limited reinforcements for the British (two brigades of infantry) and a division for the French. The British were going to drive straight for the town, then deploy the artillery to the left of the town, followed by a turning movement on the far left. This would hopefully seize the town, bombard any approaching infantry, then the British on the far left would come around and drive off any units attacking the town. The French for their part would advance on a wide front, hoping that their larger brigades could find favorable conditions to launch attacks against the smaller British brigades.

As is usual, most units were able to move in the first turn as everything was in the reserve zone. By the end of turn 3 things were about to get interesting. The British were able to get a brigade into the town and fought off a French cavalry attack before they could deploy. On both flanks the French poured through, looking for British brigades to attack. The French reinforcements got caught up in a bit of a traffic jam, but by turn 4 they had gotten themselves sorted out and were ready to move up in support.

The first French attacks went in near the village, where the British artillery was located. This is where Steve, one of the British players, demonstrated the hot dice that he would carry with him through the entire game! A 10 for a firing roll (on a D10) followed by a 10 on the melee roll pretty much took care of one French infantry brigade. Steve's influence was so great that in the French turn that brigade rolled a 1 and vanished off the board! This was followed by a second French attack that met a similar fate. British infantry firepower coupled with a few artillery batteries in support on top of Steve's rolls of 8, 9, and 10 over two turns finished off that brigade as well!

Now the French were in trouble, but they did still have four fresh infantry brigades. This time the French tried an attack on the British right, which made some headway, but soon they were forced back. A British counterattack pushed them back even further, then in another series of good British rolls to French bad rolls, that French brigade collapsed as well. (cont. on p15)





(cont. from p13) By turn 6 the French had taken quite the beating. Undaunted, the remaining three fresh French brigades and the cavalry surged forward. On the British right one brigade that was in line opposite the French positions was simply run over. Any stand loss made the British Worn while two equaled out to Spent with the associating bad modifiers. The victorious French then hit a second British brigade and crumpled up that one as well. All of a sudden, things were looking a bit grim on the British right!

This did cause some discussion about using the Age of Eagles system for the Peninsula battles (no fault of the rules). The British brigades have incredible firepower (5 stands are the equivalent of a 12 stand French brigade), but if they get contacted and aren't in some kind of difficult terrain, they could be in serious trouble. In this game the terrain was pret-

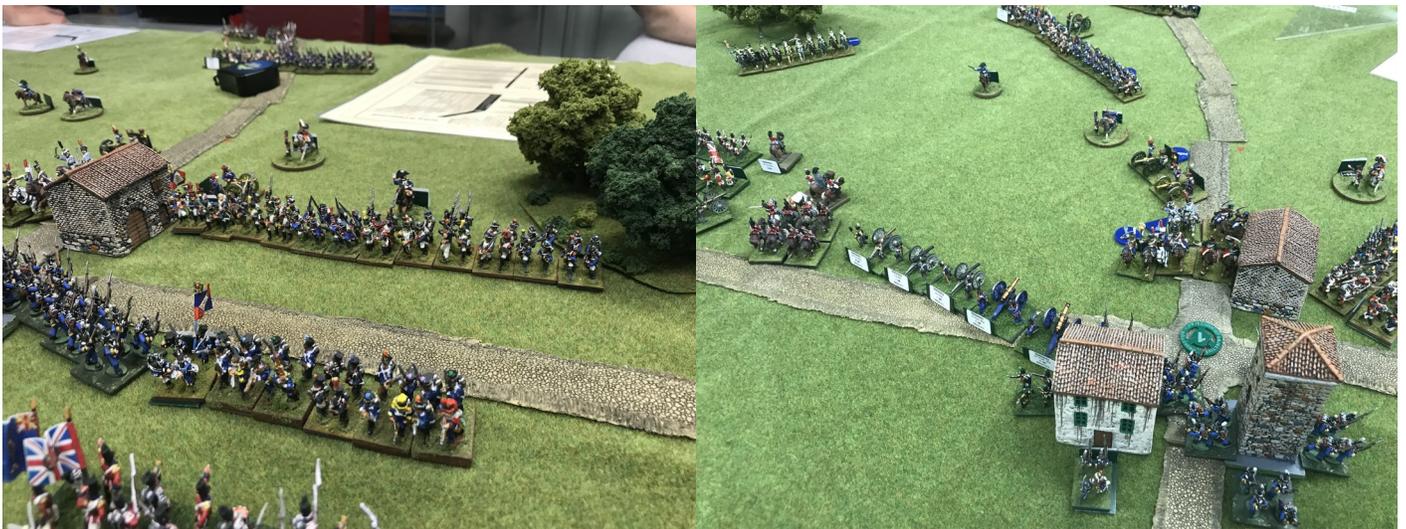
ty basic, so when a single brigade got caught out by the French, the end was not long in coming! The British had to basically form supported line to have any chance at all, but seemed a bit unrealistic as they were usually strung out pretty thin.

On the British left the French attacked with their last two fresh brigades and they had a cavalry brigade as well. In a repeat of the earlier battles, Steve rolled a 10, 8, 10, and another 10! Yikes! The first French brigade got beat up pretty badly, but it did make some headway, penetrating deep into the British lines before it was pushed back. The cavalry brigade got shelled, shot at, failed a few maneuver rolls, and basically did nothing the entire night! By this time the French were pretty well spent. Even on the British right flank where they had some success, they were getting pushed back and

were on the verge of routing. With the British in charge of the town and the piles of French casualties, the game was called as a British victory.

A very fun game, even though it didn't play out like we thought it would! For one thing, who could have foreseen Steve rolling something like six 10s in one game! The French were given credit for continuing to press the attack in the face of Steve's hot die rolling as well as the consistent British firepower. The one missing element was the French artillery, which basically did nothing the entire game but miss!

We definitely need to do better with Peninsula terrain, so we will be on the lookout for a new terrain mat. We also need to complete some rebasing of British figures and we need to start working on some Spanish.



Book Reviews by Steven Verdoliva

The Best of Enemies- Germans Against Jacobites, 1746

Written by Christopher Duffy; 192 pages; \$25.00

Published by Bitter Books, London & Emperors Press, Chicago

Hot off the presses! I picked this up at the recent Seven Years War Association convention in South Bend where it made its US premier. Most folks think of the '45 as Bonnie Prince Charlie landing in the Highlands, rallying the Clans, marching south towards London, retreating north back to the Highlands, getting clobbered at Culloden and then having some thrilling adventures as he escaped back to France. Not a bad thumbnail sketch but certainly not the whole story.

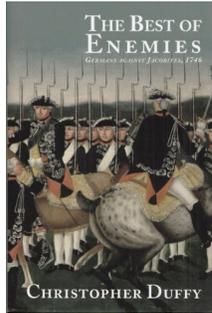
This book covers the Hessian troops that were sent to Scotland and their campaign before and during the Culloden campaign. Most interestingly it covers the personalities of the main opposing commanders, Lord George Murray and Prince Frederick of Hesse Cassel. Lord George was an inspired Jacobite commander, but his abrasive personality and constant plotting caused him to be disliked by his own side.

Prince Charles didn't trust him after a while but couldn't do without him. Prince Frederick is an even more interesting character. He was the heir to one of the leading Protestant states in Germany but was secretly converting to Catholicism. In addition he was brother-in-law to the British commander the Duke of Cumberland and by the end of the campaign couldn't stand him or the slaughter of innocents that he saw happening all around him. The book also tells of his later life as the ruler of Hesse Cassel and the problems of a Catholic ruling a staunchly Protestant country. Fortunately Frederick was one of the most enlightened rulers of his day and passed safely through the storm.

Admittedly a book for 18th century aficionados (guilty!) but still a great read.

Blackbeard and Other Pirates of the Atlantic Coast

Written by Nancy Roberts; 204



pages; \$16.00

Published by John F. Blair

I picked this up on a trip to Wilmington, NC. The book has 18 short biographies, including 2 women, of the most well known pirates to cruise the colonial American waters. Opens with a description of what was a pirate compared to a privateer, a very grey area indeed, and how a pirate/privateer could only survive through the collusion of greedy merchants and Crown officials in the Colonial ports. Piracy wasn't really put down until it started costing the government more than they'd been making from it.

Has some possible scenario ideas for small ship actions as the pirates were hunted down but alas no maps. It also has a nice glossary of nautical terms for all you land lubbers.

Dunkirk 1940 Operation Dynamo

#219 in the Campaign series by Osprey Publishing.



Written by Douglas C. Didly. Illustrated by Howard Gerrard. 96 pages

My Grandfather was present at Dunkirk. It was the only thing for which I ever heard him praise the Royal Navy. (That apparently includes when his

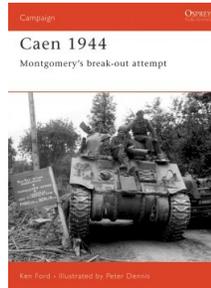
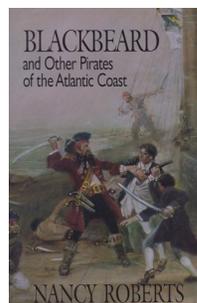
daughter married a RN officer during the war.) This is a pretty good book about the campaign and also includes what happened to the troops upon arriving in England. Most of the poor French were almost immediately shipped back to France where they were caught up in the Fall of France and surrendered.

Nice chronology, opposing plans, forces, commanders and the battlefield today. All of the stuff you'd expect from an Osprey including good artwork and photos.

Caen 1944 Montgomery's break-out attempt

#143 in the Campaign series by Osprey Publishing.

Written by Ken Ford. Illustrated by Peter Dennis. 96 pages



I must disclose upfront that I am not a Monty fan. I think he was more of an "overwhelmer" than an aggressive leader. Market-Garden is his exception and we know how well that turned out. OK, that's off my chest.

This is a well written account of the campaign and has all of the information that is part of the Osprey Campaign format. Chronology, opposing plans, forces, commanders, the battlefield today and nice artwork and photos. A good and concise account meant for those with an interest but not needing every nut and bolt.

Berlin 1945 End of the Thousand Year Reich

#159 in the Campaign series by Osprey Publishing.

Written by Peter Antill. Illustrated by Peter Dennis. 96 pages

As Berlin falls the Fuehrer eats a bullet and the Third Reich basically dies. Amen. Here's to the Soviet grunts who stormed into the charnel house that Berlin became. Urrah!

This is a good synopsis of the storming of Berlin and includes the campaign leading up to the final assault. Uses the usual format for which the Campaign series is known. Chronology, opposing plans, forces, commanders, the battlefield today and nice artwork and photos (mostly Soviet). I especially like that the chronology continues up to the reunification of Germany and the reopening of the Reichstag. Many questioned why Ike halted the Western armies and didn't help take Berlin. I think he had an idea of what a bloodbath it would become.

The Great Islamic Conquests AD 632-750

#71 in the Essential Histories series by Osprey Publishing.

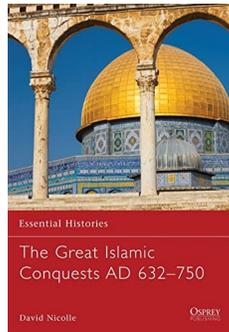
Written by David Nicolle. 96 pages

This is a well written & nicely illustrated



Book Reviews by Steven Verdoliva (cont.)

book covering not only the conquests but also the pre-Islamic culture. In addition there is a chapter on the culture that the Islamic conquests created. The main emphasis covers the period from the death of the Prophet Mohammed till the end of the Umayyad Caliphate and the rise of the Abassid Caliphate.



96 pages

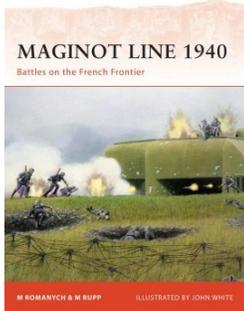
This book covers the three major conflicts between the British and Afghans, the 1st war of 1839-1842, the 2nd of 1878-1881 and the 3rd and last in 1919. All three of these campaigns follow roughly the same course with the British initially getting in over their heads but in the end pulling their chestnuts out of the fire.

The armies, tactics and opponents all get their due. One of the points to remember about the rise of Islam as a military power was the weakening of its two main opponents, the Byzantine & Sassanian empires who had each exhausted each other. How different our present world might be if these empires had not dragged each other down.

Maginot Line 1940 Battles on the French Frontier

#218 in the Campaign series by Osprey Publishing.

Written by M Romanych & M Rupp. Illustrated by John White. 96 pages



A good read about the lesser known part of the Fall of France in 1940. True or False: As the Panzers rolled through Western France driving for the Channel,

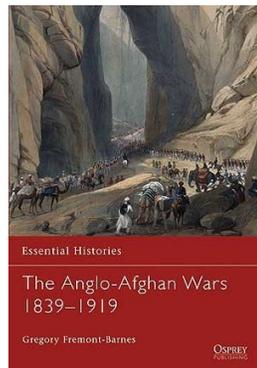
the German forces facing the Maginot Line sat patiently and skirmished with the enemy? Well it's a little of both. While not overly active at the start they had their part well, very well, in the campaign too.

I never realized how active the Germans were in attacking the French defenses and how successful they were. While showing some strength they certainly were not the impenetrable "land battleship" that pre-war France had planned them to be. This book would certainly help develop some interesting 1940 scenarios.

The Anglo-Afghan Wars

#40 in the Essential Histories series by Osprey Publishing.

Written by Gregory Fremont-Barnes.

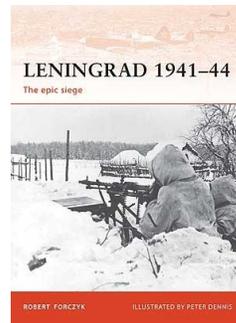


Though each conflict comes to a conclusion and the British declare each a victory, it is a victory that tastes of ash and bitter herbs. A nice part about this book is that it covers three distinctly separate campaigns each with its own cast of characters, though many are cast from the same Imperialist mold. The authors conclusion is that it's easy to get into Afghanistan but much harder to find a palatable exit.

Leningrad 1941-1944 The epic siege

#215 in the Campaign series by Osprey Publishing.

Written by Robert Forczyk. Illustrated by Peter Dennis. 96 pages



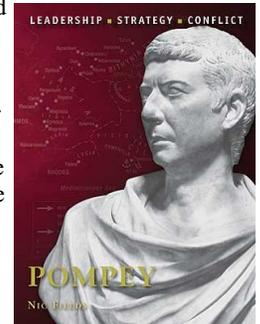
This is one of the best of this series that I've reviewed. Partially because I've always been interested in the subject and unusually for a Campaign series book it covers a multi-year period. Leningrad is one of the great sieges of history both for its length and savagery. The book has information on the forces, commanders and plans of both sides. Leningrad is shown as a series of battles as each side tries new plans to break the deadlock. Leningrad isn't the dash of massed tanks but the grind of unending infantry assaults in woods and bogs. Good scenario material here.

Pompey

#23 in the Command series by Osprey Publishing.

Written by Nic Fields. Illustrated by Peter Dennis. 64 pages

While Pompey is best known as Julius Caesar's opponent at Pharsalus he had quite a career prior to their final meeting. You don't become a member of the First Triumvirate based on just your good looks. The book describes his rise to political power in Late Republican Rome and the campaigns that he led.

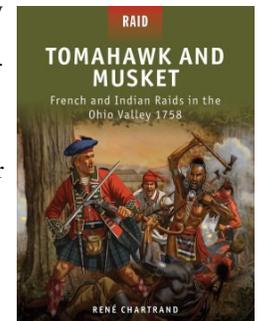


It has been said of Pompey that he peaked early and then coasted on his reputation. While probably true he still managed to show ability as a commander and was handicapped versus Caesar by needing to drag the remains of the Republican Senate with him. This led to command by committee and gave Pompey just one of the voices. All in all a good short biography.

Tomahawk and Musket French & Indian Raids in the Ohio Valley 1758

327 in the Raid series by Osprey Publishing.

Written by Rene Chartrand. Illustrated by Peter Dennis, Donato Spedalieri & Johnny Shumate. 80 pages



This was a fun read with lots of great illustrations. It covers the origins of the war and the strategies of both sides. The raids of 1758 are used to illustrate these strategies as during this year both sides were on both offense and defense. The British offensive was towards Fort Duquesne, modern Pittsburgh and the French attack was aimed at Fort Ligonier. Fort Ligonier is still around as a reconstruction and is an excellent place to visit. Mr. Chartrand's analysis is quite good. Though the French lost in the end their tactical efficiency in wilderness fighting was vastly superior to the British and allowed them to hold on far longer than their resources would have indicated.



It was time to return to the Eastern Front with another winter battle, this time set in January of 1942. The Germans were going to try to shorten their lines due to the winter supply issues as well as continuing Russian counterattacks. A German battalion holding a town has been ordered to pull back to new positions. However, a Russian counterattack has cut them off, so now a rescue operation has to be mounted by the German side.

The Germans started with an infantry battalion in a town at the far end of the board. The German relief forces were in two separate groups. The first group was an armored kampfguppe consisting of (4) PZIV-F2s, (4) PZIIIGs, (3) Marder IIs, and a battalion of panzergrenadiers. The second group consisted of a company of (4) PZIIIEs and (3) PZIVDs. There was also two batteries of 105mm artillery in support. The Germans would be able to enter at two places along the board edge on Turn 1.

The Russian forces were a bit scattered due to the counterattack. One bat-

talion of infantry was firmly entrenched at the bridge, which is where the Germans would need to escape to. The second battalion could be placed anywhere on the board, so they were in the woods just outside of the town that the Germans had garrisoned. The remaining armor, which consisted of (9) T-34s, (4) T-26s, (3) T-60s, and (5) KV-1Cs.

To make the scenario interesting, the armor had been broken up into several groups across the board, simulating that they were pursuing different objectives, fighting the German units as they retreated, or simply got lost! Each unit had to roll 2D6 plus a scatter die to see where it actually ended up. In some cases the armor got regrouped a bit while for some other commands they got spread even further about and this would definitely impact command rolls the first several turns.

The German strategy was to have the larger command with the panzergrenadiers launch an attack to seize the village crossroads, then cover the panzergrenadiers as they moved closer to the town, forming a shield while the German battalion in the town would breakout at the appropriate time. Then everyone would make for the bridge, which hopefully would have been cleared of Russian infantry. The Russians planned to get their commands sorted out, then block the German armor from supporting any units of the German infantry.

When the first turn began, the Germans and the Russians realized that due to the spotting rules and distances involved, the German battalion in the town and the Russian battalion in the woods near the town couldn't see each other. They spent the entire game staring at each other, with neither side wanting to be first to move out into the open! What we thought might turn into a close combat free for all in the end turned out to be pretty boring.

Not so in the middle of the board. What was planned as a German thrust to take the village, which would then serve as a base of fire, plus a good waypoint for the retreating German battalion. The



Germans were going to send an armor company, but when the Russians moved more and more armor into the area, the Germans then committed all of their armor on that side of the river to the attack. No one at that time figured that this would turn out to be a maelstrom where the armor of both sides went to die! (cont. on p19)





(cont. from p18) This is where we encountered some issues that are discussed on the following page. Basically, we experienced the “ganging up” phenomenon in the extreme along with a German commander who was getting 4 and 5 activations a turn! At first it was more of a long range tank duel, but both sides kept feeding more units into the battle while trying to close the range. By the start of Turn 5 there was 75% of the armor on both sides staring each other down at short range!

The Germans on the other side of the river now decided to rush the bridge and flank the Russians in the village. The German armor moved out, but was then immediately fired upon by the two T-34s that had been left on the wrong side of the river! The 45mm AT gun near the bridge plus an AT rifle attached to an

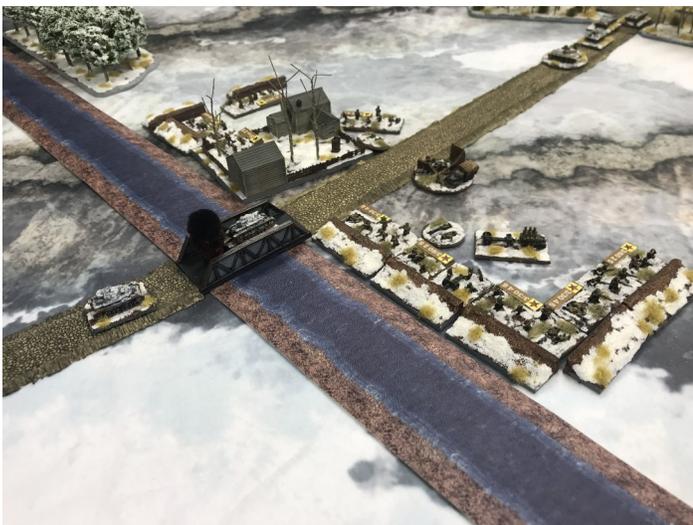
infantry stand hit the German armor, suppressing almost the entire company! On the next turn another good round of die rolls finished them off. All of a sudden, the German plan was quickly falling apart.

This led us back to the center, where despite the multiple activations per turn by the Germans, the Russians were hanging in there, namely due to the KV-1Cs, which are hard to destroy. Slowly and surely, the Russians started to grind down the German armor and when they counterattacked around the village, the Marders went up in flames pretty quickly. The Germans had knocked out a lot of Russian armor, but they were nowhere near clearing the village area.

At this point the Germans looked around and determined that their chances of victory were looking pretty bleak. The

Germans on the other side of the river could not get past the bridge and the panzergrenadiers would be easy targets for the surviving Russian armor. The German infantry in the town could not break through the Russians on their own, so the game ended as a Russian victory.

Everyone liked the idea of the scenario, particularly the randomized set up for the Russians. However, things (as usual!) didn’t quite go according to the script. What was envisioned as a series of battles across the board ended up being a massive armor slugfest in the middle of the board. These things happen with scenario design, but on top of that we had some unusual situations which brought up some discussion about the rules. Hopefully, our scenarios will continue to improve and while everyone still had fun, we can probably do better.



If you've been reading this magazine for any length of time, you've probably figured out by now that we really like playing Blitzkrieg Commander! We've played all four versions and are now firmly entrenched with the fourth edition. We've found that it's the perfect medium for our WW2 games, which due to the number of players (4-7) allows us to have the equivalent of several battalions (platoon scale) on the board. We also have a lot of fun playing it...but there are some issues that keep reappearing.



One of the major issues that we use to have was the "vanishing hits" part of the combat system where at the end of the turn all hits on each unit would magically vanish. Yes, it's a clever game mechanism, but when you're facing Tigers and Panthers or infantry in built up areas, it was frustratingly impossible to destroy them. The optional rule that we've made mandatory now has the hits carry over from turn to turn. One problem solved.

Unfortunately, that's just one of a couple of problems that reared their ugly head in the game described on the previous pages. This really got the discussion going as we don't want to change rules yet again. The other issue is how many house rules do you want to add before what you have in front of you is an entirely different set of rules? Also, some players like certain rules, warts and all, so you have to be careful that you don't offend anyone.

The next problem comes in two parts that are invariably linked together. In some games it never comes up, while in others, such as the battle on the previous pages, it can be game changing. I'm talking about getting multiple actions for commanders and the "ganging up" on enemy targets. In this game one of the

German commanders had a CV of 9, meaning that more often than not, they're going to get at least one activation per turn and more than likely two. But what happens when they get 3, 4, or maybe 5 activations in a turn? Yes, it can skew the game heavily towards that side. You can rationalize it as good commanders pressing a tactical advantage, momentum, good planning, etc., but when you're on the receiving end of this it's not very fun!

In this instance the German commander of the PZ IV F2s and PZIIIs formed a gun line and opened up on the Russian KV-1s. Being at half range they were putting around 25 shots downrange each activation! If you get three or four activations (which happened a few times), the Russians simply got overwhelmed. Is the answer to limit each commander to two or three activations? That might help a bit. Units can respond when fired on, but when there's that many shots coming at your units, the chances of them becoming suppressed is pretty good, so there's not much chance of return fire. Maybe suppression is only achieved on a roll of 6 and enemy units can return fire during each activation?

The next item which goes along with the multiple activations is the "ganging up" aspect of the game at times. Let's say that you have five PZIIIs advancing across an open plain and they run into two T-34s trying to cut them off near a farm up ahead. We usually have every player call their shots before rolling, but there is nothing to stop all five PZIIIs from targeting just one of the T-34s! If they're under half range that could be up to 20 shots coming at the T-34, meaning its in trouble. In reality, platoons moving and engaging would probably be doing this one platoon at a time, with others in support. This often creates unfair situations where a player must sit and watch while an opponent gets multiple activations, then has their units systematically destroy their units one by one! We're currently discussing rolling a die to see how many units could coordinate fire onto one target. That might even things out a bit.

Another problem is artillery and how



much is enough. We don't usually have a points per side scenario and we use to give each side around a battalion of artillery (three batteries). Sort of an annoyance to armor, but any infantry and soft vehicles usually get obliterated! This makes mounted attacks or moving infantry around the board almost suicidal. Lately, we've been giving each side one or two batteries and that seems to have stopped the nuclear level destruction, but we're still unsure how to handle artillery in this game.

Now none of these "problems" are a deal breaker and we still had fun with the game. However, there's the feeling among many of us that things could be improved. I would be interested to hear what other players have in terms of house rules, how they play, etc., which might be helpful. Some of this could just be poor scenario design, wrong choices for units, and non-standard tactics. If you look at the left image on this page there is around a battalion of German armor going up against close to a battalion of Russian tanks in a fairly small space. Maybe the secret is less armor, smaller commands, or spreading things out a bit more?

At this point we've invested too much (at least I have) in terms of micro-armor, terrain, etc., to consider moving to something else or perish the thought, a different scale! We're going to power through



this and try some different things. We realize that trying to replicate reality with any set of rules is a futile cause, but having a battalion of Shermans (9 miniatures) all firing at one German stand is a bit extreme! We're sure that there are answers out there and we just need to keep looking while still having fun.

I've reviewed the first two games in this series, which were *The Last Hundred Yards* and *The Last Hundred Yards: Airborne*. I've noted that it is an interesting system and much, much different than most WW2 tactical level games. Essentially, you're focusing on the final part of an attack, so the plan has been made, the units are in motion, and gamers are left to resolve the battle. There's no time for flanking maneuvers, waiting around for airstrikes, or slowly probing your way forward. MGs are suppressing enemy units, squads are leapfrogging positions, and then there is a final rush towards the objective.



mortar section on call. This is sort of the basic building block of the game.

There are also vehicle platoons, infantry sections, and anti-tank guns that are available for different scenarios. While there are some 81mm mortars available (plus the Japanese have knee mortars), that is as high as it goes for artillery. There are no artillery barrages, pre-game bombardments, naval fire, etc. Again, these scenarios are occurring at the tip of the spear; i.e., the artillery and airstrikes have already hit and this is the final push towards the objective.

When one side has the initiative, the player activates a number of platoons in a company. Each squad or MG can then move, fire, assault, rally, etc., all of which can cause a reaction from the enemy player. If you move two squads up to a farmhouse, the enemy can react by firing at them. The non-initiative player cannot do anything during the turn except react, so this creates an interesting dynamic in knowing where and when to react to enemy threats.

When you fire, you take the fire value, modify it for range, then check modifiers. If you have for example, a squad firing at a range of 3-4 hexes towards an enemy squad in a village, you may at the end of the modifiers place a -2 chit on the enemy squad. Other squads may fire and there may be mortars called down on the position as well. You take the best chance from small arms and mortars, then roll against the enemy unit's cohesion value. If you fail they are disrupted and if they fail again it is a step loss. In principle it works fairly simple and is effective.

However, the rules can appear to be dense and it will take some effort getting through them. In the end the system appears so simple, but it's not. There are large segments of

the rules covering terrain, actions, vehicles, etc., which will take some work figuring out how everything comes together. When you play, however, things become much clearer and by the second game the turns go by much faster.

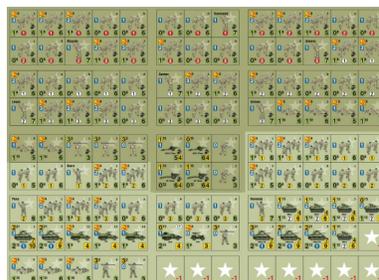
Assaults are another part of the game that works out to be pretty simple, but reading about that part of the game can leave you in a daze. There are so many options and things that can happen, that the designer must clarify all of them in the rules. However, once you've walked through a few assaults it's fairly easy to do. The one thing that may not appeal to many gamers is that there are a lot of markers on the board during a turn.



This is the third volume in the series, focusing on actions in the Solomon Islands in 1942-43. As with the other games in the series, there is a standard list of components which will be discussed here. The game comes in a standard size GMT box and contains quite a lot of stuff. First, there are the series rules, which now include the airborne rules as well, so its definitely getting thicker. There is also a well illustrated play-book, which shows you how to conduct various parts of the game system. There are several beautiful double-sided maps, two sheets of counters, a card to track time and casualties, then two sets of reference cards/tables and finally the scenario cards themselves. A pretty impressive package and the great thing is that you don't have to own the previous games to play the scenarios in this volume.



As I pointed out in reviews of the first two games, this is an entirely different system than probably anything you've ever played before! The base system revolves around activating platoons and in each scenario both sides will have a number of companies and/or platoons with which to either defend objectives or attack them. It's not atypical to have a platoon of three squads, a MG, and a 60mm



At the end of the turn you check to see if mortars are available again and then you roll to see how much time has elapsed. This is actually a pretty clever feature of the game that forces the attacker to constantly be on the move as the victory conditions usually take into account how long it took to seize the objective or accomplish the mission. There's no wearing down the defenders, pulling back to regroup and try again, or long drawn out flanking maneuvers. You come up with a quick plan and go!

This is where for some gamers things might not click. There isn't a lot of room for error and learning how to coordinate attacks is going to take some practice. Vehicles add a whole new level to operations and since these are fairly close ranges, once the firing starts they won't last long! As mentioned above, if you like the very last part of the attack or the decisive moment in a battle, then this game is right up your alley. It is certainly an entirely different look at company level battles.

A caveat is that the Pacific scenarios presented here have a lot of special rules, so this module is a bit more difficult than the other two. Already, there is a new mission pack coming out as well as a module for the East Front. It looks like this series is going to continue for a while and it will be interesting to see where it goes in the future.

HeroQuest-New Version by Avalon Hill/Hasbro Game Review

One of the most unusual fantasy board game systems in the hobby certainly has to be HeroQuest. Designed by the unlikely duo of Milton Bradley and Games Workshop, this game first appeared several decades ago! No one really knew what to make of it at that time. Was it an alternative to D&D? Was it a beginner's game for teens interested in fantasy? Should it be classified as a wargame or a family game? In reality, it was all of those things!



Whatever gamers may have thought about the system, it worked and had a fairly loyal following. There were a number of supplements and it enjoyed a level of popularity greater than many other game systems in the hobby. When Milton Bradley let the IP lapse, Hasbro stepped in and using Avalon Hill (one of their subsidiaries), they produced a new version.

First off, the new HeroQuest comes in a huge box with a fairly hefty price tag (around \$135, but there are deals out there). When you open the box there is a lot of stuff to unpack! There are the two game boards, spell cards, character/monster cards, treasure cards, equipment cards, character sheets, a ton of plastic miniatures (characters, monsters, doors, and furniture), a rule book, gamemaster screen, and finally a quest book. I instantly looked online and found a foam insert, which made sorting everything out much, much simpler.

The miniatures won't win any awards, but they're usable. They're approximately 32mm (the new "heroic" scale!) and made of soft plastic. I started a painting project to finish off the set, but with the furniture there are a lot of pieces and its going to take some time. You get the four basic characters, then 8 orcs, 6 goblins, 4 skeletons, 2 zombies, 2 mummies, a gargoyle, a evil sorcerer, 4 evil knights, and three abominations, which look some giant humanoid/fish hybrid monster. On top of



all of that there are tables, chairs, treasure chests, bookcases, a fireplace, and a ton of closed and open doors.

The rules are pretty easy to understand and a quick reading will give you a pretty good idea about how the game plays. However, there is quite a bit of subtle strategy here, but more on that later. One player takes the role of the evil Zargon, who for all intensive purposes is the gamemaster. Zargon has set up a number of quests (14 exactly) to test the heroes. One player is Zargon, who hidden behind the gamemaster screen, controls what the characters see and the actions of the monsters. The other players take one of each of the characters, or if there are fewer than four players each player can take an additional character. Even playing all four characters by one gamer isn't a great challenge.



The characters are rated for the number of combat dice they use, the number of defense dice, body points (think hit points), and mind points. The elf and the wizard get a number of spells to use, with the wizard taking a set of three, then the elf takes a set, then finally the wizard takes the remaining two sets of three. In the end the elf can fight well enough on her own, but has three spells to use while the wizard gets nine spells. Here's another little part of the game that affects your strategy; the spells can only be used once per quest.

Set up is pretty quick and you can show an entire gaming group how to play in just a few minutes. Zargon reads the parchment for the first quest, sets out the staircase leading to the dungeon/tomb/temple, and the characters place themselves on the game board.

Going clockwise, each player may take do two things with his character. The first thing is movement where you roll 2D6 and can move that number of squares. As you move down hallways or enter rooms, Zargon places anything you could see, such as doors, furniture, and monsters.

The second action can be combat, searching for traps, disarming traps, searching for treasure, etc. Movement and actions can be done in any order, so sometimes coordinating actions can be critical. There are really no rolls for searches, i.e., so you announce you're searching for traps and Zargon must tell you where the trap is in the room. You would think that this could dampen the excitement, but most of the time everyone is in a hurry and they forget simple things like that! When you search for treasure you draw a card and sometimes it may result in actual treasure or every now and then a trap or wandering monster!

Combat is pretty basic and you roll a number of combat dice then the target rolls a varying number of hit dice. Skulls cause hits, certain shield colors block hits, and when a character or monster reach their total of body points they are dead. Pretty simple, but it works. Each quest has a goal, so the characters proceed down the corridors, enter rooms, battle monsters, collect treasure, then attempt to complete the quest. If you complete all 14 quests you win the game, which will take a few sessions. Most quests are probably at least one hour and maybe up to two hours long. In between quests spells and body points are replenished, plus each character can spend any gold they found on new equipment.

At this time there are several boxed sets with new quests and miniatures, so you're not limited by the 14 quests in the box. The company seems to have plans for more and there is a section of the rules on how to create your own. There's pretty good replay value here and it will take a while to get through all of the quests.

There's nothing involving rocket science here! This is dungeon crawl, monster bashing fantasy at its finest. If you're looking for a group game as a break from a few months of Napoleonic warfare, this is it. Although the price is pretty high (at least the quoted price), this is a pretty good product. As long as you don't expect complex plots, challenging puzzles, etc., you should be OK!



Over the last few months as I've been working on a fantasy project on the side (28mm characters/monsters for The Fantasy Trip) and looking for villagers for my War of the Roses scenery, I've seen an explosion in questionable miniature offerings on Ebay, Etsy, and several other sites. Copying miniatures, making cheap molds for knock offs, etc., has been going on for a while, so this isn't a news flash. However, 3D printing and scanning have taken it to new levels! For the sake of the discussion, I'm going to leave out the ongoing issues revolving around Games Workshop trying to protect their IP and all of the people cashing in by copying their miniatures, which could fill up another editorial page!



dilemmas, which is especially weird since we're talking about a hobby! Some gamers are simply scanning miniatures and reprinting copies of them, then selling them on various sites. Others are copying (3D drawing) the miniature as close as they can, then selling them as the originals or leading you to believe that they are the originals.

With today's technology, the ability to create miniatures and terrain quickly is astounding.

As I've mentioned before, I run a large university IT department that is involved with plenty of different services, including 40+ 3D printers. Believe it or not, there are a lot of college students who play AD&D and they create some astounding miniatures. If they can do that, how hard is it to copy something and sell it? I met a young student who had produced some incredible 1/56th scale WW2 armor kits that have to be seen to be believed. What's stopping him from saying that they are for Bolt Action and produced by Warlord games, then selling them for half the cost on Etsy or Ebay? Literally nothing.

On top of that now, you have companies producing STL files for sale on Kickstarter and many other gaming sites so that you can print your own miniatures. Some of these look like other miniatures I've seen, but I could be mistaken. Also, some miniature companies have sort of thrown in the towel and are just selling the STL files of miniatures that they produce in resin, plastic, or metal. They're usually about half the price of the real thing, but you could use those files to print a set for yourself, then produce extras for sale.

Now I've bought several batches of these type of miniatures. I try to do a bit of research and order from the actual company, but it's not always easy. I ordered what I thought were some Scribor miniatures, but when I got them they were in sort of a green plastic and Scribor is usually in grey. They also weren't as sharp in the finished product, so clearly I was misled and they were

knock offs. Another batch of skeletons I received were so bad that I ended up tossing them. Others, however, had clearly been 3D printed, but it was hard to tell if they were from the original company or not.

This also brings up another closely related subject in that does the hobby need all of these miniatures? Every scale, period, etc., are out there for so many games and rules that it would take you a year or more to go over all of them. Piling on STL files, reprints, one offs, etc., and you have a hobby that is literally drowning in miniatures and we haven't even talked about terrain yet! I was recently looking at some Asgard Rising buildings, but the same set of building was sold by 10+ companies and it was hard to tell if some were the originals or if they were knock offs.

I think this leads us to the inescapable conclusion that there aren't a lot of companies that are going to make a lot of money off the hobby any more, especially with



miniatures. Sure, Warlord and Battlefront will trundle on, but if you need a unit of 28mm knights, there's only 1,000 plus choices now and in a variety of resin, plastic, and metal, depending upon how much you want to spend. Why order \$100 from a company like Gripping Beast/Front Rank for example, when you can get knock offs or print your own for less than \$50? Why buy a village from Miniature Building Authority when you or a friend can print an entire village for the cost of a spool of plastic? I've seen some incredible 28mm terrain pieces lately that came from a 3D home printer.

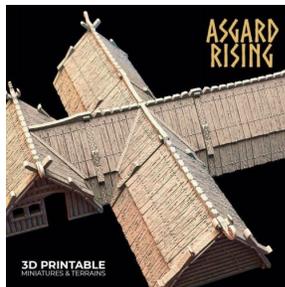
Are we hurtling towards the day where you'll just hit a site, look for some figures, choose a scale, then either print them yourself or someone will mail you something that looks close? Probably. It will definitely take the fun out of one of the things that was enjoyable about the hobby, which was looking through catalogs or web sites, making orders, then waiting for the figures to arrive, which was always a great day! I fear it may be turning into something a little more boring and mundane.



Gamers are going to naturally fall into one of three groups on this topic. First, there is the group who has no idea what's going on and will just buy whatever they need. Second, there's the group who is looking for the best price and will knowingly purchase from a company selling stolen IP. Third, there is the group that really tries to do what is right and buy from the original company, but can become confused with who owns what. Trying to do the right thing in this case can be difficult at times if not outright impossible.

The reason for the confusion at times is that there are literally hundreds and hundreds of companies selling miniatures. It's not like it was back in the day where you had Ral Partha, Grenadier, Minifigs, and Superior selling fantasy figures. You could tell from the figure where it was from and there weren't many places selling them anyway. Today, you could be buying from a store who bought a shipment and couldn't sell them, so now they're on Ebay. It could be a gamer who has a store on Ebay or Etsy and is selling off recent purchases. It could be the company themselves, selling miniatures on as many online outlets as they can. Finally, the miniatures could have been scanned and 3D printed.

Yes, 3D printing has become a curse and a blessing to the hobby and has really produced some interesting moral/ethical



We've been going back and forth between the 2nd and 3rd editions of Age of Reason for a while now, with no clear decision in sight. While we've played 2nd edition for 25+ years, the 3rd edition incorporates some changes we like, but there's also problems, which we'll go over here in this battle report.



but we did get quite a few cavalry units that turned into 1s and 3s! (you can see them marked with brown pipe cleaners for 1s and blue for 3s and in some cases 4s). This also created the unfortunate issue of having

grade 1 troops deployed in the wrong place! In the future, we need to roll for morale grades before set up.

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Due to the number of players, each side would roughly have about three infantry brigades and 6-7 batteries of artillery. The French had four cavalry brigades (the 4th brigade had only one unit) while the Prussians had three, with each cavalry brigade having two units. We used paper maps to write down our brigade placements, then set them up according to that plan. This created some weird and unusual deployments, with some infantry brigades faced off against cavalry brigades. This would not be our usual cavalry battles on the flanks type game this evening!

Both sides cautiously advanced the first turn or two, then the cavalry was faced with a dilemma; either back off or charge the infantry in front of them. This didn't happen in just one place, but in several. The Austrians chose to charge the infantry on the Prussian left and were severely repulsed.



On the Prussian right the Prussian cavalry was defeated near the village and fell back. In the center the Austrian attacks were repulsed, then the Prussians started to advance. The Prussian dragoons were defeated in melee, lost their flag, then counter-charged the next turn to restore

After all the units were set up, we remembered that in the 3rd edition you need to roll for each unit to determine its morale grade. For example, most infantry units are grade 2, but if you're the Prussians and roll a 1, they would be grade 1 and if you rolled a 6 they might be grade 3. For the most part the units would stay at their normal morale grade,

After seeing that the Prussian cavalry reversed course and looked for opportunities elsewhere! Meanwhile, the Austrian infantry in the center advanced to attack and was met by Prussian artillery fire which started doing some serious damage. At the village on the Prussian right, Austrian infantry and Prussian light troops started a firefight as each con-

that side of the battle. It turned into a disaster when the Austrian cavalry, at the halt and disorganized, routed them, then in the pursuit crashed into the second dragoon unit and routed it as well! We shook our heads at that, wondering if we had done something wrong, but that's the way it ended up. (cont. on p25)



AOR3: Prussian Infantry Carries The Day (cont.) Battle Report



(cont. from p24) At this point the Prussian cavalry was in bad shape and the only fresh units were on the extreme Prussian left, but had infantry next to a village in front of them with no room to maneuver. The Prussians had lost two flags, had two units routing, and things did not look good. If the Prussians had to roll for withdrawal (once a side hits 25% casualties they have to roll at the end of every turn) they would have had to roll 4D6 and would need a result under 12 to stay on the field! Fortunately, the Prussians were nowhere near their 25% mark.

The battle shifted to the center now where the Prussian infantry began a steady advance, supported by artillery. Slowly and surely, the Austrians were pushed back. The Prussians were taking casualties as well, but nowhere near the levels of the Austrians. After a few turns

of this, the Austrians had been pushed back past the road and the Prussians were maneuvering to expand their success.

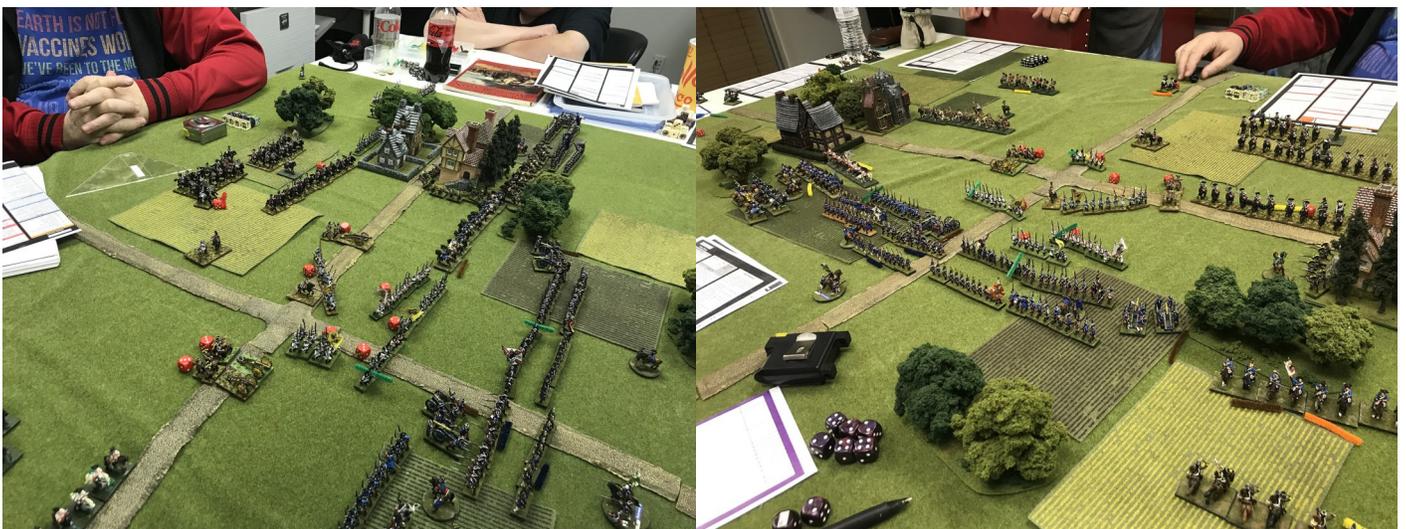
At this point we decided to stop the game, mainly because we had been going close to 5 hours and needed to pack things up. After some discussion we decided that the Prussians, despite the loss of flags, a few units routing, etc., were in control of the middle and would probably win a tactical victory. While everyone had fun, there were a number of things that were discussed.

First of all, a 6 x 4 table isn't a lot of room for 20SPs, especially when each side gets 6-7 cavalry units. The deployment was maybe a bit more clever than both sides wanted and ended up having dissimilar forces staring at each other for most of the game, which was certainly our fault! The placement of the villages

restricted the cavalry, creating some weird situations that affected game play.

The 3rd edition rules still take some getting used to. The artillery is a bit easier to use, but getting used to all of the new modifiers for morale, small arms, melee, etc., is going to be a process. The big issue at this time is that it is a huge book (it contains the campaign system and all of the supplements) and there is no index. Rules and info about special situations, units, etc., are kind of scattered all over the place. Granted, we were eventually able to find things, but it was harder than it had to be.

We'll probably keep working at it and we're even discussing trying another Sport of Kings campaign. That would take some serious painting, so we'll see what develops as we keep trying to game the Seven Years War.



Back to back Age of Eagles Peninsula games! For this one the French are once again pursuing Wellington through Spain. Eugene's corps gets separated from the main French body, so Wellington quickly turns and attacks. The British would initially have more cavalry, infantry, and artillery than the French, although there are some French reinforcements in the area. The big challenge for the British would be the terrain and how to get across the stream quickly.

The British were basically in four divisions; three infantry and one cavalry. The cavalry division (probably all of the British cavalry in Spain!) had three average sized brigades (about 6 stands each), but they weren't great in terms of quality. Each infantry division had three brigades, but as is usual for the British in the Peninsula they were fairly small. Of course, the firepower of these small brigades is pretty good! While there were about five artillery batteries, plus one horse battery, they had to be commanded directly by Wellington (in AOE terms he needed to be within 12" to place them), which really limited their ability to respond to threats.

The French forces were a bit easier to organize, with two infantry divisions and an attached cavalry brigade. One division had two pretty good sized brigades (10 and 12 stands respectively) and a battery of attached artillery. The second division had three average sized brigades and two batteries of artillery. In comparison to the British force it was smaller by 8 stands of cavalry, around 24 stands of infantry, and 3 batteries of artillery.

During the British planning, the main idea was to use the forces that could start



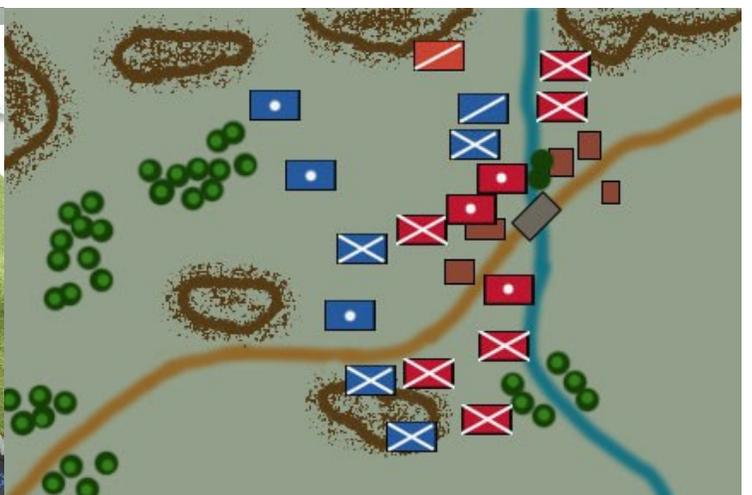
on the board (all of the cavalry, artillery, and one division of infantry) to cross the stream, seize the village near the bridge, then wait for reinforcements before continuing the attack. It was thought at that time that the French would come on the board, take up defensive positions, then await the inevitable British attack. That's not exactly how it happened...

The French had probably our two most aggressive gamers for commanders. True to form, they moved out quickly and decided to attack! Probably not the worst idea, since all of the British were not on board (variable reinforcements) and the terrain was pretty limiting on that side of the board. Long columns of French infantry snaked towards the stream while their lone cavalry brigade protected the extreme left of the French attack. By turn three they had moved pretty quickly towards the stream while the British were still sorting themselves out.

In fact, the British crossed the stream and set up their forces to act as a barrier until help arrived. The artillery was a massive problem and got caught in a traffic jam, deployed, then moved again, adding to the confusion. The French cavalry hurled itself at the first British cavalry brigade and simply obliterated it. The British then realized that the lone French cavalry brigade (heavy cavalry and elite) completely outclassed anything they had. By this time the British reinforcements were arriving and adding to a confused fight on the French left. On the French right, the British stood waiting for the French attack, which was surely coming. A turn later the initial French attack went in and pushed the British back. A second attack was repulsed and the French found themselves back where they started. (cont. on p27)



Below, the French heavy cavalry attack has destroyed two British cavalry brigades and drove two infantry brigades back across the stream. Meanwhile, the British press forward on the opposite flank and bring up artillery to deal with the French heavy cavalry.





(cont. from p26) The British troops that had been pushed back on the French right now shifted to the center just in time, while a fresh British division took its place. They and the French on that side then entered into a four turn attack-counterattack, which saw both sides ground down in melees and firefights. In the center the French heavy cavalry charged the newly arrived British infantry on that side and sent it reeling back across the stream. Another charge by the British cavalry ended up in defeat and by the end of turn 6 there was only one British cavalry brigade left! Luckily, the other French cavalry brigade had failed to appear (a die roll each turn) or things might have gone quite differently!

The other French division now went into the attack, wiping out a British infantry brigade, but was checked by the timely arrival of the British artillery. There

was a moment during turn 8 where things were not looking good for the British, despite their numbers. A die roll here or there, better rolls on the movement chart, etc., might have forced the British to retreat their entire army.

Instead, the British got themselves straightened out and returned to the fight. The French heavy cavalry, beset on three sides by artillery and musket fire, starting taking losses and had to fall back. One French infantry brigade was overwhelmed by firepower, while the second one was repulsed in a charge and had to take up positions on the outskirts of the village. The British slowly seized control of the game and started to press forward on all fronts. A charge by the British infantry on the French left drove the French back, securing the village once and for all. In the center, a British charge cleared away the French and their army

was about to be split into two. Looking around it was plain to see that the French infantry strength was spent and there was no hope of getting to the bridge over the stream. With that, the game was called as a British victory.

A hard fought battle! The French attack was well conceived and while probably biting off more than they could chew, it almost succeeded! The Wellington-artillery issue really hampers the British and it definitely showed through here. The British firepower advantage is offset by the numbers of stands in the French infantry brigade, which helps to produce an interesting dynamic during the games.

Again, we need to work on our Spanish terrain (!!!) and get some actual Spanish troops. This is a fun period during the Napoleonic Wars and we'll be revisiting it again soon.



I think, over time, Matt has made it clear that we play a lot of different games and that our group's tastes are pretty diverse. I've been with the group for a number of years now and played everything from Phantoms in Vietnam to Trojan War to Napoleonic to Sci-fi. There are several tried and true systems the group likes to play for larger games, but those can take a bit to organize.

Enter the skirmish game. They are lighter, easier, plus faster to setup and play. They are perfect for nights when there aren't a lot of people or when we need a break from more involved games. There is only so much cross checking 2-4 different charts one can handle while simultaneously looking for that one rule buried in paragraph c of random section y. Plus, while you don't have the sumptuous look of 100+ minis on the table, invariably the extra terrain and detail in the figs more than makes up for that.

My first wargame was BattleTech in the 80s. An uncle of mine bought me the boxed set for a birthday present, and I dabbled in it for a number of years. At this point, wargaming was just cardboard standees and paper sheets on cardstock maps. For those who have never played it, it is a very crunchy small-scale game (I don't use skirmish outright, as even though it's typically 4 models on 4 models, games take forever as you constantly micromanage everything). Personally, I loved playing it with my friends as we enjoyed the unlimited customization for mechs and big stompy robots were a definite plus. Queue other games to come along such as HeroQuest and Battlemasters, which were brilliant licensing by Games Workshop/Milton Bradley to get kids hooked on simple, fun, and rules light games. Yes, Battlemasters had blocks you pushed around, but the mechanics were brilliantly simple, and games could comfortably be played in an hour (I'm sure some hardcore folks will take issue with it as a wargame, but it is a lot of fun).

Years later and I'd be playing 40k and various Wizkids CMG games. Warhammer 40k scratched the itch to paint and model figures as well as getting me out into social gaming (outside of friends/family) while Wizkids provided much the

same in properties I enjoyed (I was semi-famous in those groups for my customs and repaints). However, neither really hit that perfect niche. The perpetual rules creep, playing with random folks (there is no fun playing a 12-year-old in 40k who cries and quits when his terminators get killed, even though he's crushed half your line), and the constant cash outlay to then be invalidated by the new hotness eventually got old.

All that to segue into why I am writing in defense of skirmish wargaming. You can easily plunk them down on a table and get going. Generally, they are a lot less trouble to balance vs a big battle. When people are only pushing 4-30 models around, it's a lot easier to keep things from going lopsided (BKC, as an example, is a great game, but it is not uncommon to have it go sideways). Also, you can go simple or complex depending on your taste in scenario. It can be as simple as escort the VIP off the board or as complex as searching locations for secret data. Personally, I also often like to add a little randomness into it. This might be a secret ninja in Ronin who jumps out and attacks an unsuspecting player or falling debris in a sci-fi game possibly ruining the best laid plans.

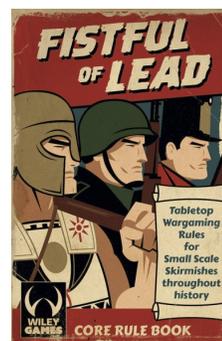
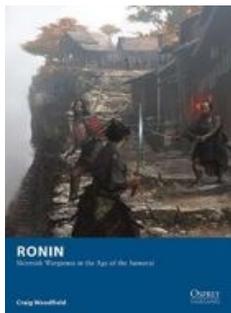
We've dabbled with a number of these since I began playing with the group. They are great for when plans change and we need something easy to put together or want something more complex in scenarios, but don't have the people to run a big battle. The list of ones we've tried include things like Ronin, En Garde!, Fistful of Lead, and Saga. I've also read through or tried elsewhere Stargrave, Bolt Action, and Clash of Spears (all of which are good for different things). Depending on what period you want, this enables relatively small forces up to semi moderate ones. Saga and Clash both use upwards of 25-40 models, while the others tend to be 4-10.

Each of those have their various pluses and minuses. Ronin has a great combat mechanic and simple addition/subtraction, but shooting is 'eh' and a level 4/5 can be a struggle to tackle.

Saga is brilliant, has fatigue, and the battleboards but is also hampered by those same boards (unless you play it regularly, you'll forget the boards and they are key to playing well). Fistful of Lead is highly adaptable, has a great activation mechanic, but can get a bit heavy on the traits. That said, none of the negatives have ever made for a bad game, just maybe more time spent in an area than may be desired or a missed opportunity a player failed to take.

The small force sizes also mean you can quickly and easily get a new faction or new model onto the table. We play Galactic Heroes (FFoL's sci-fi rules) with 15mm figures, and you can zip through a half dozen crews in no time (and everyone loves when the Hawkmen show up, pick a fight with everyone, and it turns into a turkey shoot!). Also, terrain can be much more interesting. Models can start climbing on or through things versus it just sitting on the sidelines. My Ronin forces, as an example, started out as just a single buntai, but have expanded into multiple factions (Sohei, two flavors of Samurai, Koryu, Ikko-ikki, ninja, and civies/npcs). This was also the first war game I played with my kids. The simple rules meant I could teach them to play, and the basic adding/subtracting was good for them, never mind introducing them to painting.

So, in summary, take a second glance at skirmish games if you don't already play them. They are easy to pick up and put down when you need. They generally don't require a lot of rule lookups or arguing. Lastly, they look great with far less investment than a Hail Caesar force, and if you are the one running the game it's a heck of a lot easier to get 4 players worth of figures up for Fistful of Lead than Age of Eagles. I don't think we've ever had a bad time playing one. Whether we were burning down the village in Saga or intercepting the imperial envoy in Ronin they've all made for fun, easy, enjoyable nights for all involved. That and they also give a nice break or a pinch hit game every time we needed one..



I had reviewed Stalingrad '42 an issue or two ago, which for those who are unaware, is part of what is in a series of games, all with the year at the end of the title. Stalingrad '42 covers the German drive over the summer of 1942 to the gates of Stalingrad at the operational level. The game was so popular that an expansion has now appeared that covers the Russian counteroffensive.



Similar to Stalingrad '42, I reviewed Death Valley some time ago. Death Valley was another entry in the excellent GBACW series, this time focusing on the battles in the Shenandoah Valley in 1862 and 1864. There were a number of large and small scenarios from those two years and you would think that there would be enough to keep ACW gamers happy for quite some time. Well, apparently not!

There isn't really much in the expansion, but what it does give you is a ton of additional game play. The expansion arrived in a zip-lock bag and contains the newest version of the rules (with all recent errata and corrections), a four page supplement for the rules covering the expansion, one small sheet of counters, two set up cards, and two player aid cards. The components are up to the usual high standards of GMT and go right along with the original game.

Battles for the Shenandoah is a supplement for Death Valley, adding even more battles to the ones covered in the original game. Much like the Stalingrad '42 supplement, this one comes in a zip-lock bag. However, there is a lot of stuff packed into that bag! For starters there are multiple maps and map pieces, two counter sheets, new terrain cards, turn record sheets, and a booklet detailing the new battles that are added. Again, it's really hard to complain about the value that GMT gives you or the quality of the product.

The expansion covers the Russian counteroffensive that began in December of that year and carries through the Winter Storm operation to relieve the trapped German defenders. Although fairly short compared to the campaign game of the original, this expansion will require all three maps, so it will have a fairly large footprint. For those

Russian players who are tired of taking a beating from the Germans all the way up to the city of Stalingrad, here is the chance you've been looking for to even the score!

The rules have a few changes in them, but players of the original game should still check through those changes as they can be important during play. The good thing about the games in this series is that they are extremely popular and see a lot of play, so the up to date versions of the rules really tighten things down and its hard to find problems with the game. A great expansion to an already popular game.

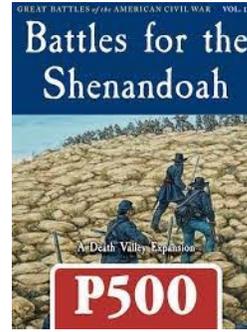
The battles are a mix of large and small, but look to be great introductions to the system. Again, these are a mix of the actions that were fought in 1862 and in 1864 during the various Valley campaigns. The battles are:

- 2nd Winchester
- Cool Spring
- Piedmont
- McDowell

Within each battle there are usually different starting times and some variants. If you don't want to play the entire battle there could be a scenario where you start halfway in. This definitely lets players pick and choose according to how much time they have. As mentioned above, sev-

eral of the scenarios have around a division or so of units, which is great for learning the system and cuts out the command system. This lets beginning players learn the activation system, movement, and combat quickly.

The largest battle, 2nd Winchester, uses parts from both games and has a fairly large footprint, plus a lot of units. The full battle would certainly take a time commitment. Again, however, there are parts of it that you can fight that will be shorter than the entire thing. This is one of the advantages of this series in



that there are a lot of options in terms of battle size and how long you want to play.

The only down side to this supplement is that few gamers are going to have already played all of the battles in the original Death Valley box! For myself, I'm not sure when I will get to the battles in this supplement as I'm hopelessly behind. On top of that the series is really moving along now with a boxed set of small battles coming out sometime in the near future. Also, they have shown

the artwork for The Wilderness game, which is going to take some time to play when it finally comes out as that is a pretty big battle!



Hail Caesar: Vikings vs. Normans

Battle Report

Another period for Hail Caesar! Instead of the usual Republican Romans vs. Seleucids, this time it would be Vikings vs. Normans. One of our members has been working on this project for a while and felt that it had reached a point where there were enough figures for a 3-4 player game (about 300 figs). While everyone was familiar with the rules, we've only played the game twice in the last year, so as usual we would be rusty the first few turns!



The standard size units were 16 for infantry, 12 for archers, 8 for cavalry, and 8-10 for skirmishers. The Normans of course were easily distinguishable by their heavy cavalry units, four of them which were on the extreme left of the Norman battle line. The Normans also had several units of armored infantry, a few archer units and some skirmishers. Clearly, the Norman plan was to advance and hold in the center and the right while the heavy cavalry did its job on the left.

The Vikings were an all infantry force, consisting mainly of heavy, well armored infantry. However, they had a host of unit attributes such as Valiant, Wild Fighters, etc., that would give them various advantages in close combat. How this would work out was anyone's guess as our only Hail Caesar experience was with Republican Romans and Seleucids! For the Viking players, getting the names of the units down and finding them on the unit roster was the most challenging thing about the night!

The units were set out roughly where they would begin, then the players could make adjustments. Both sides made a

few small tweaks here and there, looked over their roster sheets, then asked a few questions. The game would be a straightforward slugfest and would go until one side or the other broke. With that, we were ready to begin.

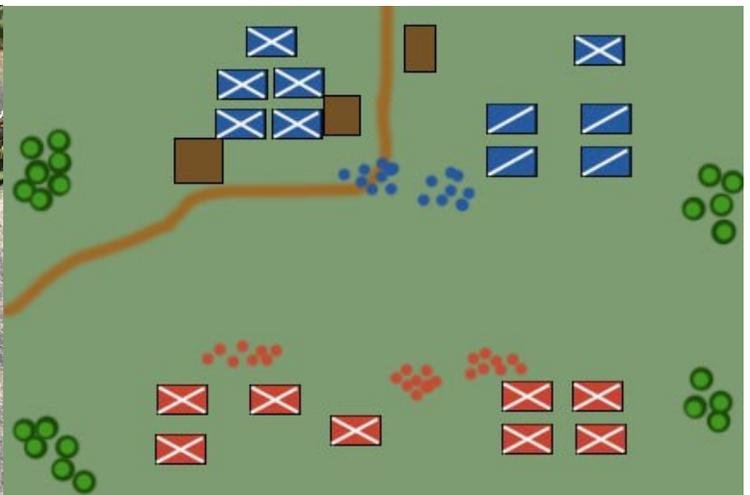
The first few turns saw some cautious advances by both sides. Again, since nobody had played this era before, it was hard to know what to do! The skirmishers got into it fairly early and by the third turn most of them had taken some casualties. One Norman heavy cavalry unit that strayed too close to the Viking front line was forced to retreat by skirmishers after some bad saving and break tests. By turn 4 it was time for the main event to get underway and both sides prepared to launch massive attacks.



Sure enough, the Norman and Viking heavy infantry got into on the Norman left. Both sides scored a lot of hits, mainly due to the ability of the Vikings to re-roll some of their attacks. The only thing that saved the Vikings in the middle turns was that they were able to make some of their saving throws while the Normans could not. The Normans were thrown back in their first attacks, but the Vikings had been weakened. The skirmishers, meanwhile, continued to kill each other off in the middle of the board.

The Norman cavalry had enough of delays (bad command rolls) and finally charged into the Vikings on that flank. The first Viking unit stood its ground, but took a lot of casualties and inflicted some back, so maybe the Norman cavalry wasn't so tough after all? That notion was

quickly dispelled when the next Norman cavalry unit charged and simply obliterated the Viking unit opposing it, forcing it back, then following up for another attack that finished it off. All of a sudden there was a big hole in the lines of the Vikings and things got worse. (cont. on p31)





(cont. from p30) The Vikings on the other flank were now coming under pressure from the Norman infantry. Another attack saw a Viking unit break due to casualties and a bad break test. However, one Viking unit did a smart maneuver and caught a Norman unit in the flank, driving it back with casualties and it looked like the front lines might stabilize a bit. Again, however, another Norman attack hit the Vikings and broke a second unit. Now things were beginning to look bleak on that flank.

The Norman cavalry, kept advancing, crashing into another Viking unit and inflicting heavy casualties on that one as well. The follow up attack finished it off and there was a huge hole in the Viking right flank. The other Viking units there maneuvered to fill in the hole, but by this time the Normans were on the rampage and there was little the Vikings could do

to stop it. The Vikings to their credit continue to counterattack and even though things looked bad for them we decided to play one more turn to see if the Vikings could salvage things.

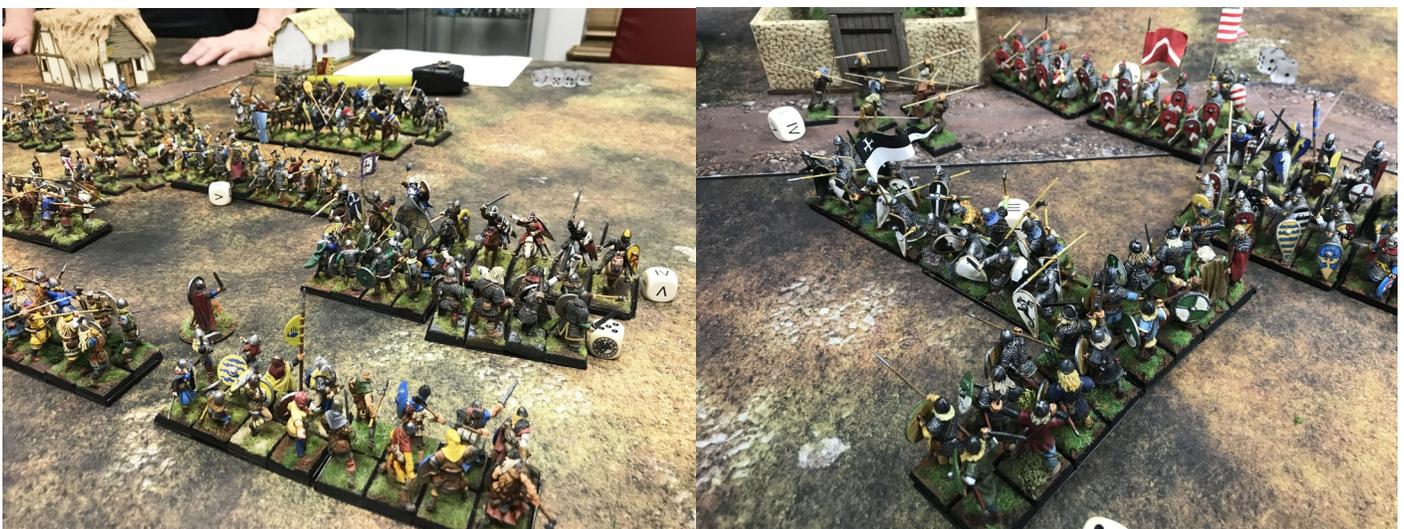
The answer to that question would be no! The counterattacks failed to budge the Normans and in the Norman turn they broke clear through in one area and broke one of the Viking divisions. Looking around at the carnage and seeing some fresh Norman units waiting in the wings, the game was called as a clear Norman victory.

We had only played Hail Caesar twice in the last year, so we were rusty again on some of the rules, so we spent some time trying to find things or making sure that we were doing everything right! We were still able to get the game set up, played, then taken down in just under 3

1/2 hours, which is pretty good. The one thing for which we need a good solution is marking which units have which special traits. I'm not sure markers would help other than to clutter the tabletop.

This game was much, much different than our other Hail Caesar affairs! For one thing, the large number of re-rolls, heavy cavalry with a 9 clash rating, etc., made it seem like units broke faster. As far as tactics go, this was a learning experience and it is clearly going to take a few games to figure out how to handle the various units, slowing down the Norman cavalry, how to use terrain in this period, etc.

On the positive side we now have another Hail Caesar period! I'm sure that more units will get added to the mix so that we can run some 5-6 player games in the near future.



From time to time we play a wide variety of skirmish games set in all kinds of different periods. For this game, we had Greeks vs. Trojans using the Fistful of Lead miniatures rules. Now this set of rules can be used for almost anything, which is exactly what we've seen by using them for Sci-fi as well as Ancients.

There are a number of supplements to add even more rules all the way up to giant robots (i.e. think Robotech, Battle-tech, etc.), so they are pretty universal set of rules that are easy to teach and plays pretty fast.



upon, plus a few rules questions here and there, we were ready to begin.

Now Rob, who designed the scenario, painted the terrain and figs, plus added images to all the player

cards for the various miniatures, spent a lot of time going over the detailed victory conditions. There were also rules for appealing to the gods by playing specific cards. As is usual with gamers, we never even got to most of this! Everyone is so intent on killing everything in sight during most of our skirmish games that we never really get to the real reason why we're fighting!

For the uninitiated, *Fistful of Lead* uses a system of cards where each player is dealt one card for each figure that you still have on the board. Then, descending from Aces down (and which suit of cards its from to break ties) each player can do two actions with one of their figures. This could be moving, hand to hand combat, reloading, moving twice, or any of a number of combinations. This keeps the turns highly interactive and you never know what's going to happen next. Some of the various cards also have special traits on them such as +1 in combat, re-roll one die, and so on.

The Greeks came onto the board and dove right into their work to burn down everything in sight. The Trojans left one group to guard the ford and one to guard the temple. However, by the end of the second turn that strategy wasn't going to work as the Greeks led by Ajax crossed the river with little difficulty (great die rolls!) and would flank the Trojans at the river. The Greeks had two archers and all of a sudden one Trojan faction was down a man!

The Greeks pressed their advantage at the ford, diving right into hand to hand combat. In *Fistful of Lead* each figure is rated for their hand to hand value and rolls that type of die. Most are D10s, but heroes can have D12s. Both figures in combat roll off and then the winner rolls on the wound table, using the difference as a kind of modifier. This results in Shock (subtracts in combat), Wounds (each figure can take several), or outright death. In the first combat it was outright death for the Trojan warrior who tried to stop a Greek in the river!

In fact, the reason that I took some time to explain the rules is because it wasn't much of a battle! The Trojans guarding the ford were simply overrun and forced back. Phil, who had that side of things for the Trojans, had some of the worst die rolls during the entire year of 2022! The Trojans made a desperate stand, but went down to defeat, only tak-



Each player had one group consisting of five figures. There was one hero or really good leader, a slightly lesser hero, then three average troops. The Lykians were led by Sarpedon (son of Zeus) and the Trojans were led by Chromius. Their job was to protect the ford at the river and prevent the temple from being looted. Each of the Trojan groups had one figure with javelins, so they didn't have much ranged firepower.

The Greeks were also represented by two factions; the Argives led by Diomedes and Salamis led by Ajax the Greater. Their task was to enter the board, burn every building they could, drop a body down the well, then loot the temple! Definitely a search 7 destroy mission set in the ancient world! With both sides set and strategies decided



ing out two Greeks for the cost of the entire five figure Trojan group.

The other Trojan group didn't fare much better, running into Ajax, who ended up being pretty nasty in combat. The Trojans killed one Greek with a javelin and another in hand to hand, but then that was the high point. Ajax and the remaining Greeks finished off the Trojans on that side of the board and then it was on to looting the temple and victory!

It went so bad, so quickly for the Trojans that we decided to set up a quick skirmish near the temple entrance in the time we had remaining. The Trojans luck never changed and after a few turns that was over as well, with the Greeks literally killing anything that wasn't Greek! The system showed that it can adapt to pretty much any period and we'll have to revisit this again.

Warlord Games River Scenery Pack

This is an unusual addition to the already massive lines of terrain that is currently available to gamers. Rivers are nothing new in the hobby and there are hundreds of different kinds, ranging from blue felt to professional done pieces using clear resin. This pack combines mdf pieces with photorealistic stickers to produce a river that will easily cover a 6 x 4 gaming table.

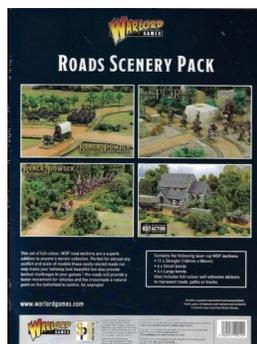
You get several short curves, some longer ones, then about a dozen or so straight pieces, which is pretty good for the \$30 the pack usually sells for. The stickers look surprisingly good once they've been attached to the mdf sections. I would recommend using a spray adhesive or some thinned down white glue on the mdf before putting on the stickers as my first test showed that the stickers were going to come off at some point if no adhesive was used.



The only problem I could see was that the stickers are a bit short on some of the mdf sections. On the straight sections I just cut off one of the edges with an x-acto knife to match up with the edge of the sticker. I also painted the same colors of the sticker on the connecting edges as when I first tested them you could kind of see the tan edges through the gaps. Once painted it worked out really well. Also, these river sections are pretty wide and may not work with every scale.

Warlord Games Road Scenery Pack

Very similar to the river pack, but this time you're dealing with roads. You get the same number of curved and straight pieces as the river pack,

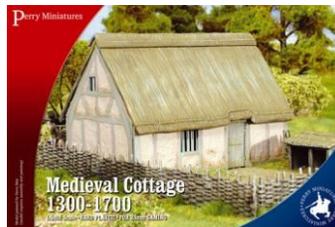


with the one extra piece of MDF material for some reason. The big difference here is that the stickers actually go all the way to the edges, unlike in the river pack. I did have a problem with four of the straight pieces in that they had been print offset, so there was a white line along one edge, but I was able to paint over it.

I used some white glue on both the river and road stickers, just to make sure that they stayed in place permanently. I also matched colors and painted the connecting ends of each piece, which seems to eliminate being able to just see the MDF color if they get pulled apart during play. Overall, they look good and seem like they should work well with our 28mm games.

Perry Miniatures Medieval Cottage

Besides doing some incredible miniatures, the Perrys also produce a few buildings here and there. This 28mm medieval cottage will actually fit into a lot of periods, including well past 1700. When you open the box you get several pieces that form the cottage, then another half dozen or so for the fence.

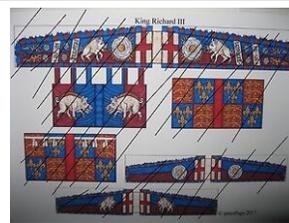


The building goes together fairly easily, but I was a bit surprised by how simplistic the fit was; i.e., there weren't really any connecting points, pegs, or slots that really fit together well. There were some guides and most of it is pretty obvious, but if you're thinking that this is going to be a really solid construction then you would be wrong. However, in the end it assembles quickly and paints up well.

Pete's Flags

This is a small company from England that produces a lot of War of the Roses and Medieval era flag sets in 15mm and 28mm. Depending upon the subject and cost, you can get anywhere from 2 to sometimes 5 or more flags on the sheet.

These are paper flags with bright colors and shading, which may not be to everyone's liking. Also, some of the flags have the "torn edges" appearance, which looks great on the miniatures and the tabletop, but cutting it out of the sheet, then touching up the white edges with paint is certainly a challenge. These are quality products, however, and if you need flags for this period they should be at the top of the list.



More Stuff for Steve Jackson Games The Fantasy Trip

While The Fantasy Trip will never be as popular as D&D or several other RPGs, it does have a devoted following, including myself! I enjoy the more combat orientated system as well as the solo adventures, which are a lot of fun. Since its return several years ago in the deluxe format, Steve Jackson games continues to put out quality products in support of it. Just in the last few years there have been numerous modules, card decks, books, etc., all geared towards making the system a better gaming experience.



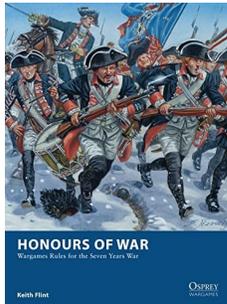
Hexagram #10 is another good issue in the series of small magazine like supplements with a lot of things that can be used in RPG campaigns. Also, the Treo School of Martial Magic is a module that is entirely based on a school, with floor plans, faculty profiles, and all kinds of ideas for running adventures with the school as the centerpiece.

If you haven't tried this system, I would suggest getting a copy of Melee and Wizard to see if you like the basic system, then expand from there. If you like fantasy adventures, there are some high quality products in this series.



We don't often try out new rules for many of what we term our "established" periods, such as Seven Years War, Napoleonic, ACW, and so on. Also, we've had some hit and miss experiences with Osprey rules, so it was with a bit of trepidation that we approached Honours of War, the Seven Years War rules from Osprey. Since we had plenty of figs and terrain for the period it was pretty easy to set the game up and most of us will try anything once, so on one Friday game night we decided to give these rules a go.

The rules use battalions of infantry, regiments of cavalry, and batteries of artillery as the standard units. These are then further grouped into brigades of 2-8



IGOUGO type system, but it's not seemingly random either. The main thing is the command distances, so units need to be kept close to their commander (especially in 15mm scale) or close to another unit in the brigade who is itself under command. This does do a good job of simulating Seven Years War command and control.

We spent the first few turns just getting used to the command and movement systems. We could see that the firing ranges, particularly in 15mm, were fairly short and it was going to take a few turns to get down to business. We quickly saw that we should have started closer on the

first turn! Not really knowing how the system was going to play out, it was hard to come up with any kind of strategy so early.

The scenario was pretty straightforward. The French, who had five more units than the Prussians, would be the attackers in the scenario. There was a town nearer the Prussian side, so the Prussians would move out quickly to secure the entrances to the town, then fight the French as they attempted to encircle the town. The cavalry went to the flanks, but both sides kept a small reserve of infantry just in case things went bad for their own cavalry in the coming battles! By turn 4 the combat was about to begin with artillery starting to find the range.

Here's where things get interesting and it's mostly due to the firing and melee systems, which surprisingly use the same table. On top of that the combat systems use average dice, which I haven't seen and/or used since my days with WRG rules back in the 70s! There are of course, a host of modifiers for regular firing, artillery fire, and melee that are pretty standard for those who play other rules. Where things really diverge is in the

hits generated and what comes after.

Since you're using an average die, there's going to be a lot of 3s and 4s rolled. Looking down the table you can



see that you'll be causing at least 1 if not 2 hits with those results. Really good rolls with higher modifiers can result in 2 or 3 hits. Units, however, only take 5 before being essentially destroyed. At 3 hits they suffer negative modifiers and at 4 hits they must retreat.

Now units can be rallied to subtract a hit and the further back you are from the front the easier it is. Essentially, the game is designed for units to go forward, take hits, fall back, get rallied and then go forward again. We found out that's not quite what happens all the time. Melee is basically one unit against one unit, with additional units providing support modifiers. Units keep fighting until one unit takes enough hits to retreat or is destroyed. As you can see, units don't last long and the game can really move along quickly to a conclusion, particularly for small battles. (cont. on p35)



units, each with their own officer who is rated for their capability. Also, units can be rated for various things as well and to help balance out a game. We decided to keep things pretty generic, especially for the first time playing the game. After going over the charts, asking a few questions here and there, we were ready to begin play. Luckily, we did find the 15mm charts as our initial reaction to the 28mm distances given were that the game might not last two turns! Once we figured out the new movement and firing distances things looked good enough to start the first turn.

The turn sequence is a bit unusual in that both sides dice for initiative, then the winner gets to pick a brigade to start with. The commander's skill also influences this in how far units can move or if they can move at all! It's not quite an





(cont. from p34) We had 25 units on one side and 20 on another, but due to the usual Seven Years War formations and the terrain,, you essentially had one brigade squaring off with another brigade while the French had a spare brigade in reserve! The biggest issue we saw was attacking, where many units simply were destroyed by infantry and artillery fire before they could get into melee. Time and time again the French tried to get into firefight range, but took so many hits that most units fell back or were destroyed.

Melee worked out somewhat better and we had a huge series of cavalry charges and countercharges out on the Prussian left flank. The French prevailed, but were sitting at 3 hits a piece, so they could have followed up, but might have lost those units in the ensuing melee. The Prussian cavalry fell back to get rallied and would be out of the fight for a few

turns, depending upon the situation. All in all, there weren't a lot of problems with the melee system.

The French continued to press forward and now had most of their units at least in small arms range, plus the artillery was starting to cause some hits. The flanks were still very much in doubt for both sides, although on the Prussian left things could have looked better. The Prussians had the village, but were about to be possibly surrounded on three sides, or were they?

After several turns we got the hang of the system except for one thing; what was the best way to attack? Every time a French unit would advance it would get met with a hail of fire, which usually caused it to fall back. After a few more turns of this we came to the conclusion that the French, despite having five or so

more units than the Prussians, were not going to budge them from their positions. The game was called as a Prussian victory, although they hadn't done much except fire at the approaching French!

While the game looked like a Seven Years War battle, namely due to the command system, we could not understand how to approach and survive for a turn or two to force melee. My guess is that we need to re-read the rules another time or two, push some figs in a few test combats, then show the rest of the gaming group. Again, things weren't too difficult and once you get used to the average dice and the combat table, things can move fairly quickly. For now things are on hold with this and we move to a try of Black Powder for the period and maybe even the Age of Eagles variant. We still prefer Age of Reason, but are always on the lookout for an alternative.



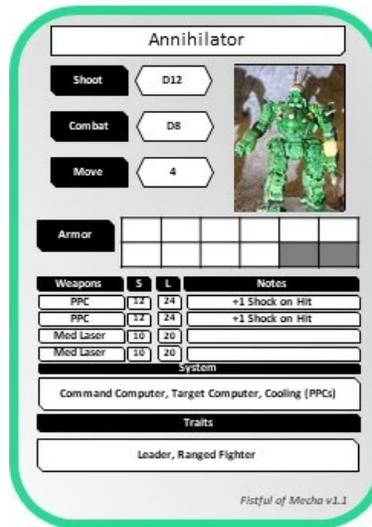
One of our Friday nights had a big game on for the University of Utah (Pac-12 Championship Game), so we were down multiple players. *Fistful of Lead* has provided exactly the right sort of thing for this scenario, and so we decided to try a my homebrew modifications of *Fistful of Starfighters* for the evening, but instead of space combat this time it would be with giant mechs.



I'd bought *Fistful of Starfighters* sometime back thinking of swapping X-wing over to it, but it didn't catch my full fancy (X-wing already being a solid game in and of itself). After pondering on it for a long time, I realized it was perfect for a re-skin into a simplified version of *Battletech*. I'd gotten started into wargaming with *Battletech* in the 1980s when an Uncle bought me the boxed set for Christmas one year. I spent a lot of time pouring over the manual, creating custom mechs, and

craft to mecha. Cutting out some of the more Star Wars aspects, such as repair droids and shields yielded my first attempt some time back which my son helped me test. That game went well, but was a bit unsatisfying (instant kills were broken), and so I updated a few things. This would be my 2nd round of play testing which Mark and Phil graciously agreed to provide.

The setup was based on a scenario from *Operation Rat*, when Davion invaded Liao during the 4th Succession War to gift part of Liao Territory as a wedding present. We ran a mixed light/medium lance for both players, with Davion trying to destroy a Comstar installation. We elected to keep it simple, and not put rules in for time or reinforcements so that the rules would get a better flex test.



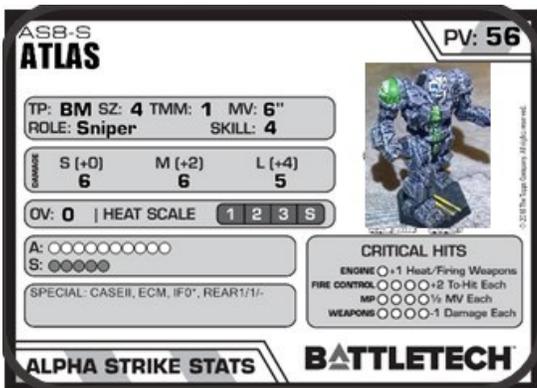
down main street, trading fire with the Davion Uziel, before it ultimately succumbed to a devastating round of shooting that saw it's reactor breached and the pilot eject.

Trying to salvage something from this, the Cougar bounced into a city park and plopped a few shock/heat down on Davion. Ultimately though that proved futile and Davion managed to finally angle a shot on the Locust and then blow it apart in spectacular fashion. A wounded Davion mech plus three fresh ones then turned on the Cougar and again a Liao pilot had to punch out.

At this point we called it, as the Hollander was completely outclassed and outgunned. Overall the game played smoothly with only a few hiccups. The two main complaints, other than some typos boiled down to an unclear front for movement (the mechs move straight forward from the front hex edge, and can

rotate 1 hex facing at the end of the move and small text on the cards. That and some lousy rolls to wound on Liao's part, which saw some good tactical maneuvering come up well short. Guess pilots in a police state don't end up all that great...

As you can see from this battle report as well as many others over the last few issues, this set of rules can be used for pretty much any period, including Trojans vs. Greeks all the way up to high tech forces throughout the galaxy! The company produces the basic rules as well as a wide variety of supplements that cover every type of weapon known to mankind all the way to the far future. You can also customize the cards to give each figure certain skills and attributes, so there is literally no end to being able to create scenarios.



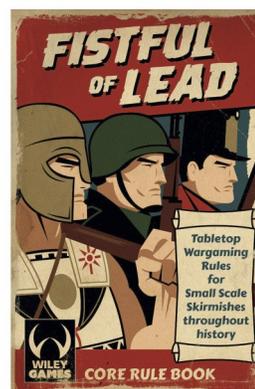
reading the fluff. However, as I've gotten older, I've come to realize it is a very clunky system that takes forever to run, then including the Clans and beyond just adds a blistering array of options you have to consider, with loads of charts and record keeping.

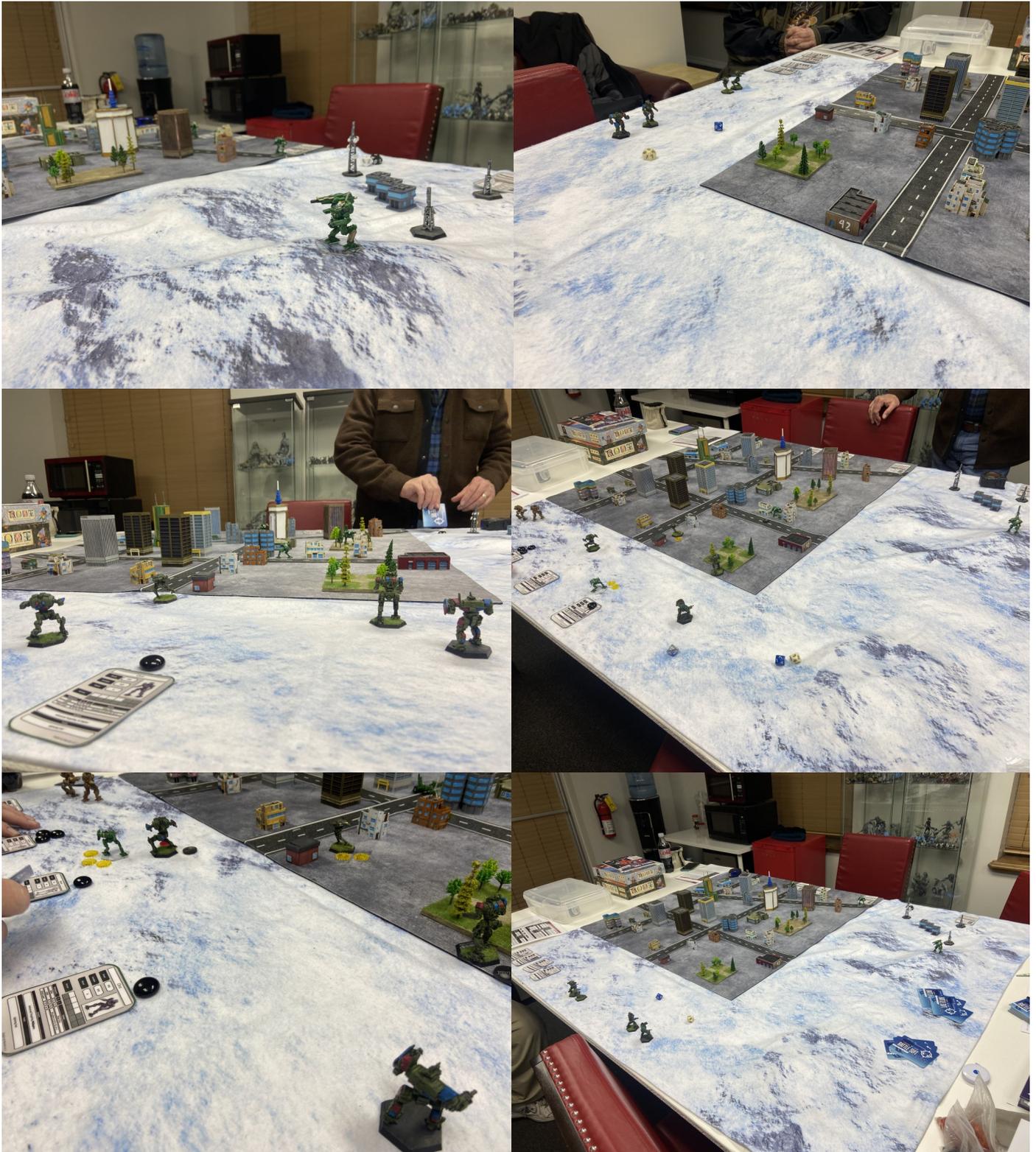
That's a shame as the PC games (back all the way to *Crescent Hawks* and the original *Mechwarrior*) are all generally really good, and capture the spirit very well. So, using that inspiration, I modified the rules from fighter

Three of the four Liao Mechs started in the city, and one on a hill above the com. station. The four Davion Mechs started off moving slowly towards the city. Liao had some success plinking down shock/heat early in the game, but couldn't score any wounds (rolling 9/10 to hit, and 1-3 to wound multiple rounds in a row).

This still cause Davion to try and move into cover to get out of the sniper's line of sight.

Liao finally decided to mix it up, and the Locust skirted into the backfield, completely flanking the Davion units and lighting them up with Machine Gun Fire (which caused plenty of shock/heat, but again no wounds). The Griffin came





Six images from the *Fistful of Mecha* game, showing the winter terrain as well as the urban area where the battle was fought. The rules cater to a wide variety of science-fiction miniatures in any scale, so figures from *Star Wars*, *Battletech*, *Heavy Gear*, etc., can all be used.

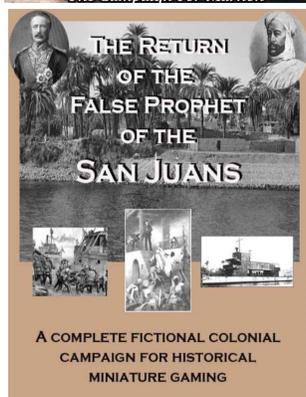
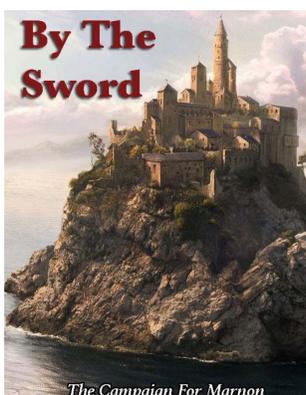
**WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL
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Meets every other Friday night in the SLC, Utah area. We play a wide variety of games in 1/300th, 10mm, 15mm, and 25mm, including Age of Reason, Age of Discovery, Age of Eagles, Fire & Fury, General de Brigade, Warmaster Ancients/Medieval, TSATF, Phantoms, Mustangs, Saga, Battlegroup Panzergrenadier, Saga, Ronin, BKC4, board wargames, and more...

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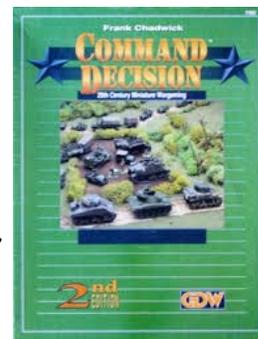
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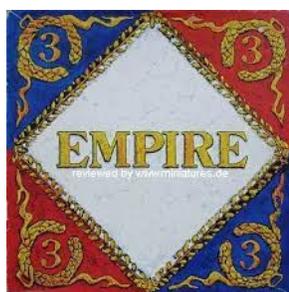


Be sure to check out our various campaigns for rules such as WMA, TSATF, and BFE II on our web site.

I've written over the years about a lot of unusual happenings in the hobby, but the latest thing I've seen over the last six months or so really baffles me! There have been regular postings on several gaming sites with gamers asking questions about rules that for all practical purposes haven't been heavily used in quite some time. This would include Command Decision 2 and 3, Empire, WRG 1950-85, a few Harpoon 2 & 4 postings, plus even some Chainmail battle reports! What exactly is going on here?



Now all of these game systems and many others have had their day in the sun in the hobby's history. During the late 80s and early 90s, rule sets such as Command Decision and Empire made frequent appearances at game tables across the USA. Whether you liked them or not, you could pretty much travel to any gaming club across the world and find one or the other in use. Yes, they were time consuming, usually data or chart intensive, there would be disagreements over sections of the rules, and so on. However, most of us had time to spare and a 6-8 hour game with any of the rules sets mentioned here



were just accepted as part of the hobby. As time went on, more rules sets appeared that featured chit pull dynamics, specialized dice, faster combat resolution, simplified basing, and other innovative game features that permanently changed the course of the hobby. With the incredible number of rules that are now available featuring those things, why would gamers be posting about these rules now?

That is a very good question and none of the postings really seem to explain why. It's almost as if a number of gamers were in cryogenic sleep or trapped in time for 25-30 years, then picked up the hobby where they left it! Now my gaming friends and I spent years upon years playing these rules, but there's not much desire to go back unless we all of a sudden found ourselves retired and had all the time in the world again! My personal feeling is that there is nothing really wrong with these rules, but the hobby and my tastes have moved on. I feel that Age of Eagles does for me what Empire used to do and same goes for Blitzkrieg Commander 4 in comparison to Command Decision. If I can have a fun WW2 micro-armor battle in 3-4 hours with BKC IV, why would I want to go back to a 6-8 hour game with CD2?

But obviously, some are playing these rules or are at least looking at them. Could it be that today's rules just aren't doing it for many gamers? This wouldn't be the first time that there's been complaints that today's rules are too simple, everything appears generic, and tactics really have no place in the game. This is a subject that definitely warrants keeping an eye on as we go forward into the next year.

