

## Roses, Thorns, and High-Borns:

War of the Roses

### DBWR:

Dan Burkley's War of the Roses Rules v19

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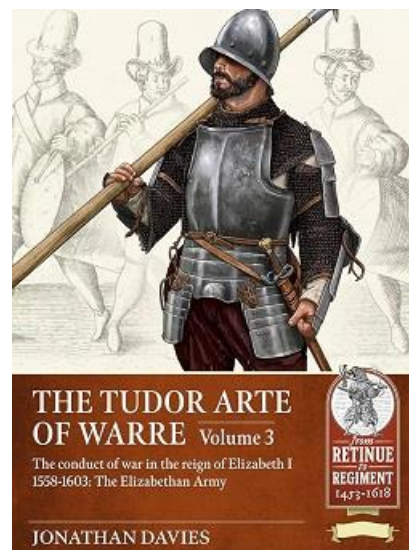
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Turn 4 (l to r): Lancastrians Ed and Keith versus Yorkists Renaud (background), Dennis (cap), and Fred (foreground).

## Roses, Thorns, and High-Borns: War of the Roses

by Russ Lockwood

Once again, Lancastrians and Yorkists gathered around the tabletop to proclaim a high-born noble to be king. This year, we settled on a single big four-versus-four afternoon bash.

*Lancastrians (left): John, Ed, and Keith.  
Yorkists (right): Fred, Dennis, The Lion, and Renaud.  
Photo by Dan (Lancastrian).*

Dan laid out about a dozen armies with the idea that first arrived, first pick. I just edged out Ed for the honor of first pick, but I knew exactly which army I wanted: Fauconberg. I've played this the most in all the decades past. Likewise, Ed chose his favorite army of Cromwell. As the rest of the cut-throat nobility shuffled in, they chose their armies.

As Fauconberg, I am also known as the Lion of Stockton, mostly because I sport an Australian Rules Football shirt of the Brisbane Lions. I commanded a 25mm army of one dismounted knight (the Lion himself), eight longbow, another dismounted knight, two spear, one skirmish,



and three billmen stands. That's 17 stands, or about the same as the other armies. I also drew a random card that gave me another billman stand for a total of 18 stands.

*The Lion's troops. Note the fog of war boards that allow for hidden deployment.*

By random selection, Renaud, Dennis, Fred, and the Lion (uh-oh, I'm already referring to myself in the third person -- an obviously prerequisite) were Yorkists and John, Ed, Keith, and Rich (unexpectedly called away with Dan as a fill-in) were Lancastrians.

Per usual, the fog rolled in and each side set up in secret. Then, the fog lifted and the day began with an eager Lancastrian force winning the initiative.

## DBWR

*Dan Bellis War of the Roses (DBWR)* presents a War of the Roses-centric variation of the *DBA*, *DBM*, etc., series of miniatures rules. For example, a billmen stand, if starting directly behind bow stands, may interpenetrate up to two bow stands, or, switch places with the front-most bow stand in one move. Certain stands will support other specific stands in melee. Cannon cannot fire in its owner's activation phase, only during the opponent's activation. And so on.

*Sample Label of Fauconberg, aka The Lion of Stockton. Upper: Name followed by movement rate (segments) for Open, Rough, and Abysmal terrain. Lower: Type (Bd (S) means Superior Blade) and combat factors against F (Foot), M (Mounted), and S (missile fire).*

Command pips are a roll of either a regular 1d6 or an average 1d6. An average 1d6 lacks a 1 or 6, but adds a 3 and a 4 so that its six faces are: 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, and 5. Us veteran players are split over which is more effective. I come down on the side of an average die. A "1" (lowest roll of a 1d6) at the wrong time is crippling, whereas a "2" (lowest roll of an average die) offers a passable chance of reforming and refining the troops. My theory regarding the extremes of a die roll is that a 1 does more harm than a 2 and that a 6 provides less benefit than a 5. Ergo, an average die for me.

We've been playing Dan's house-rules version for decades, so it's been thrashed out to be stable. However, if you never played *DBA* before, you're at a disadvantage. If you think *DBWR* works like other rules sets, notably *La Arte de la Guerre*, you're also at a disadvantage.

Combat is the usual 1d6 plus troop and other modifiers versus 1d6 plus troop and other modifiers.



## My Lion Seeks a Kingdom

The Lion of Stockton peered through the fog, but the impenetrable mist failed to part. Somewhere out there were the Lancastrians.

He knew not which noble opposed him, but spies told of one of four: Richard Woodville de la Mote, known as Earl Rivers (John), Henry Bouchier, known as Lord Cromwell (Ed), Humphrey Stafford, known as Duke of Buckingham (Keith), and Richard Willoughby, known as Lord Welles (Dan).

*Troops: (Bottom) Blue tagged troops are Fauconberg (Lion of Stockton), Next upwards is Yorkshire (black tag), and (top) is Bolton (yellow tag). Opposing are Buckingham (note the gap), then Cromwell, and then River.*

The Lion, as befitting his nobility -- William Neville, known as Lord Fauconberg -- and the placement of a specific chair to ease the strain upon his battle-worn back, formed his troops right of center. To the Lion's right on the right flank next to woods was Richard Neville, known as Earl of Warwick (Renaud). To the Lion's left and tasked with ascending the central plateau was Richard Plantagenet, known as Duke of York (Dennis). Finally, protecting the left flank and facing Bloody Stream was John Scrope, known as Lord of Bolton (Fred).

At first, the Earl of Warwick suggested he march through the woods in a flanking maneuver. The Lion, wise in the way of maneuvers, didn't discourage it, but didn't encourage it either. Command and control is only half as far in woods. Any enemy skirmishers would deploy and slowly give ground, checking the movement of the Earl's force. The same thing had happened to the Lion in a previous battle, and that was in open ground.

*Warwick's troops (purple tag) facing Welles' commanding position atop hill. Green area with stream is woods.*

Fortunately, the Earl heeded counsel and deployed most of his troops in the open ground, with only skirmishers within the woods to tie up any enemy skirmishers. And if the woods remained free of enemy, so much the better.

The Duke of York set up fairly conventionally, with his pike block dominating the center of his line. Lord of Bolton set up conventionally to cross Bloody Stream, but secured his far left flank with skirmishing foot and horse just in case.

With our troops deployed as best we saw fit, the morning sun burned off the fog. In general, our Yorkist Lord of Bolton faced off against Lancastrian Earl Rivers and a bit of Lord Cromwell while Duke of York faced the other bit of Lord Cromwell and about half of Duke of Buckingham. The Yorkist Lion faced off against the other half of Duke of Buckingham and a small bit of Lord Welles. The Earl of Warwick faced the bulk of Lancastrian Lord Welles. From my perspective, I saw a bit of an open gap in front of me and that's exactly what can be exploited to turn an interior flank, so to speak.



## Into Battle

The Lancastrians, eager to come to grips with us Yorkists, seized the initiative and swiftly marched towards us.

*The Lion's troops tap dance just so and angle for the gap atop the plateau. Meanwhile, Welles edges some troops to cover another gap. Turn 3.*

Lancastrian Lord Welles quickly seized the hill to his front. The Lancastrian Duke of Buckingham grabbed most of the plateau and

extended his flank troops to cover the gap while Lord Cromwell marched up in support, slowed by the headwaters of Bloody Stream. Earl Rivers splashed across Bloody Stream.

Opposing me, I watched Duke of Buckingham boldly advance, widening the gap in front of me, much as he tried to cover it with a thin line of troops. His advance also convinced Lord Welles to shuffle a few troops over to cover the other part of the gap. The Earl of Warwick took one look at the imposing position of the hill and decided to halt outside of bow range. If Lord Wells wanted to come off the hill, then the brawl would begin. In the meantime, Warwick tried to work his skirmishers around the flank of the hill, but was countered.

*End of Turn 4: Action heats up along Bloody Stream. L to R: Dennis, Fred, Umpire Dan, John, Ed, and Keith.*

My battle for the plateau began with a tentative exchange of arrows, which generally favored my troops. I halted short of the crest, requiring a bit of tap dancing to adjust my line.

At this point, the Duke of York asked me why I was delaying filling the gap between us. He had already responded to the advance of the Lancastrians by refusing his flank.

*Close-up of End of Turn 4: The Lion's tap dancing flanks and eliminates Buckingham's bow that had shot my knights back into the woods. Buckingham's thin line emerges from the woods to trade arrows and bolts.*



My knightly commander responded the woods were playing havoc with my alignments.

The Lancastrian knightly commander, somewhat bemused, asked if my troops were ready to graduate with a writ from tap dancing school.

Came my commander's reply, "We don't need no stinkin' diplomas, Sir Tifficate!"

The Lancastrian retorted, "Oh, you think you're so clever, Sir Reebral!"

*Turn 5: Center and right flank action. Buckingham (center) presses into York, but you can see the Cauldron forming. Cromwell (left) is concerned about his own growing gap. Welles (left) advances.*



In any case, my maneuvers managed to get my bowmen locked onto Buckingham targets, even as I shifted to my right to cover a gap with Warwick as well as intercept Welles' efforts to exploit that gap. Oddly enough, Welles' troops advanced farther than Buckingham's into the gap, but Warwick's knights filled that opening and led the counter-attack.

## On The Left Flank

The Lion of Stockton, being so engrossed with his own area, received only scanty news about how the battle fared on the left flank. It seemed as if the Lord of Bolton was thumping the Lancastrian Earl Rivers, for Rivers ran afoul of the fates.

*Turn 8. The valiant Earl Rivers crossed the stream, but Bolton (yellow tag) administers a stinging attack. York (black tags) and his pike push forward. Cromwell himself (lower right corner), wielding sword and black shield and mounted upon his steed, defies the odds against the pike.*



It's not that his tactical disposition was poor, but the fates decreed a humiliating number of "1s" on the combat die rolls. Indeed, the Lord of Bolton's retinue commander opined that fate has a way of reversing, especially among Rivers' elite knights, and shouted to his Yorkist troops, "Look out, Sir Kutt is ready to blow!"

Came the reply, "That's so sweet, Sir Rup."  
How chivalrous.

That brief interlude between foes found Earl Rivers appealing to a different fate. What bounced back and forth across the stream was no better -- Earl Rivers was having "1" of those days.

## Central Plateau

The valiant Duke of York engaged Cromwell and Buckingham, but grew frustrated at the increasingly shattered line of Buckingham nonetheless continuing to fire cannons and melee. Yet Yorkist pike continued to press forward against Lancastrian spear and knights, and even against Cromwell's retinue itself. York's refused left portion of his command held out even as troops traded fallbacks and obliterations.

The battle slowly built in our Yorkist favor.

## On The Right Flank

Warwick adjudged the timing of pressing forward nicely. He took advantage of Welles' efforts in the gap and attacked. Alas, fate fled him and opened up a small gap of its own. Warwick had a reserve that would fill the gap, but they were closer to the woods and would need time to redeploy.

*Warwick's knight (right) join the battle. The Lion's line fragments even as it repels Buckingham and Welles.*



On his right, Warwick shuffled his skirmishers around the side of the hill. Welles used interior lines to oppose the move, but numbers began to show.

As Welles came off the hill to support his advance into the gap between Warwick and the Lion, Warwick took the opportunity to advance his longbowmen and a trading of arrows began that slightly favored Warwick.

## Death of Buckingham

At about this time, the Duke of Buckingham found himself and his personal retinue in growing danger of being surrounded.

*Buckingham falls to the spears, trapped in the Cauldron with no retreat.*

My knightly commander called out to the Buckingham's retinue commander, "Surrender! The day is ours!"

Came the Lancastrian reply, "You're crazy, Sir Tifiabel!"

Came the Yorkist retort, "Ha! What's it like to think you're right all the time, Sir Ten, and now learn you're wrong?"

Sir Ten and the retinue fought valiantly, but the Lion and York's pressure soon created Buckingham's Cauldron, trapping Buckingham troops within. Numbers finally told and Buckingham's lifeless body soon fell off his warhorse and crumpled to the ground. Buckingham's troops suffered more losses from massed bow fire that winked out his gap-closing troops.

Amazingly, fate came to his remaining troops' rescue for a demoralization roll and they could fight for another turn of the sand dial.



Also about this time, on the far left of our line, Earl Rivers suffered the same fate as Buckingham and fell from his saddle. His troops also made their initial demoralization roll.

*End of Turn 8. The Lion of Stockton begins to form a line again, of sorts, and expects to exploit the now wide gap (upper left corner) into the flank of Buckingham's remaining troops. Warwick's knights advance, as does the rest of his battleline (off photo at right).*



## The End of Battle

And in between them, Cromwell, although in better shape, embraced his own mortality, for he had miscalculated and tried to single-handedly break the front of a pike block. That he scooted away intact gave him pause about continuing the battle. He decided to seek terms. The corpses of Buckingham and Rivers offered no objection and Cromwell could see that a York-Bolton tag-team attack would spell the end of him.

Welles was in good shape, but he too could envision a tag-team of Warwick and Fauconberg. He offered no objection to the peace overtures. So the battle ended with a Yorkist victory.

## Thoughts

The defeat of Rivers had more to do with successive rolls of "1" -- something like 20 or more, the bards sang. That is just plain bad luck. Happens.

Buckingham was perhaps too bold in trying to take advantage of a gap between the Lion and York. Buckingham had the time, but York countered by refusing his immediate flank. That bought enough time for the Lion of Stockton to adjust his line and press the successful attack against Buckingham's cauldron.

Once again, we continued a fine annual tradition of a War of the Roses battle. A big thank you to Dan for hosting and setting up all the armies and a battle well gamed to all our commanders.



*End game.*



*Heraldry of the War of the Roses.*

## ***DBWR: Dan Burkley's War of the Roses Rules -- Version 19***

*By Daniel*

I had eight players for the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual "War of the Roses" event using *DBWR* and featuring 25mm commands. None of the players brought their own commands, so all selected commands from among thirteen 130 point commands I had available in order of appearance.

### **Yorkists**

Fred: John Scrope, Lord of **Bolton**  
 Dennis: Richard Plantagenet, Duke of **York**  
 Russ: William Neville, Lord **Fauçonberg**  
 Renaud: Richard Neville, Earl of **Warwick**

### **Lancastrians**

Rich/Dan\*: Richard Willoughby, Lord **Welles**  
 Keith: Humphrey Stafford, Duke of **Buckingham**  
 Ed: Henry Bouchier, Lord **Cromwell**  
 John: Richard Woodville de la Mote, Earl **Rivers**  
 \* *Rich was unexpectedly called away, so I filled in.*

This would be a four-on-four battle. Demoralization rules were in effect for individual commands with "Break Point" starting at 33% casualties. Once 33% casualties were reached, a D6 would be rolled at the end of the player turn to determine if the command was demoralized: Add the D6 roll to the command "Break Point" (each army had its own Break Point) and if the losses exceeded the adjusted total, the command becomes "demoralized."

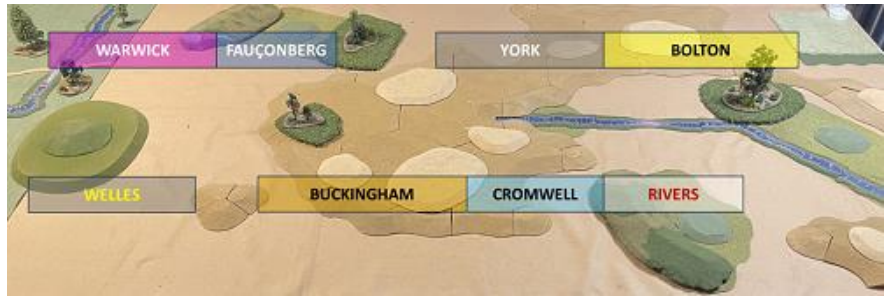
*The Lancastrians (Left) and Yorkists (Right) during set-up. All players have time to view the battlefield before the center screen is put up. Each player has to set up their command within 600 paces of the table edge without knowing where the enemy will be deploying.*



## At Start

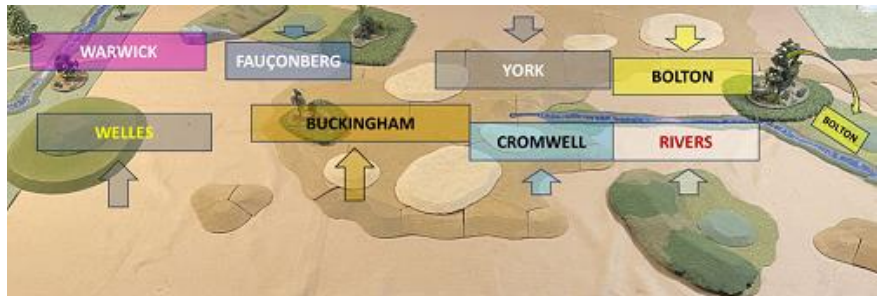
Starting deployments were not unexpected (neither was the absence of any pre-battle planning).

*Relative starting positions of the commands.*



Bolton's and Warwick's commands had some troops that could operate in the woods, as did Welles' command. Buckingham deployed in an extended line with his SK(S) and Shot(I) extending the left. Welles decided to anchor the left flank on the hill, but had little left to extend to his right, eventually committing his foot command and skirmishers to fill the gap between him and Buckingham, supported by his mounted knights. Warwick's command tried to mirror Welles' deployment. The Lancastrians won initiative and went first.

Buckingham rolled a '5' for movement pips and marched forward as far as he could, generating concern from Welles on engaging two opposing commands with only his own command.



*Initial advances.*

Welles was content to reach the far slope of the hill, but started to extend his line toward Buckingham. During the opposing turn, Bolton also rolled high for movement pips and decided to try and outflank River's command in addition to a modest advance.

## Let The Shooting Begin

As both sides close the shooting begins. Overall, the Lancastrians suffer worse as Bolton's archers and York's handgunners defeat River's and Cromwell's longbowmen - but Buckingham's handgunners also enjoy besting Fauçonberg's longbowmen. Warwick remains outside of archery range of Welles battleline.

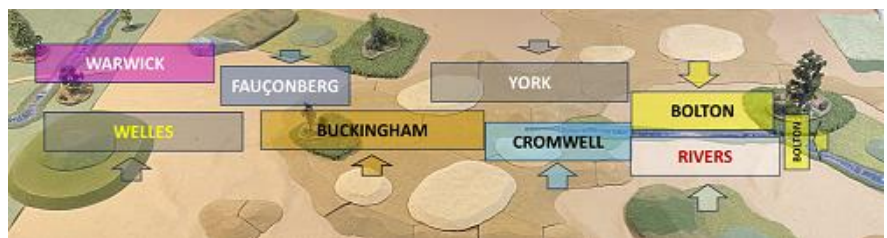
*Lancastrian Turn 2 Advances.*



Buckingham's early good fortune turns sour with each succeeding turn and his archers, handgunners, and skirmishers become casualties, losing five units by the end of turn 4. Welles has been attempting to draw off some of Fauçonberg's command onto his own command with some success, but York continues to drive into Buckingham and Cromwell. Bolton has succeeded in turning River's flank and moves in to fully engage.

Warwick advances to help Fauçonberg's command fight Welles by using his skirmishers to outflank Welles in the woods, but Welles auxiliaries hold them off. The opposing longbowmen cause similar casualties to each other, but Welles retains his position on the hill.

*Initial contacts by Turns 3 and 4.*

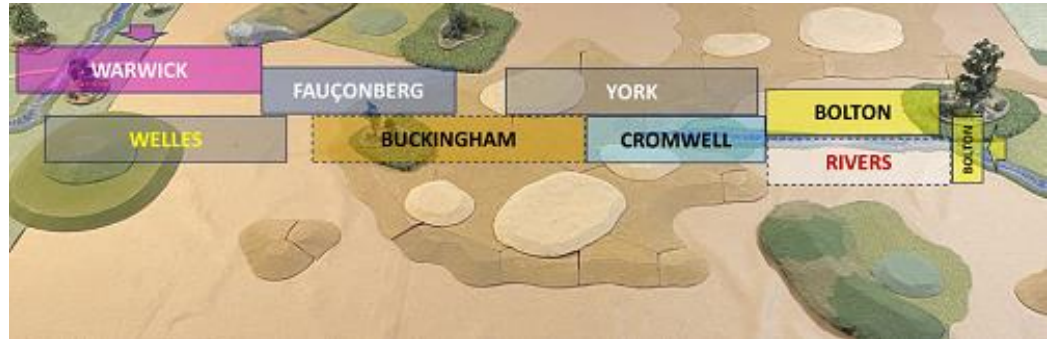


Warwick commits his mounted knights to challenge Welles' mounted knights but they are defeated with some losses. Welles' right flank is under pressure by Fauçonberg's command but is able to inflict some losses with his mounted knights – but when Buckingham's line starts to disintegrate, Welles pulls his right flank back to regroup.

## Break Point Buckingham

Buckingham reaches break point but manages to avoid demoralization for two turns as his command takes more losses with each turn.

*Turns 5 and 6: The Lancastrian commands start to reach Break Point.*



Rivers fights valiantly but his dice are just terrible, rolling close to twenty '1' results in combat during the game and his command reaches break point. Cromwell has also taken some losses, but can't salvage the center as his neighboring commands begin to crumble.

Buckingham's command finally becomes demoralized and Buckingham himself has fallen, as has Rivers. Cromwell is ready to sue for peace. Welles has dealt out more damage than he's taken, but is far from defeating the opposing Yorkists, so agrees to end the fighting.

The "Sun of York" shined brightly on Richard of York: He rolled an abundance of '6' results in combat, allowing him to outfight Buckingham and Cromwell handily. Earl Rivers, on the other hand, was cursed with an overabundance of '1' results (even with switching dice). Such are the fortunes of war...

Regardless of the outcome, the company and comradery were enjoyed by all.

**Acknowledgements:** *The following players have play-tested these rules since these were initially developed in 1999 and contributed their feedback and opinions: Russ Lockwood, Ed Carmien, Michael Hansen, Phil Alexander, Michael Meusz, Rich Pichnarczyk, Dennis Shorthouse, Fred Stratton, Keith Stratton, David Mills, Sam Tolley, Steve Brandes, and John Miller.*

*There are four sets of rules from the same company that have such significant and subtle changes in mechanics and play effects (and three are based on the same core system)! This set of rules tries to blend the concepts from all of them and capture the flavor of that period in history known as the War of the Roses. It tries to be as simple as DBA, but have some of the consistency and "chrome" of DBM/DBR/7<sup>th</sup> Edition. It also works well for resolving KingMaker-based campaign battles.*



*Once the Fog Lifts, Optimism. Photo by Renaud.*

## Snap This: *Thanos Rising*

by Russ Lockwood

After the big War of the Roses game and a bit of dinner, Dan pulled out the *Thanos Rising* game for me, John, and him. By random draw, I was Thor, John was Black Panther, and Dan was Captain America.

*John (left) ponders his options as Dan offers a suggestion or two to consider.*



I've praised this dice game before, where you match symbols to recruit heroes and vanquish villains. Every game is different thanks to the shuffling of hero/villain cards and the dice results.

For me, this game started out slowly. Thor could barely hit a villain, and had problems recruiting even his first hero. As I quipped, my die rolls made me the old fat Thor version, wallowing in self-pity and drinking too much ale.

Thankfully, John and Dan had better rolls and changed strategy from recruitment to bashing the bad guys. Of note, at one point of time, almost all of the John's heroes were about to be battered into extinction -- saved only by judicious application of supporting tokens and damage repairs. It's a cooperative game.

Then, towards the end of the game as the hero to villain ratio evened out, the same thing happened to Dan's heroes. The same mechanism of cooperative play saved most of his heroes.

As for me, well, I finally gained Rocket and Gamora to at least seem like I was doing something. It proved rather little, but just enough, to deep six the 10th villain before we lost 10 heroes.

### Thoughts

Still a great little game and one of the few where three-player gaming is entertaining. It allows players, with clever application of benefits, to recover from almost disastrous die rolls. We did it twice on the way to victory.

Thanks, Dan, for a nice cap to a great day of gaming and to John for the games.

## *Thanos Rising: The Challenge*

By Daniel

After the War of the Roses event had concluded, some players left for home, but the rest of us enjoyed submarine sandwiches and salads. At the conclusion of dinner, two more players left for home, leaving three of us for an evening game. We decided on *Thanos Rising: Avengers Infinity War*. Although it's been a while, Russ, John, and I had some familiarity with this game and how challenging it can be.

Thanos "wins" by eliminating 10 Heroes before the Heroes eliminate 10 Villains, so this is very much a cooperative game. The players have to pay attention and cooperate with each other to help eliminate the Villains, gather useful Heroes (and try to save Heroes who haven't been recruited, yet).

By random draw, Russ was Thor, John was Black Panther, and I was Captain America. These Heroes are "Team Leaders" and have a special card with a unique "Team Ability" that may be triggered only on the player's initial roll of his Power Dice. (Sadly, only one of us ever triggered their "Team Ability" during the game.) Our initial two rounds we each tried to gather additional heroes, which Thor proved "unworthy" to attract any for a while -- but we were fortunate enough to eliminate three villains before starting to lose any heroes.

As each player takes a turn, the "Thanos Dice" are rolled. Thanos *always* deals damage to any Heroes present on one of three sectors and *always* gains progress towards obtaining one or more Infinity stones. Displayed Villains can also cause additional damage, depending if Thanos is present or not. Players *must* make the most of their turns to keep pace. Adding Heroes to your team often expands that team's abilities and possibly earn extra Power Dice. Each damage scored on a Villain gains a "Bonus Token" that can be useful almost anytime.

There comes a point where the focus has to be eliminating displayed Villains instead of gaining more Heroes on your team, but as you roll your Power Dice, options *how* to use those dice may allow for only one choice to pursue – even if it’s *not* what you might want to accomplish (which might be OK, but it’s a challenge at times on how to commit your Power Dice). Although other players cannot activate their Heroes when it’s not their turn, they can offer to use their “Bonus Tokens” to help the active player.

**Crunch Time:** *Thanos has two Infinity stones and Captain America’s team (bottom) is badly beaten up. Black Panther’s team (right) is assigning Power Dice to cards in the sector Thanos is pointing at. He will try to kill off the villain in the sector.*



As the game reached its climax, Captain America’s team was next. All members of his teams had 3-5 damage already and half of them were one away from death. His mission marker was placed where the last two Villains were present. After the “Thanos Dice” were rolled, Thanos acquired a 3rd Infinity Stone. 7 Heroes and 9 Villains were dead by the time Captain America got to roll his Power Dice. Fortunately, Thanos did not move to the sector Captain America’s mission was in, so most members avoided direct damage (although damage from the Infinity Stones applied lethal damage to some of the team members).

Captain America’s Power Dice roll finally triggered his team ability, inflicting one damage on any Villain. The Power Dice rolls were just enough to eliminate the last two Villains and spare three Heroes from lethal damage. This game could have easily ended in defeat if the last two Villains had not showed up when they did.

## On the Dark Side: Russell and the Jedi Cruisers

by Russ Lockwood

The dark side's callin' now,  
 Vader can spin.  
 You'll never see his evil grin.  
 Buildin' up the Death Star,  
 A section per roll.  
 Make you feel crazy  
 Countin' up the toll.  
 Synergy's needed  
 For a chance in kind.  
 Or slip to the dark side  
 Across that line.  
 On the dark side, oh yeah.  
 On the dark side, oh yeah.



### A Star Wars Version of *Thanos*

Renaud brought over *Dark Side Rising*, which borrows most of the mechanics of the game *Thanos Rising*, which is set in the Marvel Universe. However, *Dark Side Rising* is set in the *Star Wars* Universe and features Darth, not Thanos, as the lead bad guy who spins more than Michael Jackson in the *Smooth Criminal* video.

*Four Jedis walk into Chalmun's Spaceport Cantina, or a dining room... Dennis, Dan, and Renaud confront a spinning Darth Vader.*



However, a few points differentiate the two. Obviously, the *Dark Side Rising* characters are all from the *Star Wars* shows -- and I had not seen any of the streaming shows, so many were alien to me. Thanos is after six stones. Darth is after completing six sections of the Death Star -- so the dice sides that control filling in the sections are similar, but different. The symbology is mostly different, but the sides of the individual colored dice are in the same proportions as the Thanos player dice.

Similarities abound. Players roll d6s with different icons to match the icons on cards to recruit a hero or eliminate a bad guy. Putting a hit on a bad guy or vehicle gains a player a token. These one and done tokens offer one-shot benefits such as healing damage, delaying Death Star section construction, adding dice, and so on.

It's a cooperative game for one to four players. All players must work together to eliminate seven dark side characters (easy game). Harder games require eliminating one to four additional bad guys.

When seven or more bad guys are eliminated, the game ends with a Jedi victory. If 10 heroes are eliminated, the dark side triumphs. The player who last saw a Star Wars movie or TV episode goes first.

## The Game

Randomly, I drew Medula Oblongatta. Well, that's what I named my character. The official name on the card was Hera Syndulla. Never heard of her? At first I thought, me neither. The web sez she's a general. However, in web searching, I found an image of her in a group that formed the rebels in *Rebels*. I recall seeing a few episodes before everything went streaming. The other three players were: Luke Skywalker (Dan), Leia Organa (Dennis), and Cassian Andor (Renaud).

*Medula Oblongatta (in reality Hera Syndulla) is the green-faced being with twin lekku appendages of the Twi'lek species. Yep, had to do a web search. Image from web.*



So we started. As Medula, I was pretty much a failure at recruiting anyone to join me. I guess they thought I was too brainy. I wounded a couple bad guys, but small solace when C3PO could recruit more rebels than me.

Everywhere I went, Darth followed and confronted me. I screamed, "Your mother was a rusty dishwasher and your father smelt of WD-40!" Then my throat started to constrict.

Vader intoned, "I find your lack of faith disturbing." His stranglehold tightened.

I croaked, "Hey, Mr. Lite-Brite, you're got a few bulbs missing!"

Vader immediately checked his readouts and I escaped, yelling, "You look like a defective No Vacancy sign at a run-down motel!"

So we went, around and around and around. Although we started out even in losses, we soon discerned we were steadily losing heroes without nailing bad guys.

I finally recruited two heroes, but my die rolling Force was weak. A couple of times, I was basically a missed turn -- and the dark side never misses placing hits on heroes and never misses building a piece of the Death Star. Inexorable... or a game clock mechanic if you will.

We ended up losing 10 heroes and vehicles and only eliminating five bad guys.

Rebels? Not us. We must have thought someone said pebbles, because we tossed a lot of rocks and failed to come up with the right combos of symbols.

## Thoughts

An interesting game like *Thanos Rising*, only it seemed *Dark Side Rising* lacked the player synchronicity of *Thanos Rising*. Of course, that's a universe of one game, so how cards appear and how the dice fall would change every outcome. That's the replayability of the system.

One thing it shares with *Thanos Rising* is making you think about whether to recruit heroes and vehicles or bounty-hunt bad guys. Nice design point, that.

We had a great time. Thanks, Renaud, for bringing the game over and to Dennis and Dan for the game.



Very similar, even down to the dice...

## Dark Side Rising: Same But Different

by Daniel

Russ invited me over to try out *Star Wars: Dark Side Rising*. I looked this up on BoardGameGeek and saw that this game uses the same mechanics as *Thanos Rising: Avengers Infinity War*. The layout and components were nearly identical, just in the *Star Wars* universe. Instead of Thanos, we have Darth Vader and instead of the Infinity Gauntlet, we have the Death Star (under construction).

*A better photo of Darth than I took. Image from web.*

*Star Wars: Dark Side Rising* is only available in Europe/Asia, due to licensing agreements. Renaud acquired this game through his “French Connection.”

The “Dark Side” wins by eliminating 10 Heroes before the Heroes eliminate seven to 10 Villains (depending on how hard you want the Victory Conditions to be), so this is very much a cooperative game. The players have to pay attention and cooperate with each other to help eliminate the Villains, gather useful Heroes (and try to save Heroes who haven’t been recruited, yet).

Through random distribution, I was Luke Skywalker (with remarkably similar Power Dice and Team Ability as Captain America). Along with Renaud (Cassian Andor), Russ (Hera Syndulla), Dennis (Princess Leia), we were ready to save the universe.

### Abilities

The “Team Leaders” have a special card with a unique “Team Ability” that may be triggered only on the player’s initial roll of his Power Dice. Sadly, NONE of us ever triggered their Team Ability during the game.

*Cards for Cassian Andor, Hera Syndulla, Princess Leia, and Luke Skywalker. Note the colored dice to roll on the left per card. Image from web.*

As each player takes a turn, you assign your “Mission Token” to one of the three sectors available. The “Dark Side Dice” are then rolled. Darth Vader *always* deals damage to any Heroes present on one of three sectors (including *your* team’s Heroes if it’s in the sector) and *always* gains progress towards constructing the Death Star. Displayed Imperial Agents can also cause additional damage, depending if Darth Vader is present or not. Players *must* make the most of their turns to keep pace. Adding Heroes to your team often



expands that team's abilities and possibly earn extra Power Dice. Each damage scored on a Imperial Agent gains a random "Alliance Token" (benefit) that can be useful almost anytime.

Heroes started dropping fast: R2-D2 was the first to have his top popped. Russ had trouble getting any Heroes to join his team and each failed mission is like giving a free turn to the Dark Side. We had at least five failed missions among us. Dennis managed to gain four Heroes for a five-member team. I gained two Heroes as did Renaud.

## Damage Accrued

Unfortunately, Imperial Agents started appearing and these did considerable damage. As an example, after Dennis assigned his mission token, Darth Vader showed up at the same sector ("I've been expecting you."). Not only did he do one damage to each of Dennis Heroes (and those in the sector), but the Imperial AT-AT activated and did another damage to each Hero Dennis had. Then the one functioning (green) section of the Death Star activated to fire their "mass-drivers" to deal yet another damage to each of Dennis Heroes.

*For Grand Admiral Thrawn, you need to inflict three damage to defeat him. Image from rulebook.*

Imperial Agents can be wounded once during your turn by assigning the correct Power Dice and/or Alliance Tokens, but assigning additional damage to that same Imperial Agent during the same turn is difficult unless it's an activated Team Ability or a special ability on a very few Heroes – so these enemies can stick around and have the chance to inflict additional damage if activated (and that happened often).

There comes a point where the focus has to be eliminating displayed Imperial Agents instead of gaining more Heroes on your team, but as you roll your Power Dice, options *how* to use those dice may allow for only one choice to pursue – even if it's *not* what you might want to accomplish, so it's a challenge at times on how to commit your Power Dice. Although other players cannot activate their Heroes when it's not their turn, they can offer to use their Alliance Tokens to help the active player.

We had only eliminated four Imperial Agents and seven Heroes were dead. One Imperial Agent was still displayed and I advocated eliminating it after I dealt a damage to it on my turn. Renaud protested ("It's a Trap!") but went in anyway. Darth Vader showed up and the one functioning section of the Death Star also opened up and riddled Renaud's team, killing three more Heroes and ending the game on a grisly dark note.

## Thoughts

I found the Heroes in this version had less "synergy" with *any* of our teams, but that may simply be the random draw of the cards during play. Your Team Leader always gets four Power Dice, but you can usually find another Hero that can grant you at least one or more Power Dice. Some of us got to five dice, but not more than that unless we used an Alliance Token to get a one-time bonus Power die.

*Star Wars Rebels. Image from web.*





*The desert calls to the French Foreign Legion. L to R: Jay, Rich, Chris, Russ, Sam, and Dave. Photo by Mike.*

## **Pardon My French: H2O Smash And Grab**

*by Russ Lockwood*

I don't know if it was the gorgeous terrain, the giddiness of Good Friday, or the literal full moon that night, but all of us were in a mood both gregarious and cantankerous. Umpires Dave and Mike could hardly explain anything about the rules without questions, groans, and alleged bon mots.

*These guys put the Rif in rift. Umpire Dave (left), and three Rif commanders (l to r): Same, Jay, and Rich.*

It didn't help that the poorly-written rules, *The Men Who Would Be Kings*, had given us problems last time we played (see the 5/20/2023 AAR). They had not gotten any better. Nor did we. Pity. Such a lovely set up.

*The French leave the town to get water.*

### **Scenario**

The French needed water for the town and the Rif had it at the oasis. A French force with baggage train of mules and camels sallied out to fill up. A nearby French Foreign Legion fort might also



help with a force. You never know.

The Rif had some units in the open and spotted and many more round counters signifying possible Rif units. Or maybe they were dummy counters. I controlled a pair of scouts who could see through any terrain up to six inches to turn over the counters.

And that was it -- an H2O smash and grab in the desert.

*My force is outside the gate and the force led by French commander Chris (right) is inside the gate. Rich lurks among the sand dunes and ridges.*



## My Force

I had three cavalry units, a field gun, and three infantry units. The French commander, Chris, had a fixed MG and two infantry units manning the walls of the town and a pair of infantry units ready to march out in support. Mike was in the French Foreign Legion fort with two infantry and a cavalry unit.

The Rifs had a couple infantry in the oasis behind a small wall, some cavalry and infantry beyond, and a lot of unknown counters scattered around the battlefield.

## Rules Overview

Having played this twice, I can say that the rules violate Russ' Rule Number 1: If you have no movement, you have no game, and I came to game, not sit.

To activate a unit, you roll 2d6 and roll equal to or higher than its rating, which is from 5 to 8, depending on a pre-game die roll. Then you pick one from a list of actions (fire, move, rally, etc.). Some actions are "Free" depending on the unit type.

*Our host and terrain genius, Dave, poses near the oasis with all the water...and a number of Rifs guarding it.*

Firing is one figure tosses 1d6 with a very Featherstonian hit on 5s and 6s or just 6s (depending on unit type). One hit equals one figure kill. Through an error in interpretation (we think), we said cavalry took two hits to eliminate one figure. That two hits per cavalry kill (we think) is only for melee, but we applied it to firing, too. Melee is the same as firing, except you add in the unit's "Discipline" modifier, which can be -1, 0, or +1.

Whenever you lose one or more figures, you roll 2d6 for morale and add the unit's "Discipline" modifier, subtract one for every figure killed that round, subtract one for every Disorganized marker (if any) from a previous turn, and look for a roll equal to or higher than its rating to pass. Failure plops a Disorganized marker on the unit.

At the beginning of any activation, a unit with one or more Disorganized markers must roll to Rally: 2d6 plus Discipline modifier, minus 1 per Disorganized marker and roll equal to or higher than its rating. If pass, they remove all Disorganized markers, but cannot do anything else for the turn. If fail, they still can't do anything that turn and must roll to Rally next turn.

One point to remember: successful activation allows one action, usually either move or fire, but many units have a double-time move, which isn't double, but adds 1d6 inches to the basic 6-inch infantry move and 12-inch cavalry move. Many units have a double-time plus attack option, which is essentially a charge move. Some units have a skirmish move.



A lot of rules flipping, catcalls, and absurdist jokes occurred to generate that summary. Alas, the gentlemanly abuse passed so quickly around the table, I cannot remember a one. After all, this is a family-friendly AAR.

*Sam's Rif infantry first shoot up my French cavalry from the edge of the gully, then lose 25% of their troops in melee and still stand.*

## The Battle

Well, about half my units failed to activate, even though no enemy was in sight, so they sat down for a picnic. Indeed, one cavalry unit was so lazy, it sat down turn after turn for a picnic. My field gun wasn't much better, either.

On my left, I sent a scout to check out a gully with Sam's two unknown Rif markers -- one turned out to be a 16-man Rif infantry unit and the other a dummy. I spread out an infantry unit into skirmish formation, but because Sam's infantry were in the gully, I couldn't spot them and he couldn't spot me. I sent the cavalry unit around so at least one trooper could see into the gully. The rest were screened like the infantry.

## Rude Awakening

First rude awakening: the skirmishers only moved at half speed, but could fire half the troops -- a compromise between move or fire. Could they move full if they didn't fire? Flip, flip, flip.

Second rude awakening: Can you shoot through your own guys? Flip, flip, flip. It seems (we think) you can't shoot through another unit, but you can shoot through figures within the same unit.

OK, so based on the angle of the gully, and shooting through the edge figures, Sam al-Kabong, the distant cousin of el-Kabong, had four shots.

"Not true," sez Sam al-Kabong. "I have 16 shots: one per figure."

"The other 12 are inside the gully and can't see out, much less shoot out," I replied.

"Not according to the rules."

"Say what?"

"If one figure in a unit has a line of sight to an enemy unit, then all can fire at the enemy unit."

"No way."

"Way," Sam said. "Ask Umpire Mike."

We looked at Mike. Flip, flip, flip. "He's right," the umpire said.

Sam rolled 16d6s and scored six hits, killing two cavalry. Sam al-Kabong's dice were on fire. I passed morale.

I charged down the gully. Cavalry don't seem to have any offensive advantage versus infantry, but my particular unit had a Discipline of 1 versus Sam's Discipline of 0, so I added 1 to all my rolls. Thus, I hit on 3-4-5-6 instead of 4-5-6. Sam still hit (we think) on 4-5-6, but needed two hits to kill one cavalry figure. So, he rolled 12d6 and I rolled 6d6 and the end result was another four dead infantry and four dead cavalry. I lost, retreated back to the mouth of the gully, and made my morale.

*Concentrated fire from French infantry and a cavalry charge do in Sam's Rifs.*



Sam al-Kabong picked off another cavalry figure. I was down to two cavalry left out of the original eight. Sacre Bleu. If this keeps up, the only combat units I'll have left will be the ones that didn't move. I passed morale.

My skirmishers formed up and moved to the lip of the gully and watched the cavalry carnage. I moved a second cavalry unit up to the mouth of the gully.

## Gully Gamesmanship

OK, I can see how this was going. Time for different tactics in a sequential unit-activated game.

Winning initiative, my infantry fired into the gully, killing four figures. Sam failed morale, so his remaining four infantry were Disorganized. I charged with the cavalry and swept Sam al-Kabong's unit into oblivion.

Flank secured.

## Middle Advance

My other scout uncovered a dummy counter in the hillock just in front of the oasis. He scooted off to the hills to look at two other unknown markers.

My infantry finally made it to that hillock and overlooked the oasis. Jay's Rif fire picked off one of my 13-man unit. I passed morale. I fired at the oasis and picked off a couple figures, but Jay failed morale.

Chris' unit pulled up next to me and together we shot up Jay's unit. He brought another into the oasis and I shifted fire to that one.

Jay's morale rolls were pretty horrible. He was Disorganized more than free to fire.

Chris finished off that original unit, but Jay was bringing reinforcements: a couple cavalry units around the side.

## On the Right Flank

Rich chose this moment to bring a cavalry unit, camel unit, and infantry unit out of hiding in the hills. The infantry headed to the oasis and eventually made it inside after a number of picnics.

In the meantime, Rich's cavalry and camel units hit my one cavalry unit. The die rolling was equal: my cavalry killed three Rif figures and Rich killed six of mine.

*Top: Rich's camel unit and cavalry unit charge my slow-poke cavalry unit...*

*Bottom: ...and send it packing and roll into my artillery.*



So, I had to make a morale roll: Base 7 + 6 figures lost = 13. Well, tough to do on 2d6.

Whaddya know -- boxcars! Is that an automatic pass?

"No! No! You need to roll 13!" screamed the Rifs, the froth from their mouths highlighting their green teeth and dripping on their shambles of clothing.

"Oui! Oui! It is a 1 in 36 roll and must have passed!" stated the immaculately-clad French.

Flip, flip, flip. Umpire Mike searched the rules and found it. 2d6 + Discipline Rating. My cavalry had a 1 rating. Boxcars 12 + 1 equals 13. I had made the improbably roll! My cavalry still retreated around the field gun.

Rich's Rif units followed up and hit the gun. "Wait," he said. "Can I have one hit the gun and the other hit the two remaining cavalry unit?"



"Wait, Doesn't the follow-up charge go after the nearest unit?" I asked.

"Didn't Mike look that up when you attacked Sam?" Rich asked. "You charged twice at the same unit."

"True, but it was fast cavalry versus slow infantry and the infantry was the nearest target."

I think Umpire Mike cursed in French, Rif, English, and Danish languages. Flip, flip, flip. Flip, flip, flip.

*Umpire Mike (left) looks on as Dave, Sam, and Jay try to move and defend the oasis water.*



Umpire Mike gave his decision. "No nearest unit mandate, so it can go after the same unit. The field gun is in between the victor and the defeated unit, so it gets charged.

Well, that's the short version. Amazingly, my field gun lost only three figures of the four and made morale. He fled towards the safety of the town.

Now, Chris saw the ends of the Rif cavalry and camelry far exceeded my cavalry line. Can he shoot at the ends? Flip, flip, flip. Mike now invented a language to curse in.

"Yes," he ruled. "I can't find where it says you can or can't, so you can."

Uh-huh. I think he's just making it up as he goes along...

*The French Foreign Legion fort holds Mike's units.*

## The French Foreign Legion

Mike held back a couple turns to see where the rest of the Rif-Raff went, but as my scout made the safety of the fort, Mike marched all three units out towards the Rif. I shut and locked the gates behind them. I don't think he got into battle, mostly because he spent all his time flipping through the rules.

And that's somewhat amusing, because he had all these small Post-It notes attached to the periphery of the pages so he could find things fast. It didn't seem to help.



## End Game

Jay's cavalry charged Chris' infantry. Apparently, Rif infantry are luckier than French infantry. The cavalry killed 10 of 13 and sent Chris packing. The cavalry followed-up into the pack train that would be used to transport the water.

We mercifully ended the game at that point. Rif win...

*The Rif capture the water train. End game.*



## Thoughts

Parts of the rules, like firing and rolling for morale, are fine. The firing needs better explaining in parts and the idea that if one figure sees the enemy everyone fires is absurd.

Dave tried the activation rules and we all found it extremely frustrating when perfect-condition units failed to move and sat down for a picnic. Another absurdity. Granted, you're talking low-odds rolls in many cases, but they happen -- apparently often.

We universally agreed to go back to the *Shako II* activation: roll 1d6 and highest activates first, then next highest, and so on until all units activate. Granted, units caught in a crossfire with a low 1d6 roll may be decimated and morale Disorganized before they can try to move, but at least fresh units out of sight of enemy can do something instead of random picnicking.

Rule designers face the choice of simultaneous fire or sequential fire: Advantages and disadvantages to both.

I have no idea why skirmishers move at half speed versus regular formations. I have no idea why regular formations cannot fire after they move, but skirmishers can. If skirmishers fire, I have no idea why only half can fire. It's not quite logical to me, but like all gamers, that's personal logic based on playing lots of rule systems.

This rule set needs better clarification if it's intended to be played with "rules as written." I'd argue for tweaks.

One thing we all agreed on is that Dave crafted a great table and a scenario more creative than attack the fort. My photos do not do it justice, but I tried.

Thanks for hosting, Dave. Thanks to Mike with an assist by Dave on the rules, such as they are. And thanks to a group of cantankerous gamers whose commentary went a long way to overcome short pauses of rules flip, flip, flipping.

## Looks Great, Less Flipping

by Mike

Dave spent many, many hours on the scenario and spared us the usual wargame scenario of a Rif siege of a French Foreign Legion Beau Geste-like fort barely holding on while awaiting a relief column.

Here, the two sides had decisions to make, including a fog of war element for the French due to the unknown markers. So, a beautiful tabletop and a good scenario.

The rules *The Men Who Would Be Kings* (*TMWWBK*) are an alternative to *The Sword and The Flame* (*TSTF*) rules and have become quite popular among those wanting to play colonial warfare games in a few hours. They cannot be described as well written, as I was reminded as I was sitting cooped up in the French fort trying to find answers to the many questions asked. I, for one, think *TMWWBK* is an improvement on *TSTF* and I have decided I will invest some time in producing a QRS supplement.

In all the prior *TMWWBK* games I have played, including the playtest of this scenario back in 2024, initiative was done using the *Shako II* approach of rolling a D6 for each unit, highest go first, the attacking side preceding the defending in ties. I was surprised and do not know why Dave decided to go with the IGO-UGO approach instead.

## Looks Great, Less Rolling

by Rich

Thanks for all of your work on the game yesterday. I had a fine time. I think that the terrain was one of Dave's best efforts. It looked great. The rules need some proofreading and editing, but we were figuring it out towards the end.

("Figuring" is a kind way to put it -- more like "making it up as we go along" -- RL)

It was fun to bloody Russ' cavalry and knock his field gun out of the game with my horse and camels. I was lucky to move my infantry 50% of the time. It finally made it to the oasis on the last turn and contributed nothing.



*The abandoned town.*

## Heir Today: *RUSE* Tomorrow

by Russ Lockwood

Lockwoodo-san gazed down the street at the temple anchoring the minor village. A few shacks lined the street, skirting a rice paddy inside the village.

He crooked a slight smile. He had finally run down one of the heirs of the Renodo clan. Then again, the last time he had run this dishonorable vagrant to ground, he had been ambushed by a strong bodyguard. Then again, he had simply rushed straight ahead and into the ambush.

*The table, take II. Photo by Renaud.*



This seemed different. His scouts found no other samurai and ashigaru except those in the village. This time, wiser as only defeat can make him, he spread out his forces to engulf the village.

### ***RUSE* Tweak**

If you've been following along in the AARs, Renaud has been refining his *RUSE* system game by game. The initial system was delightful carnage: one hit equal one kill. Over the years, armor effects were added and various command and control systems tried and discarded. Various tweaks to the defense die or dice rolled have been tried.

This time, he added one of those weekly pill boxes -- you know, the kind with seven compartments labeled with the days of the week.

What madness is this?

One with a method.

Previously, you would roll 1d6 per figure (skirmish combat) or 1d6 per unit (larger scale combat) and assign a die to the figure or unit. Unfortunately, about a third of the time, figures didn't move. And you may recall Lockwood's Rule Number 1: "If you have no movement, you have no game, and I came to game, not sit."

I noted that I liked a previous version where you chose an activation card for figures / units. So, he got a pill box.

Instead of rolling a d6 for a random activation, you put a bead in one of the first six compartments. The seventh is for storing beads that are no longer used due to casualties or routs. So, it has activations linked to a number: 1 is withdraw, 2 and 3 are shoot, rally, or prep (overwatch, dig in, etc), and 4, 5, and 6 are offensive actions. You take your beads and put them in any of the compartments -- no rolling, just selecting.

The key is that the number with the fewest beads goes first. If a tie, die roll off. Think about that: You select your option, and you get a little bluffing in the mix. Do I only put in one bead to try and go first? Do I put in lots and cede going first to the enemy, but have lots to counter-punch with? Should I settle into overwatch (prep) in the hopes that the enemy will choose an offensive activation?

That's a deucedly clever dilemma.

### **The Battle**

We alternated placement of units: bow, arquebus, ashigaru spear, samurai katanas, spear, and mounted. I surrounded the village. Then the activations began.

The noose tightened around Samurai Renodo as I moved in. By the temple, two of his attacks, one by spear and the other by Samurai cavalry, were bloodily repulsed by my ashigaru spear. His gunfire slashed one of my mounted units.

I returned the favor as I set up a base of fire at the entrance of the village. Actually, I tried to shoot the heir, but Umpire Renaud was having none of that and said the figure may be standing in the doorway, but the actual heir was inside out of sight.

Oh, Bushudo-du-du!

I wracked an enemy unit instead.

On my right, my samurai spear attracted a lot of attention, hammered by two units and menaced by a third. That proved to be the winning maneuver, for my unit held on just long enough that my cavalry and infantry could tag-team the unit defending the temple and then my cavalry, led by Lockwoodo-san himself, swept over the bridge and into the temple to capture the heir.

*Heir in the temple. Photo by Renaud.*

## Thoughts

The pill box scheme was initially weird, but soon became clever. You could make your selections in secret and it generally stayed that way because the opponent can't see into the box. Granted, the more beads placed by the figure / unit to signify its activation, the more information is revealed. When figures / units get eliminated or rout, beads go back into the last compartment, tracking losses.

As for the *RUSE* system, the defense die, weapon strength versus armor strength, and differentiation all require calculations that are spelled out on a Quick Reference Sheet. I need to refer to it about half the time, although obviously Renaud can do this in his head. If this were published rules, I would call it the Advanced version. The simpler system without armor and with one hit equals one kill would be the Basic version or a good convention game.

Remember, the "U" in *RUSE* stands for "Universal." The system can be used for ancients through modern periods and also sci-fi.

So, another incremental improvement to *RUSE* and another well-run game. Thanks, Renaud.

**Digression:** Sadly, my grognard fingers pressed something on my phone and wiped out all the photos of this game. The photos you see are Renaud running the scenario again with Jerry, with a little better protection for the heir.



## *Samurai: Go Figure*

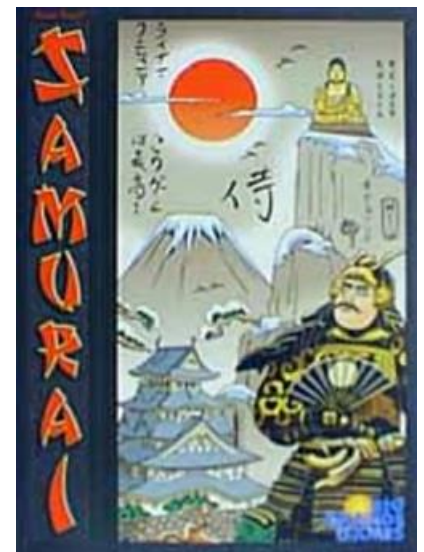
by Russ Lockwood

With a little time left, and keeping with the theme, Renaud set up a Reiner Knizia-designed boardgame called *Samurai*. It vaguely reminds me of *Go*, in that you place a token one at a time to surround victory pieces to capture them, but goes well beyond it because of the tokens slugged to pieces as well as "wildcard" tokens good for any piece. Add in a couple of extra immediate placement tokens, a swap one token for another, and a swap one victory piece for another and you have a lot of choices.

As both players have the same number and type of tokens, the random draws per turn shapes your strategy, but the timing of token placement -- especially in terms of "using" opponent's tokens -- helps capture pieces.

The victory pieces are: seven Buddhas, seven Rice containers, and seven Towers. Tokens have a strength factor. When all hexes surrounding a victory piece are filled with tokens, the victory piece is captured by the player with the highest total. Ties remove the piece from the game and no one captures it.

The kicker is that if a token has one of those three specific victory piece images on it, the strength only counts in capturing that specific victory piece. So, a token with a Rice image doesn't count the strength to capture a Buddha or Tower.



Some hexes will be adjacent to hexes containing victory pieces. Inevitably, a token might be able to be placed to use the strength factor on both victory piece hexes. Likewise, sometimes you want to deny a space to the opponent, even if the strength factor wouldn't apply to either.

There's a bit more to it, but not a heckuva lot more when it comes to the mechanics of token placement and victory piece capture.

*Black victory pieces on the map. Behind my screen, my tokens await placement.*



## Winning

Here's the kludge part of the game. I don't even want to try and explain the convoluted nature of the victory calculations. Because there are three types of victory pieces, my guess is that in a game with more than two players, lots of combinations occurred regarding captured pieces, and this required some rapid rules tap dancing to untangle.

## The Game

We actually played two, splitting the wins. We would consider the board, place tokens, and capture victory pieces. The swap tokens could be powerful and if you are clever enough, you might figure out how to make the most of the one you have, understanding that the opponent will eventually have one to play, too.

Sometimes, all you need are tokens in two hexes to capture a victory piece. A city like Edo needs six hexes filled -- so much the better if your opponent fills in a few and you sweep in with a larger strength. Note that Edo has three victory pieces -- one of each type, so it is possible to split the haul.

It's a clever chess-like game: easy to learn and able to have more than two players, although who wins requires stepping through the rules and the example.

## *QuarterMaster General 1914: WWI Boardgame*

*by Russ Lockwood*

Renaud brought over *QuarterMaster General 1914*, a strategic card-driven WWI game. I kept thinking there was a game by the same name by a company in Flemington, NJ, but I was wrong. Close, but wrong. The game was actually named *Perfect General*, but was by Flemington-based Quantum Quality Productions (QQP).

In any case, cards drive the game: placing new armies and navies, attacks, defense, special events, and so on. Like all other card-driven games, luck of the draw determines whether you have the right card or not in your hand. As the game has a chart about how many cards of which are available, card counting helps.

It's simple enough to learn: deal out cards and do whatever the card you play says. When your cards run out, you do nothing. Of note: The number and type of cards in each powers' deck is different.

One thing to remember when playing a Build Army or Build Navy card is a supply line from your home capital to the area you expect to build the unit. All areas leading back to the capital need to have a friendly unit in it. No supply through enemy-occupied areas, of course, but also, no supply traced through vacant areas, even if they are part of your original country.

The key mechanism to learn is that you can place one card face-down on the table per turn. Cards you play are generally



offensive, but cards on the table may be used to counter the cards played from a hand. Thus, if a card played in an Attack, the opponent may play a defense card if it is face down on the table, not from his hand.

*Game at the beginning of 1916.*

Sides are Germany and Austria-Hungary/Turkey (Central Powers) versus Britain/US, France/Italy, and Russia. Thus, you can have a multi-player game. As it was only Renaud and me, one side took the Central Powers and the other the Entente. By random roll, Renaud was the Central Powers. It was a bit of a schizophrenic existence on our parts, but manageable.



## The Game

The play of cards can be rapid, but your hand made you think about the order of playing them. Since you only play one card in a turn and place one face-down card in a turn, it took me about half a game to start to figure out favorable combinations. Of course, I only realized this after I had discarded some good cards. I even did a bone-headed discard of a US card that would allow me to search the discard pile to retrieve a couple cards. Renaud forgot to play Build Army card in Poland after I had defeated him there the previous turn. I immediately built one there myself.

Germany led the way westward through Belgium and into Picardy -- an area adjacent to Paris. Italy eventually reached northward through the Alps and defeated an army in Vienna, but Austria-Hungary quickly built a replacement army there.

*Game at the beginning of 1917.*

Serbia and Romania became Allied while Greece and Bulgaria became Central Powers. For some reason, a British Army showed up in Russia to thwart Austria-Hungary plans.

I finally built the magic number of navies -- three -- to trigger some benefits on event cards. The Turks built through the Mideast while the Russians hung onto Azerbaijan and the Black Sea.

A fierce naval battle occurred in the North Sea, which led to the French kicking out the Germans. In Ireland, a German event card generated Victory Point (VP) after VP until I finally drew a British Build Army card and put an Army in Ireland.

The US never quite went "Over There." Why? I had discarded both US Build Army cards earlier. I had not expected only two to be in the deck. Remember, I inadvertently used the US card that would allow me to search the discard pile to retrieve a couple cards. Yep. Shortsighted, that, but I needed it as a defense card to stop the Germans.



In the end, everyone ran out of cards, although the Central Powers ran out before I did. The last couple turns were maximizing the effect of what cards I had left without a worry that the Central Powers could do anything. I even played a card that forced the discard of face-down cards.

Certain areas contain VP cities. In addition, certain cards allow the placement of cardboard counter VP markers -- and the number of markers is limited. Renaud scooped up the last one moments before I played my own version of the card.

Still, I squeaked out a victory by a point or two.

## Thoughts

*QuarterMaster General* played quickly, even if sometimes you just stared at the cards and wonder why any of these cards would be used. Certain cards are better early in the game. Certain ones better at the end.

Likewise, knowing that the US only has two Build Army cards would have changed my discard selection a bit. Knowing the French Navy would trigger benefits in a different sea zone would have been helpful. Knowing the existence of the Ireland VP Event probably would have made me play an Army in Ireland early.

But that's the joy of playing a game for the first time. You're playing on instinct -- whether or not that works is another story. The shuffling of cards obviously makes for a different game every time.

Thanks, Renaud, for an entertaining game.



## Space Base: Race for 40

by Russ Lockwood

After *Dark Side Rising*, Dan brought out *Space Base*, a die-rolling eurogame where the goal is to gain 40 Victory Points. I've praised the game before, so now it was time to introduce Dennis and Renaud to the phenomenon. We only played the basic game, not any of the expansions.

Basically, die rolls convert into currency (technically, I think the game calls them credits) which is used to buy cards to expand your space fleet. The kicker is that as you add cards to your fleet, the existing cards are displaced outward, allowing them to generate currency and other benefits (like VPs, extra die rolls, etc.) on opponents' rolls. It's a neat mechanic.



## The Game

Off we went, rolling and gathering currency to buy cards with VPs on them. Sometimes, cards appear that you want. Other times, it seems no cards are that desirable.

I managed to put together an impressive collection on the number 8, so that every time my opponents rolled 2d6 and got an 8, I piled up the cash. The number 8 rolled pretty often. Renaud had big VP cards at the upper range. Dennis scattered his benefits throughout his range.

Alas, Dan had concentrated on the numbers 6 through 8 -- the sweet spot of odds for 2D6. Better for him, VPs were not many per roll, but they piled up. He crept past 40 just as my juggernaut started to gain results. Dan took the win just over 40 while I pulled up in second with 30 VPs.

## Thoughts

By the end of the game, everyone had the basic mechanics down. Which card to buy often caused a bit of a think. And that's a good thing. You also have to pay attention to the other players, which is difficult to do because you are not directly attacking them like a wargame. There is one card that subtracts VPs from an opponent, but otherwise, it's what you are doing and other players' switchovers from currency generation to VP generation can be a subtle event.

Thanks for the game, gents.



The start of the game.

## Japanese Blitz: *Axis and Allies Pacific*

by Russ Lockwood

Being on an *Axis and Allies* (A&A) kick of late, Dan brought out a 2001 *Pacific* edition with all the air and naval bases printed on a map that has fewer spaces than the 1940 versions I've been playing. The game is the same, movement and combat wise, but quite different map-wise than the 1940 boardgame version. By random pick, I was Japanese.

If you recall, I played a rather inept Japanese 1940 *Pacific* game versus Renaud and Dan played a rather excellent game as the Japanese in our three-player 1940 *Pacific* game. I did pick up one aspect that I intended to use in this game: build a factory in China.

So I spent the Industrial Production (IP) units -- currency of the game -- to build a minor factory, which didn't leave much for units, but I figured it out.

*My initial attack in China. White and Gray chips are worth one unit. The dice keep track of aircraft movement points remaining.*

### Strategy

Next was the strategy -- Japan gets a first-turn benefit of surprise: every Allied unit's defense is a "1" on a 1d6. Dan altered this to allow only two rounds of combat -- i.e. two historical waves at Pearl Harbor seemed like two



rounds would be a good compromise. Online chatter finds that some invoke the benefit for the entire turn and others only for one round of combat. Note that China is exempt from this surprise since war had been going on since 1937.

In any case, I have two rounds, so the big decision is Pearl Harbor or no Pearl Harbor. I immediately ignored the decision for the moment and concentrated on China and SE Asia.

*My initial attack in SW Pacific.*



Off my troops went, attacking overland as well as amphibious assaulting Hong Kong. I certainly needed the Philippines, so in went an amphibious assault supported by battleships, cruisers, and destroyers plus aircraft that would get rid of the American ships. Singapore was next -- no amphibious assault because I didn't have the troops, but enough firepower to take care of the British ships. I even managed a 50-50 invasion of Borneo.

I also discovered that my Betty bomber wing could reach the waters off India and attack the transport (but not the submarine because I did not have a destroyer in the zone). That was a chance, for while my 12 IP bomber hit on a 1 through 4, the 6 IP transport could hit the bomber on a 1. Hmmm. Chancing the golden BB shot was worth it. Nail the British transport and weaken the ground defense builds if the UK spends IPs on a replacement.

## **To Pearl Or Not To Pearl?**

In some ways, the game's starting spot for three aircraft carriers and six planes decides for you. Plus, since defensive shots are all "1s" (a battleship is 1 through 4 for a hit), you really have only the first turn to take out the American fleet at Pearl. You can also ignore Pearl and go after the carrier and ships off the coast of California, but that seems like overkill.

*My initial attack on Pearl Harbor.*

So, the Kido Butai aircraft carrier fleet sent its aircraft winging into Pearl Harbor.

That left the central Pacific and the ANZAC area. The ANZACs don't have much, but I can't send unescorted transports around. I do have a battleship, supporting naval units, and aircraft in the central Pacific. Leaving them there was not an option.



Thing is, all these could also just reach Pearl Harbor. Hemmed and hawed I did until I remembered the golden rule about A&A: nice combat system, any relation to WWII is purely coincidental.

If it worked, I would have a foothold, including a minor factory, on a spot aimed at the West Coast of the US. It would also burn a US turn trying to take it back, leaving me extra time to tackle China and SE Asia.

I sent the invasion fleet.

I debated sending one submarine to try and hit an American aircraft carrier and cruiser at Samoa. As this force had no destroyer, my sub would fire first, needing a 2 for a hit and a sinking. If I got lucky, maybe I could get away with two hits. Remember, the US fleet defends at a 1 for two rounds.

It was worth the risk. I sent the sub.

## Running Wild

I started in China. All the attacks were heavily weighted in my favor. I took some losses, but not an absurd amount. What surprised me was that I gained absolutely zero IPs for all those spaces taken. In 1940 Pacific, you get 1 IP per space. Here, I got nothing.

Uh-oh.

At least I got 2 IPs for capturing Hong Kong.

Off the coast of Singapore, I sent the British fleet to the bottom. The bomber sunk the British transport off India and lived to tell the tale. Borneo fell. Over in the Philippines, we dug out Dugout Doug and took the place with acceptable losses. Guam and Wake Island also fell, with minimal loss.

My sub failed to hit the US force at Samoa and after two rounds, submerged to avoid the full strength defense. Pity. I would have liked one hit.

Overall, so far, so good.

Now came Pearl Harbor.

My aircraft screamed into Pearl along with the invasion fleet. If Pearl had been on full alert, it would have been carnage for the Japanese. But they weren't and I managed to not only sink the US fleet, but land, crush the US Army, and capture the Hawaiian Islands.

*Midway (upper left corner) remains in US hands, but Hawaii was captured by the Japanese.*



All totaled, the Japanese pushed up its IP total to 29. For the Japanese to win, they needed to conquer and hold one of three areas: India, West Coast US, or Sydney Australia. Or, they needed to get to 22 Victory Points -- one gotten for every 10 IPs. 29 gave me 2 VPs. If I had captured an area with 1 more IP, that would have been 30 and 3 VPs. Alas, I only received 2 VPs and 29 IP worth of funds for next turn's builds.

## Allied Reactions

The British built lots of infantry and pushed forward to grab an area. The Chinese consolidated around their capital and major factory. The ANZACs built more for defense.

The US launched a furious counter-attack with every ship and aircraft to destroy the Japanese fleet at Pearl. He knew he didn't have the advantage, but he needed to whittle away at the Japanese fleet. Besides, the US received 70 IPs per turn (plus 10 or 15 for the ANZACs, 20 or so for the UK, and a few for the Chinese) to the Japanese 29.

It was carnage incarnate. All the US ships and aircraft ended up littering the water around Hawaii. My Japanese fleet was down to one aircraft carrier, one fighter, a battleship, and two transports.

That was about 100 IPs of Japanese steel joining the Americans at the bottom. Dan could afford to lose ships and aircraft in a battle of attrition -- but can he counter-attack fast enough before the Japanese VPs reach the 22 needed for the win?

That's the basis of the game right there.

All the Allies built like crazy. I gotta admit feeling a bit paranoid being out-produced 2:1 and being at the end of a supply line.

## Continuing Operations

The attack on China ramped up as I squeezed the areas around the capital, mostly because the minimal delaying forces allowed for a concentration of the infantry defense on the capital.

*All of China captured except for one lone holdout. India was next on the hit list parade, but the British built and built and built. Red chips are worth 5 units.*

I shifted some units to attack towards India and Malaya. I sunk the reserve British fleet in the Indian Ocean. Amphibious assaults hit the big IP Dutch islands. I still had to be careful of the ANZAC ships. Unescorted transports were considered target practice, so I had to make sure I escorted everything.

What was left of the Pearl Harbor fleet aided the attack on ANZAC -- although it didn't last long. It did pull the US carriers away from the Central Pacific for a turn.

I built three infantry at Pearl's minor factory. It wasn't enough to withstand the US attack and Pearl went back into US hands. I can't complain -- OK, I can complain that the three new infantry failed to hit any of the Marines coming ashore -- but I had bought a turn and gave the US a bloody nose.

The trade-off of India and the Shan State territories continued. The Brits were holding me off, to my chagrin. India built up more. I saw the first Matilda tank pop in. Hmmm...

The ANZACs were also building up and not much I could do about it.

## Japanese Dilemma

Basically Japan has three "fronts" -- China and SE Asia, South Pacific and Australia, and Central Pacific and US. It's difficult to attack in all three, so the Japanese have to make priorities. In my case, it was China. My minor factory churned out infantry and then armor. The home base in Japan churned out aircraft, the occasional destroyer, and a few more ground troops.

I would try and hold off the growing US threat while squeezing India. The South Pacific was a question mark. It turned out Australia was a lot easier to attack in the game than history.

## South Pacific

With the big IP islands mine, I had a number of forces available, so I invaded Australia. It wasn't much, and I emptied Philippines, but enough landed to cause a bit of concern. The aircraft carrier and battleship added in some weight to other ships. I even invaded and captured New Zealand.

*I could never quite get enough units to capture all of Australia -- most, but not the important factory.*





*The end of the Japanese half of Turn 4.*

With the tradeoff around India and the gradual land grab in Australia except for Sydney, things were looking up. I was pushing high 40s in IPs for a few turns in a row, coming closer and closer to 22 VPs.

The US came to the rescue of Australia. I kept forgetting that Pearl Harbor to Sydney is one move. I delayed as much as I could, but Australia and New Zealand were recaptured.

By this time, I realized I needed to play defense. All those transport ships were sent unescorted into various sea zones to form a wall of naval obstruction. I withdrew the warships back to the Philippines and watched the US pick off individual islands.

But the delays proved enough. I had 18 VPs and the high IP zones were behind a water wall of transports and warships -- gamey for sure, but necessary for the Japanese to even have a chance at the delay and attrition strategy. Remember the golden rule about A&A: nice combat system, but any relation to WWII is purely coincidental.

Dan looked at the map and saw he could not take away enough IPs nor reach Japan in the next turn to prevent a Japanese victory. And there is a kamikaze rule that is potentially lethal.

*The counter-attack during the Allied half of Turn 4. Notice the single transports strung from north to south to delay the Americans.*



## Thoughts

One difference between this version and the *1940* version is that the transports shoot back. It's only a "1" to hit, but it's a chance. Dan modified the rule so that no matter how many transports were in a zone, all they got was 1d6 defense die.

That said, my lone transports had the best sharpshooters in the IJN. I shot down so many fighters and bombers and sank so many subs, the US plans for these forces were in shambles. It was way over 1 in 6 hits. It was probably 1 in 3, although it felt like a 50-50 chance.

Sometimes, the dice can help. They certainly helped the IJN whittle down the US.

Of course, there are always little tweaks to improve. I had mis-positioned units (again!), leaving offensive power idle or forgetting that a sacrifice of a transport to interrupt the Pearl to Australia one-turn run would have saved my remnant fleet off Australia. I forgot to even look at the Convoy spaces until about turn 4. Some unit purchases could be pared down and others increased -- a case of not thinking ahead enough.

Of course, what works for one *A&A* game doesn't for another. That's the nice replayability of the system.

Thanks, Dan, for a nice three and a half hour game. *A&A* isn't much for history, per se, but it is a good simple WWII-ish game system.

## *Axis & Allies Pacific: With Some Revisions*

by Daniel

I invited Russ over to play *Axis & Allies: Pacific* (2001) but with a number of significant revisions, including a 2-player version where all the Allied factions take their collective turns at the same time. Russ & I have discussed seeking ways to cut down individual player turns for a collective "Axis side / Allied side" turn to decrease playing time, so this is my first attempt at it, using *Axis & Allies: Pacific* (2001).

I chose *Axis & Allies: Pacific* (2001) as it is a stand-alone game that was among my favorite *A&A* games. I also liked that all the airbases and naval bases were printed on the map versus the counters used in the later "Global" versions of *A&A*.

It's been many years since either of us played *Axis & Allies: Pacific* (2001).

### Summary of Rules Revisions used for *A&A Pacific* (2001):

- 1. Set-Up Changes: Two destroyers per side replaced with cruisers: SZ5, SZ11, SZ26, SZ43**  
All Carriers have one Fighter replaced with a Tactical Bomber.  
Major Factory in Hawaii changed to Minor Factory.  
NOTE: All Airbases and Naval Bases at start are printed on the mapboard.
- 2. 2-Player Sequence:**  
**Japan**  
UK/ANZAC/China/USA (Each Allied Faction purchases and collect their IPCs separately.)
- 3. Unit Production Cost Chart from *A&A Global 1940* is used.**  
All unit types from *A&A Global 1940* allowed (exception: Armor cost 5 and fights 3A, 2D, M2)  
Both sides can build Airbases, Factories, and Naval bases.
- 4. CAP rules for *A&A Pacific* replaced with Fighter Scramble rules from Airbase.**
- 5. Strategic Bombing Rules, Defending Fighters and Fighter Escorts Rules in use.**
- 6. 1<sup>st</sup> Turn "Surprise Attack" lasts only 2 rounds (not applicable versus China and scrambled defending Fighters on US West Coast are not "surprised").**  
**Japan can choose "surprised" targets destroyed during 1<sup>st</sup> round of combat.**
- 7. Japan may still carry 1 infantry on a Destroyer.**
- 8. Japan's Victory Conditions unchanged:**
  - Control Tokyo and one Allied capital for one turn, or

- Reach 22 Victory Points (collect 1 VP per 10 IPCs earned a turn, round down).

**Allies' Victory Conditions unchanged:**

- Control Tokyo and all Allied capitals for one turn, or
- Japan cannot earn 1 VP (collect 9 or less IPCs a turn).

9. **Convoy rules from A&A Pacific are used.** Control denies all income from convoy, but if a submarine is in a convoy space with enemy surface ships that are NOT destroyers, they may subtract 2 IPCs per submarine from that convoy space.

**10. Multi-National Forces (Allies only):**

- All Allied units may defend a territory together as one force.
- ANZAC/UK are treated as the same nationality (“Commonwealth”).
- Allied forces that start the turn together can act as one force and combine with another force of either nationality.
- Otherwise, Allied forces NOT starting together must attack separate targets (or combine during non-combat move to form a multi-national force for next turn).

11. **Transports must be taken as casualties last.** However, if Transports are the *only* defending ships present during any Combat Round, the defending Transport(s) get one and only one die for “1” regardless of the number of Transports in the area.

I provided Russ with a copy of the revised rules and Production Chart the day before, but we reviewed them again before play (and often during play). By random roll, Russ would play Japan.

## The Game

Russ took a page out of my “playbook” from playing Japan in our last *Axis & Allies: Pacific 1940* game by purchasing a Minor Factory to place in China – Shantung instead of Korea. That would help him keep a steady stream of ground troops to support his campaign in China.

I also started considering my initial builds for each Allied faction as Russ did his turn. With Japan having two possible conditions for victory, the initial one to defend against was losing India, New South Wales (Australia), or the US West Coast since Japan need only occupy ONE of them to win the game.

Russ did the appropriate aggressive moves with Japan: Attack the Pearl Harbor fleet and invade Hawaii, Guam and Wake Island, try a submarine sneak attack at Samoa, attack and invade the Philippines, sink the UK fleet off Malaya, take Hong Kong, and dive into China. I reminded him about Japan’s Destroyer ability to carry 1 infantry. All were successful except the submarine sneak attack at Samoa. Japan ended their Turn 1 at 29 IPCs (2 Victory Points).

## Avenge Pearl Harbor

After considerable thought, I decided to counterattack the Japanese fleet at Hawaii with everything I could find. Had the Japanese submarine sneak attack at Samoa scored even one hit, this response would not have been feasible. The odds were against me, but I knew I could damage Japan’s fleet significantly and the new US fleet being built *should* be strong enough to deal with whatever was left.

The “sacrificial” US attack was eliminated, but left Japan with a Battleship, Carrier, one Fighter, and two transports -- so I considered this mission accomplished. I should be able to re-take Hawaii on Turn 2, but this would be a significant delay to gaining any offensive initiative.

Nothing much I could do in China except consolidate at the capital. India was not being threatened, yet, but I drafted as much infantry as I could to defend. I scatter the Australian fleet and one ship joins a US transport at Samoa to form a “multi-national force.”

I committed a critical oversight in moving the surviving UK fleet to SZ51, not realizing the Japanese fleet that wiped out the UK fleet at SZ46 could reach it. In a bit of visual irony, one of my ships obscured the short border between SZ47 and SZ51.

On Turn 2, the Japanese fleet at Hawaii heads south to Australia to invade New Zealand as other elements move to invade Indonesia. The remaining UK fleet is eliminated in an almost bloodless battle (poor judgement followed by poor dice) but the infantry defending the Indonesian islands succeed in taking out an attacker in each invasion. China

loses more territory as almost everyone holes up at the capital. Japan and UK trade Burma and the Shan State with small attacks. Japan reached 40+ IPCs and earns 4 more VPs.

## Recapture Pearl Harbor

The US rescues Hawaii from the recent Japanese occupation. US heavy bombers built on Turn 1 join an attack with the Australian air force and navy, including the “multi-national force” I created on Turn 1, against the Japanese fleet that savaged Hawaii on Turn 1, eliminating that portion of the IJN.

Japan launches their final attack against the Chinese capital. The Chinese fight well on combat round 1, but Japan finishes them off. One lone infantry remains in the westernmost region. Japan finishes capturing Indonesia and start landing in Australia, taking 3 provinces. Japan is at 46 IPCs and another +4 VPs (10 VPs total).

Time for another desperate counterattack to stop Japan from conquering Australia. The US heavy bombers and carrier planes start hunting transports without escorts as the US fleet at Hawaii moves to the Solomon Islands and the US Turn 2 fleet joins them from the West Coast. Australia builds an aircraft carrier to strengthen their navy off New South Wales enough to dissuade those Japanese ships that might try to invade in concert with overland attacks.

## IJN Picket Line

Japan reluctantly backs off trying to take New South Wales. Instead a “picket line” of destroyers and transports is formed to prevent the ANZAC/US navies from going after the Philippines or Indonesia. The small-scale attacks across Burma and the Shan State continue as Japan’s forces in China start to migrate to Burma. Japan gains 47 IPCs and +4 VP (14 VPs total). It’s apparent that Japan is now going for the 22 VP win. I have three turns to take Tokyo or reduce his IPC gains to below 40 to get another turn to take Tokyo.

That’s not looking very likely, despite gaining some initiative on Turn 3. Australia regains most of her provinces as well as New Zealand. Japan’s picket line is attacked, removing most of it but one heavy bomber is lost in the effort against a transport. The Allies have enough of a combined fleet to attack and built a new US fleet at Hawaii, but it’s clear to me that the Minor Factory 3-unit limitation at Hawaii can’t build enough units to prosecute the campaign as the remaining builds must be at the West Coast and that extra distance works against me.

Japan starts to reinforce Japan and establishes a new picket line. Japan has a significant force in Burma with three transports available, but it’s not enough to take India – so I can start to attack out from India, but it won’t impact the IPC total much. Japan is still 40+ IPCs and gains +4VP (18 VPs total).

As I start Turn 5, it’s clear the Allies cannot win. The fleet that can make it to the Sea of Japan will have to deal with up to six Kamikaze attacks and there are more land troops than the four Allied transports can bring, so I suggest stopping the game at this point.

## Thoughts

From our experience with this game, I believe many of the revisions worked. What did *not* work was changing the Major Factory at Hawaii to a Minor Factory, which impacts the Allies ability to deal with the 22 VP win condition for Japan. The US needs an “extra turn” to get their West Coast builds into action – but I can’t “justify” Hawaii having a Major Factory. Instead, Japan’s 22 VP win condition could be adjusted to *exceed* 22 points, along with some Pearl Harbor rules that would impact the Turn 1 surprise attack on Hawaii or the US West Coast.

If I repeat this exercise again, I would amend the revisions as follows:

### **NEW Summary of Rules Revisions used for *A&A Pacific* (2001):**

**12. Set-Up Changes:** Add a US destroyer to SZ11.

**14. Unit Production Cost Chart from *A&A Global 1940* is used.**

**Neither side** can build Airbases, Factories, and Naval bases.

**15. 1<sup>st</sup> Turn “Surprise Attack” lasts only 2 rounds (not applicable versus China and any US air and ground forces on Hawaii and West Coast, plus** scrambled defending Fighters on US West Coast are not “surprised” but scrambled US Fighters on Hawaii *would* be “surprised”).

US battleships at Hawaii need 3 hits to be sunk. US battleships with 2 hits are “capsized” and cannot fire in subsequent rounds of combat. “Capsized” US battleships are eliminated if Hawaii is captured. Otherwise “capsized” US battleships return to play at the end of Allied Turn 2.

## 16. Japan's Victory Conditions unchanged:

- Control Tokyo and one Allied capital for one turn, or
- **EXCEED** 22 Victory Points (collect 1 VP per 10 IPCs earned a turn, round down).

Allies' Victory Conditions unchanged:

- Control Tokyo and all Allied capitals for one turn, or
- Japan cannot earn 1 VP (collect 9 or less IPCs a turn).

## The BB Damage Idea: A&A Pacific

By Russ Lockwood

Dan's Item 15, the battleship damage idea at Pearl Harbor, is interesting: At the start of the game, two battleships are at Pearl Harbor, which seems to indicate each ship figure represents four battleships (*USS Maryland*, *USS Tennessee*, *USS Pennsylvania*, *USS Nevada*, *USS California*, *USS West Virginia*, *USS Arizona*, and *USS Oklahoma*). One British battleship is outside Singapore, which seems to indicate that the figure represents two battleships (battleship *HMS Prince of Wales* and the battlecruiser *HMS Repulse*). I'm not sure why the numbers are different, other than perhaps the US battleships are of older vintage.

The British ships were sunk at sea and the US battleships were sunk at anchorage in relatively shallow water.

The A&A turns are supposedly slugged at six months each, so if Turn 1 represents the last half of 1941, i.e. Pearl Harbor and the start of the Japanese offensive in December 1941, the end of Turn 2 would be around June 1942.

The idea of giving battleships an extra hit (three instead of two) is likely influenced by the game *Admiral's War*, which doubles the number of hits for ships in ports, or at least in Pearl Harbor. Let's look at the historical repair rate for the Pearl Harbor battleships (repaired on West Coast):

### Battleships Returned to Service

*USS Maryland* (BB-46): Repaired by February 1942; back in service June 1942.

*USS Tennessee* (BB-43): Damaged, but returned to action in early 1942.

*USS Pennsylvania* (BB-38): In dry dock, lightly damaged; returned to service April 1942.

*USS Nevada* (BB-36): Sunk, refloated, and returned to service on April 19, 1942.

*USS California* (BB-44): Sunk, refloated, rebuilt, and returned to service in January 1944.

*USS West Virginia* (BB-48): Sunk, refloated, heavily rebuilt, and returned in September 1944.

### Battleships Not Returned to Service

*USS Arizona* (BB-39): Total loss, remains at the bottom of the harbor.

*USS Oklahoma* (BB-37): Raised, but deemed too damaged to return to service

Given the repair rate and the turn time, getting one battleship figure back after turn 2 (up to June 1942) on the west coast is fine. Getting the second battleship figure back on turn 6 (up to June 1944) is historical. Then again, as I often say, A&A is a nice little combat system but any relation to WWII is coincidental.

That said, our game lasted to Turn 5, or Turn 6 if the Japanese would be required to get more than 22 VPs. So if we do slug capsized BBs to historical repair rate to turn, some rejiggering of the VPs would be needed.

## Triple A: Computer A&A

By Russ Lockwood

I've been playing *Triple A*, concentrating on *Europe 1940 Second Edition* version (of 160+ different versions). Those of us who play the computer solo have decided there is some algorithm that favors the computer regardless of country. That said, the computer often does dumb things regardless of difficulty level. The higher the difficulty, the earlier the Axis declare war on the USSR, regardless of troop positioning, including on Turn 2. The Axis also have a propensity to declare war on "True Neutrals," which often means free troops for the Allies in Spain, Turkey, Sweden, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan (!?), Venezuela, Chile, and Argentina.

*Triple A* offers a way to experiment with different strategies, although how well they'd do against a live opponent who had average luck but smarter play is unknown. Web: <https://triplea-game.org/>



# Heroes of Normandie: Sword Beach Cards

by Russ Lockwood



By random roll, I played the British storming ashore at Sword Beach against Renaud's Germans in this icon-happy game. And when I say icon-happy, I really mean icon-ecstatic. Both sides of a Quick Reference Sheet are covered with icons. At first glance, it's a bewildering array. By game's end, we had figured out most of them.

Units are cards that are placed on a square-gridded board. The cards contain all sort of information about number of attacks (one or two), special functions like immune to suppression or clear minefields, and so on.

Activation markers (six for the British and four for the Germans) are used to pick from among a number of function: activate a unit, swap card positions, draw up to three cards from the deck and placed them on the board, recover bonus Directive tokens, and so on. Balancing those choices and in what order are your first challenges. Figuring out how to layer your attack is the second.

The "Heroes," when drawn from the deck, are represented by separate counters to place on the appropriate type card. For example, an infantry hero only goes on an infantry unit. A commando hero only goes on a commando unit. The hero imparts some icon benefit to the unit.

## Nuts and Bolts

Movement is only ahead or to the side on the grid except for mechanized units, which can also move diagonally. I don't know why tanks can't move diagonally, but there you have it. So, you activate a unit, move it one, and fire.

Firing is into an adjacent space (except artillery which has a range commensurate with its caliber) with a 2d6 roll. Most British attacks were 8+. Some units, like tanks, had a second attack at 9+. The kicker is that you can spend a Directive token to add +1 after the die roll. That came in handy for both of us at time.

Units in certain types of terrain, specific units, and units that have not been spotted can roll a 1d6 save die, with a save usually on a 6. Remember, a roll of 5 and the spending of a bonus Directive token will also save the unit.

Most British infantry units take only one hit. The tanks usually take two to destroy. The Engineer and Commando units also take two hits. It seemed most German units took two hits and some were on terrain that allowed a saving roll. Renaud rolled a few more 6s than average.

The concrete Blockhouse, a British must-destroy unit, takes three hits. A card pumped that up to four hits to destroy. I ultimately needed eight hits (or was it 80?), for Renaud had adjusted his monocle and rolled many saves over the course of a game. And remember, units hit on a 8+ (7+ if you have a bonus Directive token), so I took many shots to get all those hits.

But I get ahead of myself.

## The Invasion

Three of the spaces in front of the Blockhouse had mines, so my initial placement of the two engineer units was opposite. The rest were mostly one-hit wonders -- infantry. I should mention there was a second blockhouse opposite the infantry. I had one tank unit that I put in the middle.

*Set up with German cards deployed.*

With six commands (the Germans only had four commands), I activated first one engineer, then the other, to clear the mines. The other four activate other units to move inland and engage the Germans. I also drew three cards.

I soon discovered the first order of business was to knock out the blockhouses. I managed to get the right flank one fairly quickly, but Renaud obviously saved his best save rolls for the left flank one. The center was a trade off, but I slowly gained ground.



What was interesting is that tanks and mechanized units did not move faster than infantry. I would have to spend a Directive bonus token to get one square of extra movement. Fortunately, if you activate a unit, you move one square, attack, and if successful in eliminating the enemy unit, can take the square and then use a Directive bonus token to move one more square -- the third -- assuming the square is vacant.

*Top: The British invade the bottom row. End Turn 2.  
Bottom: End game.*



So, the activation of a unit to move and attack was one of the six commands you get per turn. The use of a Directive bonus token to add to a move (or add +1 to firing or to a save) depletes them and you can get three back by using another command.

The command and Directive bonus token limitations make you think about how to structure your turn. That's a good thing. It makes you think. It also makes you kick yourself as you learn how to do that. That's not a bad thing.

## **Inland**

Victory for the British is destroying the one blockhouse on the left and capturing five more objectives (towns in this scenario). The blockhouse took so long, it put the five-town objective in jeopardy.

At one point, I called in naval bombardment, which put two hits on it -- Renaud saved one of 'em. "There's something wrong with our bloody guns today," remarked General Lockwood.

Nonetheless, progress was smoother on the right. It's hard to describe the intense card play of both sides. Attack and counter-attack were the rolls of the day -- once you spent the commands to activate.

The use of HQs often allows for extra activations -- assuming you can roll a 1d6 to meet or beat the activation listed on the card. My HQs came out late in the game, limiting their use.

In the end, my third random event (the first two were naval gunfire) extended the game by one turn. And I needed it.

Even on the last turn, I had a chance. Not much of one, but it was there. Every attack would have to be perfect. Every hoarded Directive bonus token would be needed.

At first, I drove inland with speed and success. HQs generated extra activations for my tanks. Attacks blew out German units. Advances took VP objectives...until they didn't. I stalled as the dice turned normal -- less than the hot I needed. I failed to take that last town.

## **Thoughts**

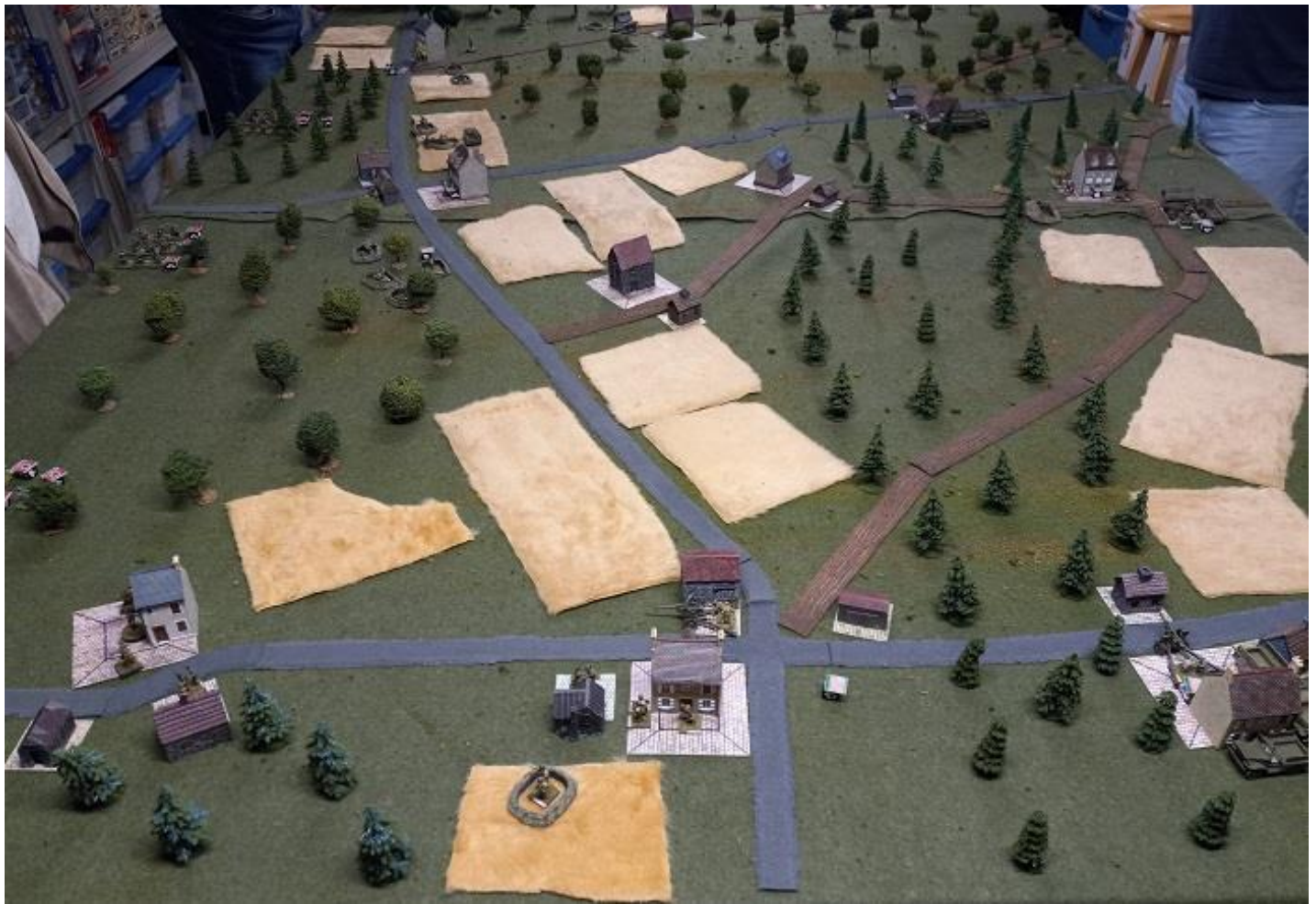
Renaud has a whole series of games using this system. This one has a dozen or 15 scenarios and layouts that go beyond beach assault. I suspect all the others do to.

The grid system is presumably intentionally limiting for infantry and tanks. Only the mechanized units, which I lost early, allowed for diagonal movement. That's about the only odd mechanic in the system. The rest was easy enough to learn once you understood the icons.

Oddly enough, we found two icons that were not described in the rules or on the web. Whether or not those would make a difference or not is unknown.

Nonetheless, it was a nice, hard-fought battle on the shores of Normandy. Thanks for the game, Renaud.





*The tabletop battlefield and my objectives: Roder (left bottom corner), Marnach (center bottom), and Reuter (bottom right corner).*

## **Foggy Bulge: *Command Decision***

*by Russ Lockwood*

Lt. Col. von Lockwood pondered the mysteries of the universe, for he could barely ponder the road stretching 300m into the fog blanketing the battlefield. The good news: no American Jabos to strafe his battalion. The bad news, his panzergrenadiers couldn't see far into the Amis line.

The road to Roder stretched into the whiteness. It was his first objective and last report had an infestation of Americans there. Woods covered an approach from the north, but open ground was along the road and relatively open fields were to the south.

Von Lockwood's ultimate objective: the crossroads town of Marnach and Reuter beyond. But first things first. How to take Roder.

*My fellow German commanders: Pat, Tom, Dan, and Nick.*

### **Bulge Scenario**

Usually, we fight on a clear day. Tonight, we fight on a foggy morn. Various types of German battalions lined up ready to advance. I was in the far north with the panzergrenadiers. Regular infantry and Volksgrenadiers stretched southward.



It was a good crowd: Allen, Brandon, and Larry were the Americans while Pat, Tom, Dan, Nick, and Marc joined me as the Germans. Jake was the umpire.

*Allies (l to r): Allen, Umpire Jake, Brandon, and Larry.*

The game started out with the weather as fog -- 6-inch visibility. A random roll would eventually turn that into a light mist with 30-inch visibility. Further random rolls would dissipate the mist and the full 60-inch visibility would return.

As head of the panzergrenadiers, I could call on one artillery battery pre-registered on any spot of the board. I picked Marnach -- the idea that I could overwhelm the reported US company in Roder on my own. I had access to two batteries of artillery that depended on spotting.

The other commands had their own artillery batteries. We also had one 210mm battery.

What we didn't have was armor. No tanks, no halftracks, no armored cars, no nuthin'. We didn't even have any AT guns. My panzergrenadiers had a few panzerfausts and the Volksgrenadiers carried panzershrebs, but US Sherman tanks would give us a hard time.

*My battalion advances through the fog on Roder.*

## The Attack

Not knowing when the fog would lift, I played it cautiously and sent a company into the woods to the right of the town of Roder, one company into the fields to the left of Roder, and one up the road in the open. All stayed 6.1 gamey inches from the town.

Umpire Jake didn't say when he would roll for weather, just that he did. I could just imagine him rolling in the middle of a turn and me stuck in the open, but that was a risk I would take.

The Americans, snug in their beds, didn't stir. The assault was swift and decidedly not deadly. The report of Americans in the town proved incorrect. I occupied Roder without a fight. Sneaky Jake. He put dummy troops in Roder.

*My assault on Roder...hit nuthin' but dummy troops. Sneaky!*

I infiltrated two companies through the woods to the right of Marnach. The third company continued to advance through the fields heading to the left of Marnach. The pre-registered artillery fell on the town, albeit at random due to the persistent fog.

## Across the Front

Pat's infantry battalion to my left double-timed it through the woods and fields to the village of Dorseheid and then into the woods to flank Marnach. When he found no opposition, he kept going to flank the next town up the road: Reuter.



The other battalions stormed Hosingen, the cafe, and points in between. A full US company in earthworks was bypassed in the woods. Both sides let it sit until German Tom decided not to leave intact Americans alone. He was rebuffed in attacking. Marc's follow-up battalion inherited the job and curled behind, losing troops but dishing out damage as well.

The Germans on the far left ran into stubborn opposition at Holzthum, but seemed to be bypassing it rather than engaging.

It was at this point that the Americans brought up Sherman tank companies in the Marnach area as well as in the center. German morale dropped.

Then it dropped some more when the weather changed from fog to mist.

*Turn 3. Americans roll through Reuter (bottom right corner) on way to Marnach. Up top, US tanks roll into Munchausen (top right corner).*

## Back at Marnach

I launched a company assault at the outskirts of Marnach. First, I laid smoke to mask the fire from the bulk of the town, isolating the platoon manning the earthworks in a field. I traded platoon for platoon, but it was a foothold to bring fire on the town.

My artillery battered the American defenders again as I launched a second assault. This proved successful, although a couple platoons out of the two companies retreated due to Ami fire. I had a foothold in the town and outbuildings.

*Turn 4. I drop smoke in front of Marnach and hit the flank of the Ami garrison.*

## Morale Digression

More importantly, all my companies passed morale -- no wacky 10s to fail, as Tom and Brandon experienced. I've noted that *CD* is a game of 10s -- you never want them when rolling morale because that's when companies pin or break. Many games have morale breaks when rolling in the extreme, but when you have only three units for morale purposes (three companies in a battalion), one Pin can halt a battalion attack.

Understand that while cover gives a -2 benefit for morale (rolling low is better for morale), seeing enemy infantry within 12 inches gives a +1 detriment. Each platoon stand suffering a force back is another +1 and each platoon eliminated is a +2. Seeing enemy armor within 12 inches is also a +2 detriment.

*The American half of Turn 5 is a tank-led counter-attack into Marnach. Meanwhile, Pat's troops have infiltrated into the woods to flank Reuter and Marc's troops make it to Dorscheid (top left corner).*



Now you also understand why armor is so fear inducing to commanders with infantry without AT capability that can range out to a foot. Infantry-armor combo within 12 inches is a +3, negating the -2 for cover -- even an elite troop without a casualty will Pin on a 10. It gets worse (as it should) for less experienced troops, including running away.

*Turn 6: The Nebelwerfer barrage arrives in Marnach and smokes everything, driving the US tanks back towards Reuter.*

## Back to Marnach

The American Sherman tanks rumbled up the road and parked in Marnach, bringing fire against my company in the field. Fortuitously, nothing much happened there, but US armor stopped any thoughts of charging from that direction.

*Turn 6: Close-up of the Marnach fight.*

Then came the big Nebelwerfer barrage. We had only one and sent it into Marnach. It didn't do much in terms of destroying units, although it chased away one or two, but the Nebelwerfer barrage suppressed US units under it's area of effect (a +2 detriment to hit) and generated all sorts of smoke.

With the outskirts stripped or occupied, I kept up the assault into the smoke, clearing away the forward edges, shooting up the American AT gun ensconced in outbuildings, and even attacking the battalion commander in the center of town. All attacks were successful because the odds were definitely in my favor: mass versus suppressed troops.

The attack even convinced the Sherman tank platoons to abandon Marnach -- helped in large part by Pat's troops flanking Reuter. Even Shermans sent his way failed to stop him. Pat's infantry close assaulted one Sherman platoon, which moved out of the way enough to shoot, but did no damage.



Combat-wise, Pat may not have eliminated any Shermans, but he attracted so much attention, that Marnach fell. His other troops headed for Munshausen.

Marc's troops glided into Dorschied, following up behind Pat.

## Elsewhere Across the Front

I'm not entirely sure. Tom, Dan, and Nick advanced, although I recall some discussion about an American quad 50 halftrack platoon catching troops of one of them in the open. As you can imagine, a pretty one-sided shooting match against rifles.

## American Victory

We Germans were supposed to grab three cross road towns (Marnach, Hosingen, and Bockholz) and a combo of eight other road exits on the American side of the board and towns. I'm not sure how many turns the scenario was for, maybe 12 or so, but we got through seven full turns.

The German left flank, while advanced, was in a bit of disarray and the Americans were well placed to defend. I didn't see much from my end of the table and the action was so intense around Marnach, I never wandered over to take a photo.

The German center, led by Pat and Marc, was well on its way to exit the board, depending on future US reinforcements.

The German right flank achieved its immediate objective, but would need more turns to flank the Sherman tanks out of the woods line backstopping Marnach. Smoke shells would mask the tank fire and allow the crossing of the open area into the woods, perhaps, and I do mean perhaps, use panzerfausts to take out a tank or two.

## Thoughts

This tactical rules set really shows off the ability of a company to hold up a major attack. A company of infantry and one AT gun platoon, followed by a second AT gun platoon and a company of tanks delayed two battalions for 3.5 hours. Map-wise, it's about 1800m, or a little over a mile. Hardly a blitzkrieg.

My panzergrenadier battalion lost only two platoons in exchange of eliminating a US company, the battalion commander, and platoon of AT guns in half a winter's (short) day. I would guess that it would take me the rest of the day to push the Americans back to the river.

Whether I could cross the river to Clervaux is another story.

It's good to see a group gather around a table for a good-sized game. Thanks Marc for hosting, Jake for umpiring, and my fellow commander for gaming.



*End Game.*

## NEWS

### Lone Star Historical Miniatures: Facebook

by Russ Lockwood

I was forwarded the Lone Star Historical Miniatures newsletter, which has a number of game recaps and nice inspirational painting project photos from members. In addition, lots of convention information around Texas. Lots of adverts for Texas stores and conventions.

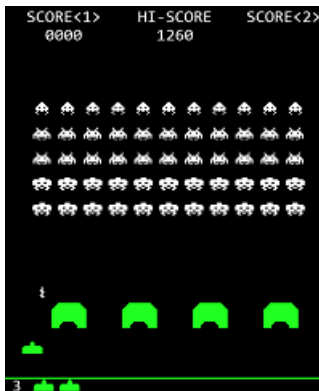
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/lonestarhistoryminis/>

### Space Invaders and Galaxian: Online

by Russ Lockwood

While poking around the web for info about *The Perfect General*, I stumbled across Play Classic Games. On a whim, I fired up a representation of an Atari 2600 classic: *Space Invaders*, followed by *Galaxian*. Played through your browser, it was classic 8-bit blocky gun and invaders and played like the old game. Plenty more of the classics. Indeed, seems like plenty more old games you could also download. I don't know about the Intellectual Property implications, but for 15 minutes of nostalgia, a nice break.

Info: <https://www.classicgame.com/>



### Lindbergh Trial Effects: Flemington

by Russ Lockwood

Currently, the Hunterdon County Historical Society at 114 Main St, Flemington, NJ 08822, is running an exhibition *Lindbergh's Flemington 1935: Businesses, Bars and Boarding Houses* from May 2 through late June, 2026. Hours are 1pm to 4pm on Saturdays. The exhibit uses photographs, autograph books, scrapbooks, artifacts, and more to explore what happened in Flemington during the six-week trial of Bruno Hauptmann. Entry is free, and you don't need a Flemington House/Garden ticket to enter, although \$5 per-person donations are welcome.

*Outside the courthouse: Notice all the extra wiring needed to accommodate all the reporters who covered the trial?*



Info: <https://hunterdonhistory.org/hchs-exhibition-to-focus-on-flemington-during-lindbergh-trial/>

June 6 is the day of the House and Gardens Tour of Historic Flemington. The tour, from 11am to 5pm, walks attendees to private homes, gardens, and public buildings -- largest representation of Victorian architecture outside of Cape May as well as Early 20th Century and stunning examples of Greek Revival, Gothic, Colonial and 2nd Empire. You can tour the Courthouse and jail at your leisure or participate in guided Courthouse and jail tours which will be at 11am, Noon, 2pm, and 3pm. Tickets are \$33.85 in advance (June 5 or prior) via the web or \$44.52 on June 6.

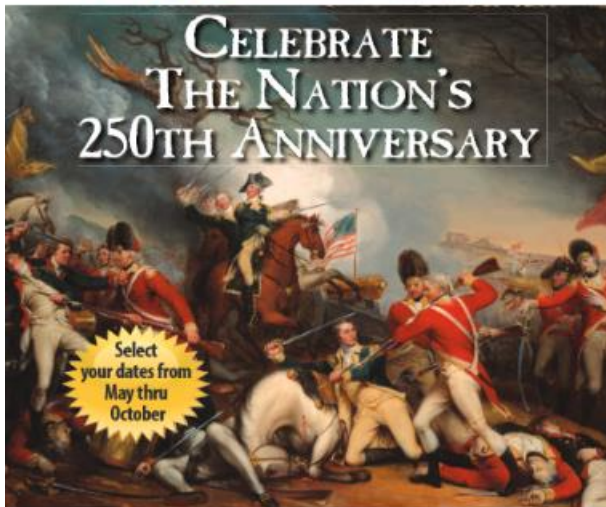
Info: <https://www.historicflemington.com/government/news/770-house-and-garden-tours-of-historic-flemington-tickets-for-sale>

# Princeton Battlefield Society: 2026 Events

By Russ Lockwood

In the spirit of full disclosure, I am a trustee of the Princeton Battlefield Society, which announced events to help explain the 1777 Battle of Princeton. They are also fundraisers to help restore the battlefield and the original Clarke house, which still stands on the site. Some of the projects being undertaken, some with partners such as the American Battlefield Trust, include restoring the Memorial site, including the medallion in the middle that honors unknown British and American soldiers who were buried in a mass grave after the battle; restoration of an Apple orchard present at the battle, restoration of the road used by troops to enter the battlefield; ongoing repairs to the Clarke house; re-enactment; and a few smaller projects. The long-term project is to fundraise for a full Visitor's Center.

Visit the PBS website for more info: <https://pbs1777.org/>



Experience the American Revolution at the Princeton Battlefield State Park

Explore the Ten Crucial Days of 1776-77, the Battle of Princeton, and the people involved.

**Sundays, May to October**

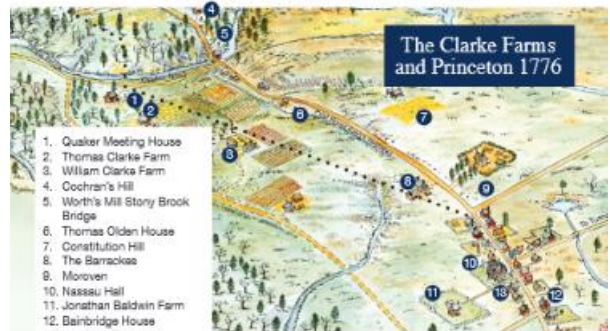
- Guided Tour of the Thomas Clarke House
- Battlefield Talks and Demonstrations
- Walking Tours
- Musket & Flintlock Programs



(See dates for programs on back)

**You must register at [www.pbs1777.org](http://www.pbs1777.org)**  
**Adults - \$10**  
**Walking Tour - \$20 per adult**  
**Children under 13 - Free**  
**Active Military - Free**  
*(Not recommended for children under 8 years)*

May 17	Presentation <i>Princeton: A Battle and A Community</i>
May 24	The Battle of Princeton
June 7	Presentation <i>Battle of Princeton: Why here?</i>
June 14	"Black Powder, White Smoke" <i>Care &amp; Feeding of Revolutionary War Flintlocks and The Battle of Princeton</i>
June 21	"In Their Footsteps" <i>Walking Tour of the Entire Battlefield</i>
July 12	The Battle of Princeton
July 26	The Battle of Princeton
Aug 2	The Battle of Princeton
Aug 16	The Battle of Princeton
Sep 6	"Black Powder, White Smoke" <i>Care &amp; Feeding of Revolutionary War Flintlocks and The Battle of Princeton</i>
Sep 13	"In Their Footsteps" <i>Walking Tour of the Entire Battlefield</i>
Sep 27	The Battle of Princeton
Oct 11	Presentation <i>Who Experienced the Battle of Princeton?</i>
Oct 18	"In Their Footsteps" <i>Walking Tour of the Entire Battlefield</i>



The dotted line overlay represents the general path of modern Mercer Street



Princeton Battlefield Society  
 P. O. Box 7645  
 Princeton, New Jersey 08543  
 More information at [www.pbs1777.org](http://www.pbs1777.org)



*Game Lab's Austerlitz in progress.*

## ***Snappy Nappy at Kansas State University: Austerlitz***

*By Prof. Brad Burenheide, Co-Director of The Game Lab*

The Game Lab at Kansas State University got two games of *Snappy Nappy* in. The first was with students in training to be teachers. The second was with in-service teachers. Both were designed to teach the use of wargames in the classroom.

In both games the French were victorious. In the student game, the Allies lost the initiative in the battle by compressing their front and the French were able to outflank them on the Heights. The teacher's game was a much closer run affair as the French held strong on the road to Brunn, but got overextended in the middle trying to beat the Allies to the punch. Napoleon had to rally the center to drive the Allies from the field.

We experimented with Break Points and a means for a side to quit the field. The French had 28 stands, but based on the historical estimates, their break point involved a d10 roll of 3 or higher to continue the fight upon the loss of their 8th unit. The allies had a d10 roll of 4 or higher to continue the fight upon the loss of the 12th unit. Each subsequent unit lost meant one was added to the target number. It was a meaningful experience and a great introduction to the Napoleonic era.

## **Mons Grapius**

Additionally, some students got a refight of Mons Grapius in. In this game, the Roman students must have angered the Gods of Dice, as I had never seen such unfortunate luck as I had seen that day. But it came down to the Legionnaires salvaging a draw for the Romans and protecting Agricola to fight another day.



# HMGS: Next Generation

by John Spiess

## Battle of Arsuf

We played the Battle of Arsuf, fought during the Third Crusade, between Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in 1191. Richard's army was marching along the coast when Saladin attacked with a larger mostly cavalry army.

*The Battle of Arsuf develops on the tabletop.*



All these kids are regulars, so no explanation of the rules was needed and we jumped right in. It was great to see Chip again. He is usually pretty busy on Sundays, so he hasn't been able to play in a while. We made him the team captain for the Saracens.

This turned out to be a really fun scenario due to the kids really taking advantage of the cavalry mobility. The battle eventually broke down into two separate fights, one at the head of the Crusader column, and one at the rear.

The Crusaders were able to fight off all the attacks, mostly due to some great positioning of reserves to plug some gaps that developed. I was pretty impressed that they saw what might happen and planned for it.



## HMGS-NG Reaches Into NJ

Although HMGS Next Generation started in Connecticut and expanded into New York, another expansion is taking place in NJ. The first teen event will be held May 2 at the Hunterdon County Library up on Rte 12 in Flemington, NJ. The Battle of Trenton 1776 will be the game and history lesson.

*As you walk into the library, the wall of events displays a Battle of Trenton flyer.*



## Vault Dash: *D&D* Dreams

by Ed

*I missed this session, but Ed kept the adventure journal going. -- RL*

The day started out like any other, with a field trip to Chindl, capital of the Kingdom of Furyondy, to see the King. We sent our most good representatives, and received information and gifts as we explained our mission was to disrupt the forces of Iuz now occupying the Horned Society lands. The Hammer described the throne room of the palace in the capital of Molag, and we teleported in. While in his dream the place was deserted and full of bones, in reality it was chock full of ettins and gnolls and ogres and oh myyyy we managed to slay them or chase them off, but when we heard wings from the sky above a 30-foot hole in the ceiling, we descended to the vault.

This Vault, said The Hammer's vision, contained a crown, a ledger, and a prisoner itself. Clever scrying proved this prisoner to be Moloch, an arch fiend. What do we discover down below? Five Balor Balrogs chanting in a summoning circle and a collection of minions...and a wizard casting Force Wall around the ritual in progress. We intimidate the minions and decide to use the key (which arrived in The Hammer's possession via a vision -- it was a pretty tangible vision...) to unlock the Vault. As we chased the wizard around to have a "talk" with him, the wizard completed, the summoning. The five Balrogs disintegrated into dust and before us stood the Demogorgon.

Or maybe an avatar. We fight. It hits like a train and reduces hit point maximums and has legendary actions and resistances. Someone spends their time tangling with minions, who mostly wanted to stay out of the fight but, sure, you wanna fight, bucko? Sure let's fight, they say, and Cristoff ends up not fighting the Demogorgon at all. After taking a few good shots, The Hammer runs and opens the Vault door, doing the Demogorgon's job for it. Down a hall inscribed with sundry contracts--mayyyyyybe The Hammer recognizes his own true name on there, maybe not, he ain't sayin'--he finds an Iron Crown and a Ledger full of contracts. And in a prison beneath a grating on the floor: Moloch.

"Come back and fight, we can win this," everyone tells The Hammer, so he abandons his quest to find an ally to fight the Demogorgon, who seems to have a lot, and I mean a lot (700 hit points) of stamina, and Hammer gets the last blow in, slaying the foul creature raised by the minions of Iuz. After some patching up, we revisit the prisoner, and some minutes of negotiation passes. Neither side seems willing to give up on their essential desires. Moloch wants very little restriction on its future actions, doesn't want to be exiled from the plane, and even though we just whacked a Demogorgon, doesn't seem too worried about fighting us, maybe because we're all a bit banged up and short on resources.

To begin the whole trip to the capital and the Vault we'd enjoyed a hero's feast. This came in handy when Frank the Cleric took it into his head to smash the iron crown, destroying it with his Mace of Disruption. But The Hammer was too swift and snatched up the crown and placed it on his head, bathing him in Fire, which looked great but didn't otherwise do anything.

However, this released Moloch, and a grand fight began. Moloch casts a very high level Cloudkill--but thanks to the feast, we were immune to its effects. Frank, wired up some -- "Cuthbert sent some badass magic my way" -- smacks Moloch pretty good. Sarge smacks it even better. Moloch isn't able to regenerate like it would wish, so it begins heading for the exit. To really leave, it must escape the "no teleporting out of prison" effect. But it really, really, really, really hates The Hammer -- for starters, he is the last scion of the country that imprisoned Moloch. So Moloch leaves The Hammer as a snack for the road.

Free to move quickly, Moloch dashes for the stairs out of the big summoning room. No one can stop the thing...until The Hammer traps it in a Force Cage such that the stairs are also blocked (which might be important, as there is a city full of bad troops above). Trouble is, The Hammer is trapped in there too, and it is a very small Force Cage. While he tries to convince Moloch that killing him will only guarantee its own death, he ain't buying that sauce and after finishing the pummeling that nearly kills him, disintegrates The Hammer. The Iron Crown and all his magic gear falls to the floor of the magic prison amidst a fall of dust. Corpse dust. The Hammer is most definitely dead.

But within a matter of seconds, so is Moloch, as Cristoff found a way to send three of the party into the Force Cage and the outcome is inevitable. It returns to somewhere else -- wherever that might be.

An hour and forty minutes after leaving the capital of the Kingdom of Furyondy, the party returns home with a mason jar of Hammer dust, Hammer's things, a deeply awful magic ledger full of Contracts, but no Iron Crown -- for the cleric Frank destroyed the thing. Quite a day of accomplishments: major bad guys slain and the balance of power in the occupied Horned Society territory shifted. That thwarted a significant plot by our arch-enemy Iuz. Yet, what will happen to Hammer?



*Into the breach once more... (clockwise from bottom left corner): Jordan, Steve, GM Sean, Ed, Chris, and Keith. Missing Fred.*

## **Dragon Draggin': Five Times the Fun**

*by Russ Lockwood*

I returned from my vacation well rested and ready to continue the quest against Ooooozy the Odiferous. By the time I reached the A-Team HQ in Sheffield, Hammer had been reconstituted, albeit he seemed changed. Maybe his disintegrated dust wasn't collected.

Indeed, he kept demanding some book of contracts be turned over to him, leading to quite the discussion about what was in the contracts and why he wouldn't explain why he wanted them. He even went so far as to threaten to leave the A-Team.

It seemed like some sort of leverage game, which would be fine if he told us. The only thing he would say is he had a dream vision and that the team had gone there specifically to retrieve a book and crown. That seemed a bit far fetched, but then I remembered others who had been granted dream visions.

The real problem was we were closing in on Ooooozy and his dragons. We may have killed a number of them, but we needed all the help we could get. Our Paladin Henri offered his gauntlet in friendship, which allayed some suspicion, although he conditioned it with never harming the team.

As Frank noted, it all seemed as if we were helping Hammer increase power towards being an equal of Ooooozy. I guess the operative word is "towards." In the end, Hammer's past exploits overcame his secrecy, and we reasoned that whatever the contracts contained, they most likely were signed voluntarily and we would let fate take its course. Or maybe it's the devil you know, so to speak.

### **Back To The Vault**

We teleported back to the Vault, our task unfinished. Down the stairs, past blackened walls and corroded doorways. I remarked that the team must have had a tough fight, but they assured me they did not cause such damage. Indeed, Cristoff felt a growing sense of foreboding, with increasing dread about meeting a dragon. And not just any dragon, but one called Teamot, the so-called "First Dragon" and "Queen of the Dragons." And if anyone knew dragons, it was Cristoff. Not only had he studied them, he somehow managed to directly usurp some dragon lore. His vast dragon knowledge was offset by becoming a high-value target to all dragondom.

Frank nudged me. "I think I see kobolds!"

"Where? Where?" I answered, bow and arrow at the ready. Just about every interaction with kobolds resulted in them trying to kill me, I had a well-honed instinct to spot them first. Especially the robed ones.

Well, they weren't kobolds, but a trio of dragonmen abominations -- half dragon and half men. We dispatched them quickly enough, but no doubt the alarm had been raised.

We continued downward into the prison cell of Molach. The bars that made up the door in the ceiling had been blasted out in the previous trip. Hammer picked up the broken pieces of the Iron Crown. None stopped him. Maybe the future would bring the reforging of the crown.

Most of us dropped or floated down inside. I tied a rope and let the end fall into the room. By the time I shimmied into the cell, the rest of the team had searched the room and found the trapdoor under a rug. A few words, "Keep Out! First Dragon!", were scrawled across the door. Of course we ignored that. Cristoff already warned us and we took the new warning seriously.

The room below contained a small figurine of a five-headed dragon placed within a large bird cage. Well, dragon cage I guess. Two stairways, one on each side, descended. We chose one and followed its steps down a hundred feet, where it opened out into a vast and wide balcony platform.

This looked out into an even larger room 100 feet wide, 300 feet long and with a 100-foot tall ceiling. A pair of small balconies were at each end and the far wall had an 80 foot high by 80 foot wide shimmering purplish portal of some sort. This enormous room was bare except for a small podium with a book upon it. It seemed like an audience chamber of some sort.

## Reading is Fundamentally Wrong

Our cleric Frank and the paladin Henri walked down the stairs to the book. From the platform, we all watched.

From my vantage point on the balcony platform, I could see the pair examine the book and then flip a page or two. That's when Frank started to tear out the pages. Henri called up an ethereal horse.

*Frank (left) tears out pages from the book while the paladin Henri conjures up his ethereal horse.*



The purplish portal began to waver amidst tremors in the room.

That's when Frank swung the mace to hit the book. In a flash of light, the book disintegrated.

The purplish portal wavered anew.

I looked at Hammer. Hammer looked at me. We both stepped back inside the stairwell. Yet Frank and Henri kept up a running commentary about dragonmen shapes swirling into view on the other side of the portal.

Frank strode up to one of the ends of the portal and swung his mace. Lightning flashed on the portal as the purple haze twisted and cracked. Frank swung again. The cracking extended across the entire face. He hit a third time and the veil of the portal shattered into a billion shards.

From the depth beyond the portal, we heard five roars. A quartet of dragonmen raced out of the portal and Henri charged them.

That's when Teamot emerged from her prison. Her golden body ended in five different-colored heads: Blue, Black, Red, White, and Green. She was not the first of dragons for nothing. "Who dares free me from my prison?" the five heads said in unison.

"I do," Frank replied.

"Then I grant thee a boon."

"Help us fight Ooooozy the Odiferous."

She contemplated the request.

I thought it was a fair request.

Alas, she perceived that Frank was hoping she and Ooooozy would exterminate each other. "I can see in your heart that you will fight me."

I cannot say which happened first: she released five breaths of destruction or Henri charged her. Whichever it was, the battle was on.

## What a Drag It Is Getting Bold

That's when we noticed a figure upon one of the end balconies. Mages wiser than me identified him as Ooooozy. Guess he was here for a dinner and a show. I figured this canny evil wizard wasn't actually there, but was merely some sort of projection.

I drew one magic arrow and let fly.

Imagine my surprise when the arrow hit and stuck.

Being of keen eye, I saw him glare in my direction. Uh oh.

I sputtered, "He's still there! I thought he'd wink out!"

Hammer muttered, "That's what I thought, too."

I shafted him again and then again. And then I retreated up the stairway out of sight.

The fireball came out of nowhere, but to little avail. I had chromatic protection. It did singe the top of my head a bit, but nothing worse than a bit of sunburn.

Well, this was a right merry kettle of pirahnas! Instead of the dragon fighting Ooooozy, she was fighting us. And instead of Ooooozy's avatar disappearing, he's actually there.

Wait! He's actually on the balcony! We flushed him out! All our efforts have finally made him crawl out of his hole to confront us. Then again, he only expected to watch the show, not be part of it.

## Into the Breach

Frank ignored Teamot and used his mace to pound the portal again and again. The rest of the team swarmed Teamot, who gave as good as she got. I made sure I served as the artillery, ducking in and out of the stairway to shoot at the Queen of Dragons.

*Too close for comfort. Tazan (right) leans out of the stairway to puncture Teamot anew while Cristoff (left) tosses spells.*

It didn't take long -- I filled her with so many arrows, she was Queen of the Porcupines. She fell and we added another dragon to our long-running tally.

Scurg and Henri busied with chopping up the dragonmen. I yelled to Cristoff to lop off one of the heads -- just in case the beastie would be revived.

Sure enough, a purple pulse surged out of the portal and Teamot staggered to her feet, ready once more to do battle. Cristoff hung on to the scales for dear life, but the five-headed beastie grabbed and flung him into the portal and he was gone from sight. Frank pounded on the portal with his mace. We all redoubled our efforts.

She dealt damage, but took even more. Scurg's and Henri's smites scored deep wounds. After a moment Cristoff ran out of the portal, a wild look in his eye. Maybe it was something he saw on the other side.

A Balrog stormed out of the portal, but Balien intercepted and wove his blade in intricate patterns, slicing and dicing the monster.

Then Teamot opened up a maw and swallowed Scurg. Oh, he was still alive and if he made it past her teeth, might live long enough to do internal damage, depending on which head swallowed him. Another head breathed fire on Frank and Henri. Cristoff was battered to death. He lay like a lump on the floor.

I bent my bow multiple times and could see the damage from multiple attacks was starting to wear her down.

Then Frank did just enough damage to close the portal in a poof of purple smoke. Balien put the fatal stroke into Teamot and she fell once more to the ground. Scurg crawled out the gullet.



## What About Ooooozy?

Oh, he flung spell after spell: Firestorm, Finger of Death, Forcewall, and so on. The damage accumulated among the A-Team.

Well, except for me. I was smart enough to understand that in the middle of a wizard war, us mortals need to stand clear. Us archers needed to keep pumping arrows into the dragon -- by my count 661 scales were ripped from her body by my bow work.

Now my attention turned to Ooooozy. I will swear under oath that 216 pieces of the evil wizard were spun away from his body. I suppose he didn't consider me much of a threat. He concentrated on the more magical members of the A-Team. Balien was hit with some spell that aged him two years. A couple spells were counter-acted, including a force cage that would have sealed the stairway and me on the other side.

Frank ran to Cristoff's side. With a shimmer, he cast a Revivify spell that brought Cristoff back to the land of the living. Cristoff didn't waste any time. He called upon his wish spell for super healing for all of the A-Team. That worked wonders. It returned all of us to excellent, pristine health. While I didn't have much need, others in our party did. That was a big help.

That's when Ooooozy cast Time Stop -- freezing us all in place. Oh, we were still conscious, but we watched him perform multiple healing actions. I guess two can play the same game.

Then he cast some sort of anti-magic bubble around him. Magical weapons became ordinary. Spells at the sixth level of concentration and below automatically failed. This was serious.

Balien asserted that we were almost entirely out of spells, but he had one last escape ploy if we could all gather close enough. I raced down off the balcony platform towards the group. We congregated at the dragon's corpse and Balien cast Teleport.

We materialized in Sheffield.

## We Toasted to Our Success

Upon further research, that big portal was an old portal that bound two worlds together, bringing evil dragons into our realm. Its destruction was a singular achievement for Frank. The killing of Teamot prevented Ooooozy from uniting all the evil dragons into the worst Rat Pack since Vegas and Brat Pack since St. Elmo.

*With Teamot vanquished, Frank (lower left) pounds the portal, Henri charges the Balrog, and Balien deals with the last of the dragonmen.*



Ooooozy escaped, but he revealed a couple interesting spells from his bag of tricks. Not to mention his ability to spit acid like a deranged cobra. Another interesting aspect of his personality.

No worries. We had more dragon heads to mount in our headquarters and had flushed him from his spiderhole. We'll do better in the next showdown.

*Getting ready...*



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## Books I've Read

**The Tudor Arte of Warre Volume 3: Retinue to Regiment 22.** by Jonathan Davies. Softcover (7.1x9.8 inches). 364 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Conduct of War in the Reign of Elizabeth I*

Subtitle: *1558-1603: The Elizabethan Army*

This extensive look at Elizabeth I's English Army in the last half of the 1500s. Command and Control lead off, followed by Training, Tactics, Recruitment, Provision, Weaponry, Armor, Equipment, and the status of the army within Elizabethan society. The three major arms of infantry, artillery, and cavalry.

I came away with the impression that Elizabeth I was incredibly parsimonious and that translated into soldier poverty and extensive corruption. Desertion was a problem and companies were generally understrength, even after combining multiple companies into one.

One interesting point was the pikes blocks were supposed to 10 ranks deep, with three feet between files and six feet between ranks in "Order" and half the distance in "Close Order" (p103). The idea was that the first five ranks were to charge and the second five ranks were to keep the "first foremost ranks from retiring" (p101).

Recruitment was often from "the press" (roving officials impressing/conscripting men into service) and sometimes from jails.

Firearms were devastating within 50m (5 hits of 5 shots evaluation), lethal at 80m (3 hits of 5 shots), and decreasing in accuracy from that point on. Technically, maximum range was 900m, but anything over 550 was unlikely to penetrate (p296).

Typos: "needed to be pay" (p150) should be "paid"; "contacts not being properly fulfilled" (p193) should be "contracts"; and "would ave" (p199) should be "have".

The book contains 53 black and white period woodcuts, 21 black and white photos, eight black and white photos, and eight color photos of Tudor re-enactors.

This is a marvelous addition to the *Tudor Warre* volumes and the *From Retinue to Regiment* series. Well done. Enjoyed it.

**The Bitter End.** by Antonio Munoz. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 274 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *Final Battles of the Eastern Front in World War II*

This quick operational look at the last year of WWII on the Eastern Front offers overviews of significant battles and sieges. The text is peppered with German OOBs, which is a marvelous reference for those seeking to create tabletop scenarios. The Berlin OOBs have actual numbers of troops associated with units, but not the earlier ones -- although the text often cites numerical details.

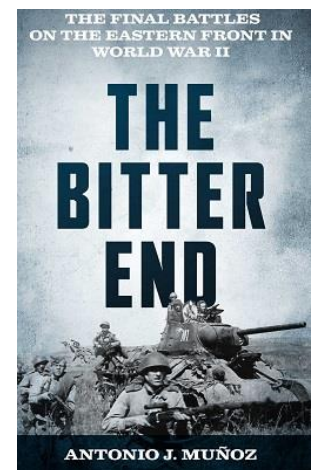
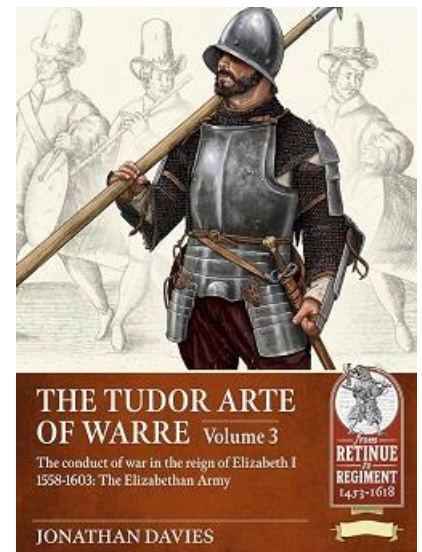
This also contains a cornucopia of maps, especially German period maps, which make up about half the total number of maps and is a good thing. And you know how much I like to follow a battle or campaign using a map.

On the down side, it's about a 50-50 chance of the period maps being too light and blurry to read. It's a good thing significant towns are often labeled with overprinting. I believe these period maps come from bound volumes and might have been tricky to photograph. I seem to recall that Osprey's *Barbarossa 1941* semi-reprint of the 1941 maps had some curvature problems, but were readable. So, some squinting may be necessary to discern terrain. The other maps are perfectly clear, if lacking the same level of detail.

One possible non-fatal typo: "Stephen B. Cole," founder of *Jagdpanther Magazine*, I believe is really Stephen V. Cole. He is better known for Star Fleet Battles with a secondary nod to co-founding Task Force Games, publisher of *StarFire*. Somewhere in my attic, I have a couple issues of *Jagdpanther* and wrote a couple articles for it back in the 1970s. *StarFire* I have in my library.

The book contains 66 black and white period maps, 16 black and white photos, two black and white visual TO&Es, and 15 black and white vehicle silhouettes.

The ebb and flow of forces, combined with analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of positions and maneuvers, offers a marvelous encapsulation of the relentless tide of the Soviet Army at the height of its prowess. It certainly encourages more than a few tabletop scenarios. Well done.



Enjoyed it.

**Queen Victoria's Colonial Troops 1837-1901.** by Gabriele Esposito. Hardback (7.0x10.0 inches). 230 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Organization, Uniforms & Equipment*

I'm not sure how many of these in-depth looks at the Organization, Uniforms & Equipment of various armies that Esposito has written, but the unit examinations remain the same high quality in this volume. Some of the illustrations are a little less attractive than others, but all the color details you need to paint up the various units of Queen Victoria's armies are clear.

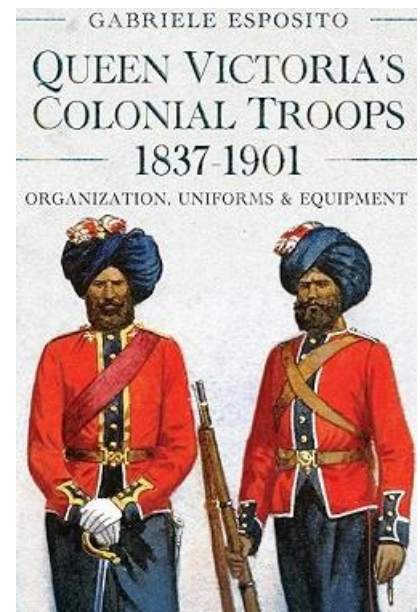
At one point, 426 battalions of the Canadian Seditary Militia (p32) were raised in 1840, but these were more paper exercises in conscription than actual unit. The battalions only served for a day per year. At least one unit was a bit of a surprise: The Sarawak Rangers (p187) recruited in Borneo do not match the red-clad British line.

The US Fenians (including former ACW Irish Brigade soldiers) invaded Canada twice, in 1866 and 1870 (p37) to pressure Britain to spin off Ireland as a separate country. They didn't do much and both invasions were repulsed by Canadian militia.

The book contains 203 color infantry and artillery uniform illustrations, 49 color cavalry uniform illustrations, and seven black and white illustrations. A lot of Osprey booklets are listed in the bibliography.

The text covers units' creation, TO&E, merging, disbanding, and so on. As you might expect, it does get a bit repetitious when reading cover to cover, but the information within is golden.

Enjoyed it.



**Great Battles of the Punic Wars: Rome Versus Carthage.** by Philip Matyszak. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 176 pages. 2025.

While Hannibal and the Second Punic War receive the bulk of the coverage, and rightly so, the First and Third Punic Wars are also covered. Skirmishes and minor battles are not covered, but 28 major battles receive good overviews.

A quick history of Rome and Carthage lays out the spheres that each honored in the early days with the dividing line generally between Sicily and the toe of Italy. Alas, an industrious tribe of pirates at Messene (Messina) kept raiding the Romans. The Carthaginians ignored the incursions, so Rome invaded Sicily. So began the events that culminated in the First Punic War. Overviews of land battles in Sicily and Africa plus the naval battles around Sicily, are covered.

As for the second, with the dividing line set at the Ebro River roughly where modern-day Spain and France meet, Hannibal's siege of Saguntum on the Carthaginian side of the line prompted the Saguntines to ask Rome for help, who responded and so the Second Punic War started. Overviews of battles in France, Italy, and Africa as well as naval battles are covered.

When the Roman ally Numidians grabbed parts of Carthage and Rome ignored Carthaginian complaints, the Carthaginians raised an army and attacked the Numidians. Rome needed only half an excuse and the Third Punic War ignited.

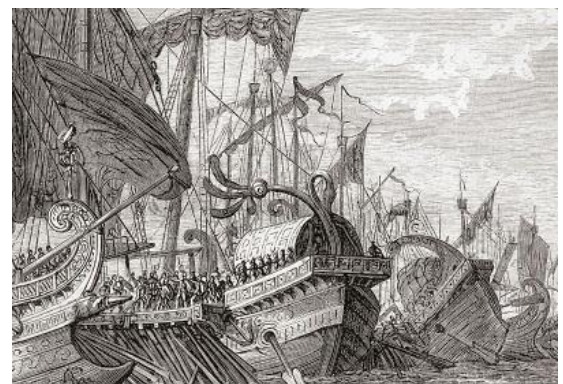
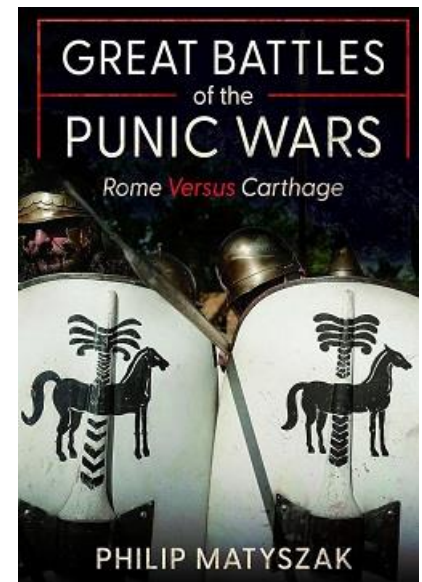
The overviews are written well enough although this book is more an introductory volume than a definitive history. The larger of the major battles receive three rudimentary "maps" of the phases of the battle. Well, better than nothing, but far below anything you need for tabletop scenarios.

One typo: missing period at the end of the sentence (p115).

The book contains one rudimentary map of the Mediterranean Sea and 36 rudimentary battle maps. No photos.

It's a nice overview to get folks interested in the Punic Wars.

Enjoyed it.



**Tragedy & Revenge.** by Steve R. Dunn. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 320 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Battles of Coronel & the Falklands 1914*

The German East Asiatic Squadron gave the British the slip in China thanks to a British error in judgment that sent the Royal Navy to Hong Kong instead of blockading Tsingtao. After crossing the Pacific, it ran into a British force of antiquated warships at the Battle of Coronel and sent two to the bottom and leaving the others damaged.

The Germans swung around into the Atlantic and intended to raid the Falkland Islands. Faulty intelligence failed to disclose British battlecruisers in port. Here a lapse in German judgment sent the Squadron fleeing instead of bombarding the British ships in port. Only one German ship escaped.

It's all well explained, including the reason why Adm. Craddock decided to engage a superior German force at Coronel and the thought processes behind Adm. Speer's decision to flee at the Falklands. Better yet, the action and reaction of crews during the battles receive admirable detail.

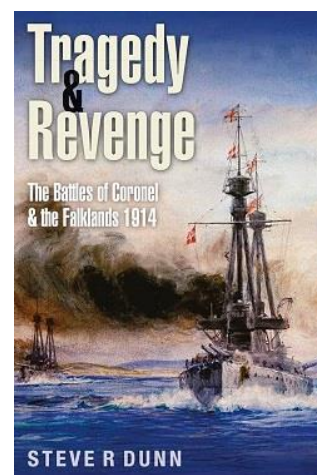
Besides the tabletop scenarios of the two battles, a scenario pitting Armed Merchant Ships -- the German Cap Trafalgar and the British Carmania (p70) -- offer something new in a one ship on one ship battle. A what-if scenario would pit the British blockading force at Tsingtao against a German effort to run the blockade.

The third section offers a look at the various memorials regarding the two main battles, including monuments, plaques, statues, bas reliefs, and ship names.

The book contains 123 black and white photos, 16 black and white illustrations, and three black and white maps.

Compared to Jutland, the two battles are small, but no less important at the outbreak of the war and control of the sea.

Enjoyed it.



**Fallschirmjager in the Defense of the Oder 1945.** by Eduardo Manuel and Gil Martinez. Softcover (7.1x9.8 inches). 131 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Schwedt, Zehden, Eberswalde, Seelow, Berlin*

The book covers the SS Fallschirmjager Battalion 600 and the 9th Fallschirmjager Division and their various defense battles against the Soviets towards the end of WWII. Attempted breakouts from Berlin are also covered.

The subtitle notes the battles and each can be adapted to the tabletop. The maps are light on the terrain, and sometimes lack a scale, although the text explains the defensive lines.

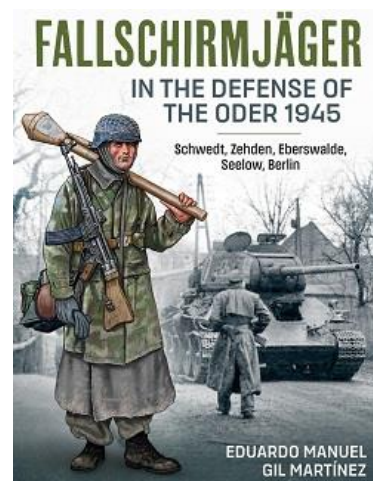
Interesting that SS Fallschirmjager Battalion 600 was led for a time by special operations genius Skorzeny in a pure defense role. The 9th Fallschirmjager Division sent troops to Breslau, so was never really a whole division although it functioned like a regular infantry division.

Both units showcased the Soviet abundance versus the German shortages at that point in the war. How balanced a scenario could be in such circumstances is questionable, but a clever GM may focus on part of a battle where attack and counter-attack generated a fluid combat in a small part of the larger battle.

The book contains 99 black and white photos, 11 black and white maps, one black and white illustration, and three color maps.

It's a nice little unit history.

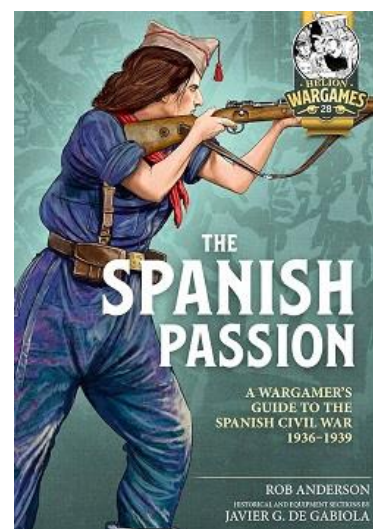
Enjoyed it.



**The Spanish Passion: Helion Wargames 28.** by Rob Anderson and Javier G. De Gabiola. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 159 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *A Wargamer's Guide to the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939*

As with the other volumes in the series, this book starts with a chronology before offering an overview of the war. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, you'll learn about the various organizations that fielded political power as well as contingents of troops. It's not easy to keep them the multitude of them straight, but De Gabiola covers units, uniforms, weaponry, equipment, and their battles in 115



pages.

The next 10 pages are exceptionally well-done full-page color uniform illustrations. After that comes a step-by-step painting guide to infantry miniatures, six scenarios, manufacturer's guide, and a rather extensive bibliography.

On the plus side, the history covers the major campaigns and battles followed by a pretty extensive OOB that includes each warship and aircraft. Most but not all entries offer some sort of unit organization, although it's a bit generic at times. I suspect actual organization, including understrength units suffering combat losses and desertions, was just as loose. The scenarios provide backgrounds, OOBs, and a color map and range from skirmish to battle size.

On the minus side, sometimes the history text contains odd phrasings. For example, "served a menu made of eggs" (p13) is the Spanish equivalent of calling someone a coward, which probably sounds better in the original Spanish than in an English translation. I'm not sure if it was a verbal dressdown at the review or an actual lunch entree. The latter would certainly be more dramatic.

The book contains 60 black and white photos, five black and white maps, 10 color uniform illustrations, 54 color photos of miniatures, and six color scenario maps.

It's a nice place to start a journey into learning about the SCW and firing up a few scenarios.

Enjoyed it.

**F-35 Lightning II: FlightCraft 33.** by Ben Skipper. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

As you would expect from a *FlightCraft* volume, technical explanations about the F-35 Lightning II aircraft abound, with extensive design and development work as well as the competition leading up to the decision to award Lockheed the actual contract. Variants and export models are included. To an aerospace engineer, the streamlined explanations of the concepts, systems, and equipment will likely cause them to roll their eyes. To the aerospace-ignorant like myself, it helps to understand the design, although I admit to skipping around whenever my eyes rolled into the back of my head.

The modeling portion provides a few examples of completed 1/48 and 1/32 scale models. This is not a how-to book, although some techniques are mentioned. Of interest to the modeler and the wargamer are the 24 color camouflage illustrations of the F-35 -- mostly in a dark gray, but with different markings and insignia.

The book contains three black and white photos, 123 color photos, three black and white illustrations, two color illustrations, 24 color camouflage illustrations, and 111 color photos of models, kits, and box covers.

Ultramodern aircraft enthusiasts will likely already have this on their book list. A thought struck me: If you give this to teenagers and they absorb it all, you've got aerospace engineers in the making. If you give this to teenagers and their heads explode, you have book reviewers in the making.

Enjoyed it.

**Leros and the Aegean: Images of War.** by Anthony Rogers. Softcover (6.8x9.7 inches). 160 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *September - November 1943*

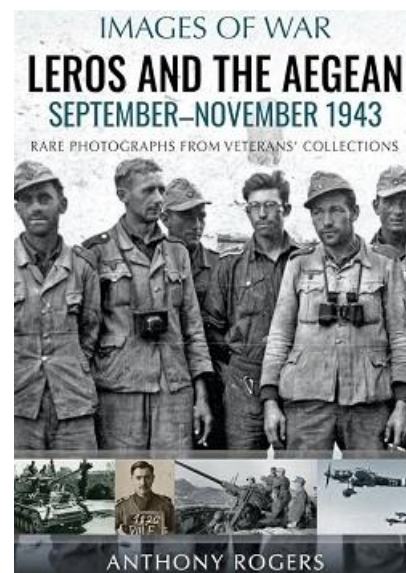
When Italy surrendered in WWII, the Germans quickly moved to take over Italian-held areas, including some of the Aegean Sea islands. For the most part, they were successful, although the British had grabbed a few islands, including Leros and Kos, which the Germans had to invade to capture.

In general, German units in the Aegean Sea were left to themselves, surrendering to the British and Greeks only after Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945. The battle of Leros would make a good small-scale scenario.

The book contains 222 black and white photos and one black and white illustration -- although you'll need other references for unit strengths and specific terrain.

The photos, besides showcasing uniforms and equipment, highlight the rocky nature of the islands. If you are looking to put WWII Greek Island photos with maps, here's a fine place to start.

Enjoyed it.



**The Fleet That Fought Itself.** by Leonard R. Heinz. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 350 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Spanish Navy and the Civil War 1936-39*

The Spanish Civil War (SCW) saw the Navy divide: crew mostly backed the Republicans and officers generally backed the Nationalists. With the split and the various mutinies, the fleet divided. The Republicans had the advantage, although lacking in command. The Nationalists succeeded in grabbing important naval bases with drydock facilities -- indeed, even completing warships as the civil war went on.

Each side mostly stuck to trade protection and interdiction, but every so often, sea battles, including convoy interceptions, occurred that would make for good tabletop scenarios. In general, the Republicans were stronger in the Mediterranean Sea and the Nationalists in the Atlantic Ocean, but as the British were neutral, passing through the Strait of Gibraltar was often accomplished by both sides.

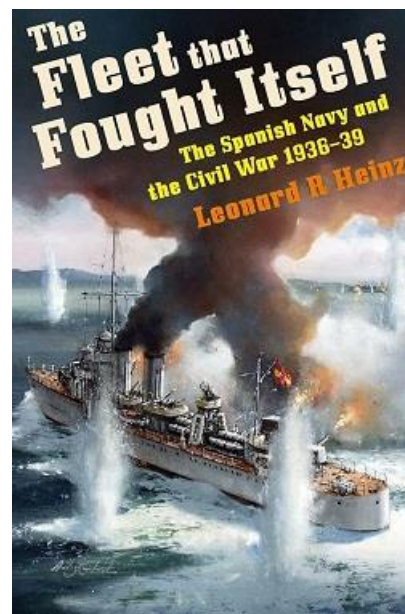
Republican ships often opted for night mission and the Nationalists day missions, in part due to growing air strength. Intelligence was so-so for both sides and air recon was often ineffective. Even when spies told of cargo ships leaving Italy or the Black Sea, interception proved difficult without radar -- especially at night.

The examination of naval policy, strategy, and operations offers considerable details about how each side functioned and the impact of foreign escorts and interventions. The Appendix provides specifications on the ships named in the text.

The book contains 27 black and white photos, three black and white illustrations, and six black and white maps.

While not the most scintillating prose, the coverage of all things SCW is impressive and fills in the naval details often lacking in books about the SCW.

Enjoyed it.



**The Philippine Insurrection 1899-1902.** by Dale Thomas. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 144 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The Journal and Letters of Quartermaster Fred Tuttle US Navy*

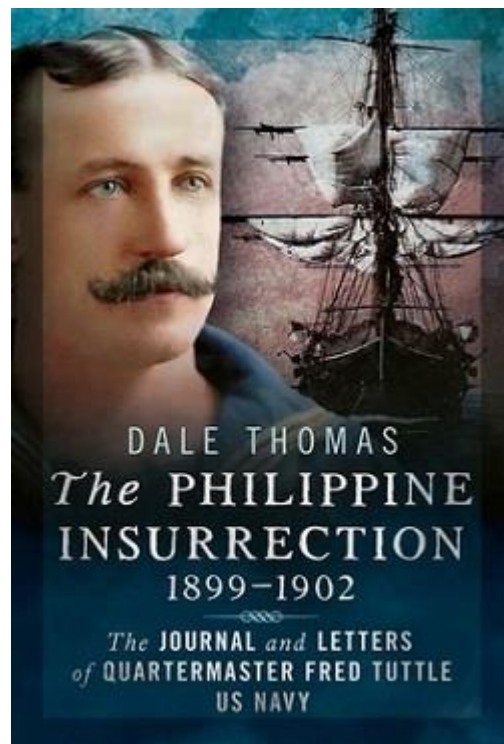
Once Spain surrendered and ended the Spanish-American War, the US found itself owning the Philippines. At the time, a debate over whether or not to keep it raged in Congress. Indeed, the "Republican Speaker of the House Thomas Reed resigned to protest the annexation." That one sentence was probably the most stunning of the entire book. Imagine the fortitude back then to actually resign over annexing the Philippines right after annexing Hawaii.

Anyway, the guerrilla war soon turned against the Americans. Tuttle was part of a US Navy and US Army force sent there to quell the rebellion. This journal of his recounts his experiences as well as related anecdotes of the suppression of the Filipinos. It mixes the mundane with the memorable. Booby traps, shelling natives, skirmishes with the 'bolo men,' and exchanging salutes with other ships occupy day-by-day entries.

A couple typos: "hasten Spain's surrendered" (p10) needs the "ed" deleted, and, "coin sliver" (p134) should be "silver."

The book contains 135 black and white photos, which should help with uniforms and terrain, four black and white illustrations, and 19 black and white political cartoons.

This is excellent primary source material for a little known guerrilla war in turn of the 20th century Philippines. Enjoyed it.



**Secret Warriors: British Submarines in the Cold War.** by Paul Brown. Hardback (horizontal: 9.7x12.8 inches). 272 pages. 2026.

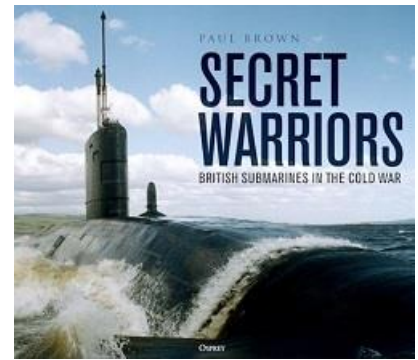
It has the look of a photo book, and it contains many, but the text delves into the design, development, and deployment of UK submarines during the Cold War. Classes include: S, T, U, A, Porpoise, Oberon, Valiant, Resolution, Swiftsure, Trafalgar, and Upholder. Also included: midget subs and HTP subs which were adapted from U-boats (U-1407 in specific) and keel up subs that used variants of the German technology.

Design and development examine systems and equipment in some detail for each class. Deployment mostly centers around "firsts" and "lasts." Firsts are subs that were first to do something, like crack through the ice cap or run underwater from point A to B. Lasts are a wide variety of accidents, from running aground and being hit by surface ships to explosions that lost the sub.

Submarine enthusiasts will enjoy the ins and outs of each Class' system descriptions, while those with a less technical interest will enjoy the various deployments -- although it sure seems like a lot of accidents and disasters over the course of the book.

The book contains 132 black and white photos, 39 color photos, three color maps, three color illustrations, and one black and white cartoon.

This was far more extensive than expected, and pleasantly so. Enjoyed it.



**Final Assault.** by Stephen Ames Berry. Paperback (4.2x6.7 inches). 314 pages. 1988.

This discount book is actually the third book in a trilogy, so I was a bit lost. It seems a rift opened in space and an AI race invaded the galaxy and prepared to conquer human-occupied space. Yet the humans had a fleet of mindslayer ships they needed to recall to fight the millions of AI battleglobes and even larger number of AI supporting ships.

As befitting a third book, it's a race against time as the main heroes hasten to unlock the secrets of the mindslayer fleet before the battleglobes obliterate human HQ. The human have a few tricks to play in their last-ditch defense of the homeworld.

Decent action, although jumping to the end robbed me of understanding the arc of relationships between the characters. For example, the heir to the human Empire is an engineer on a warship and prefers to lay low instead of inspiring the troops. My loss as I had not followed him since I had not read the first two books.

Enjoyed it.



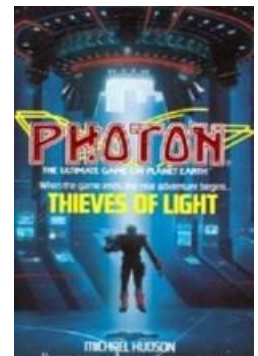
**Photon: Thieves of Light.** by Michael Hudson. Paperback (4.2x6.8 inches). 215 pages. 1987.

Back in the 1980s, a movie called The Last Starfighter came out that featured a teenager who scored the highest total on a video game machine -- and was teleported to a Federation-style facility to train as Earth's representative in the war against the enemy evil empire. Photon uses LaserTag instead of a videogame, but the idea is the same -- victorious teenager self-named Bhodi is whisked away to the stars to join the battle against the evil Arrian dark side.

All the tropes are there: samurai-like alien mentor, swashbuckling alien mentor, a "Q"-like gadget maker who explains the way of things to our hero Bhodi, training sequences that would include a music montage if made into a movie, and his first mission. All that's missing is an alien babe.

It's all quite breezy, innocuous, and readable.

Enjoyed it.

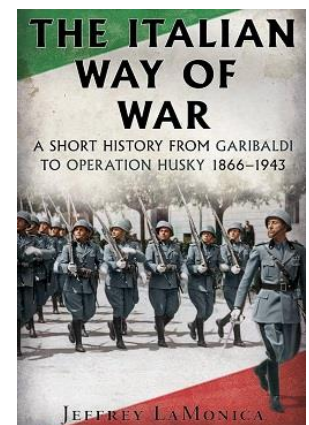


**The Italian Way of War.** by Jeffrey LaMonica. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 176 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *A Short History from Garibaldi to Operation Husky 1866-1943*

Despite the subtitle, the bulk of the book covers WWII (p56+). Indeed, Garibaldi barely receives a mention (p17-18) and minimal Italian military history prior to WWI (p18-26).

However, coverage of WWI, interwar, and WWII offer a succinct overview of Italian military fortes and foibles. In WWI, after the disaster of Caporetto, Italy opened up a number of specialty schools, including artillery, scouting, communication, and mortars,



to improve performance. It even created Arditi -- special assault troops not unlike German stormtroopers trained to infiltrate enemy lines, with Bersaglieri follow-up troops to secure gains and mop up bypassed enemy troops (p40).

Interwar Italian military adventures in Libya, Ethiopia, Spain, and Albania receive reasonable overviews of the various Italian shortcomings. Italy entered WWII undermanned, under-industrialized, and under-equipped. The country had to import 75% of its coal, 85% of its iron, and 100% of its petroleum (p94) -- the latter point of some mirth considering how much oil was later discovered in Libya. The military result proved the fragility of the Army, although analysis showed flashes of brilliance despite the material and leadership handicaps.

One odd point: LaMonica refers to the 132nd and 133rd Divisions in North Africa. Who are those? Not being an OOB grognard, I had to look them up on the web. Ah. They were the far more familiar Ariete and Littorio divisions.

A couple style points: Oftentimes, a sentence begins with a written-out number followed by the number. For example, "Five thousand 5,000..." (p18). While correct to write out numbers at the start of a sentence, the number is unnecessary. You'll find it elsewhere in the text (p31, 34, 41, etc). One non-fatal typo: "refit old" (p47) has an extra space.



The book contains 17 black and white photos, 11 black and white illustrations, and three black and white maps.

As the author is a professor, I can't help wondering if this is some sort of extension of a course syllabus. Nothing wrong with a broad overview to remind you of salient Italian military events from 1866 to 1943. I figure it's a good introductory text offering a more positive view of Italian campaigns.

Enjoyed it.

**Armies of the Byzantine Empire 395-1204.** by Gabriele Esposito. Hardback (7.0x10.0 inches). 176 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Organization, Weapons & Equipment*

Subtitle: *Armies of the Past*

The history of the Byzantine Empire conjures up battles against Eastern horse and a waystation for crusaders on the way to the Middle East. You also might note wars of reconquest against Germanic tribes mostly in North Africa and Italy, plus Balkan wars against Magyras, Bulgars, Serbians, and Rus. That doesn't even begin to count the undercurrent of internecine warfare that runs through the centuries as one usurper after another vied to take the throne.

With almost a millennia of warfare, changes occurred in organization, weapons, equipment -- all ably explained within these pages. For example, the organization of the military changed as the Empire contracted and barbarian invasions devastated the land. Armor and clothing changed as the years passed. You'll have to wrap your head around the multitude of Greek names for units and items.

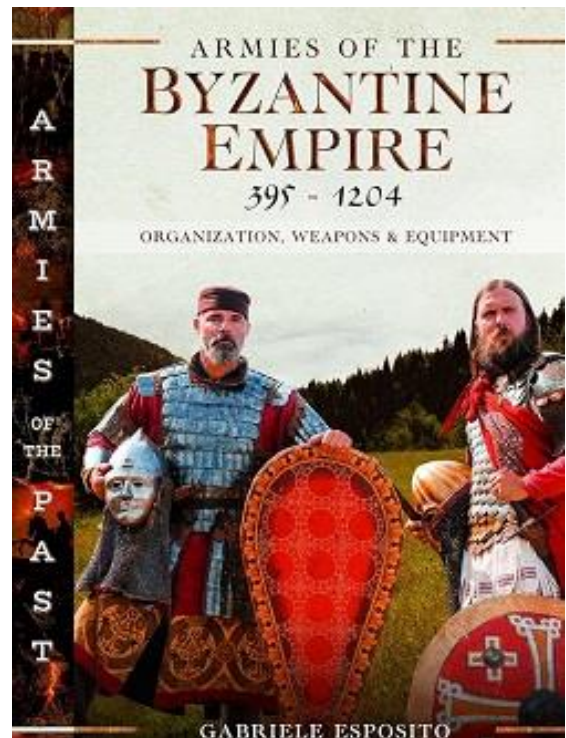
One typo: "Realizing understood that the Crusaders..." (p102) should have "understood" deleted.

Of import, the book contains 90 color photos of re-enactors donning the arms and armor of various Byzantine units.

Miniatures painters and modelers will have a field day. Fifteen re-enactor groups contributed to the authenticity of the troops and contact info is in an appendix should you become inspired to join one. It's quite the effective pairing.

This volume offers another wonderful addition to the series and Byzantine Empire enthusiasts a touchstone reference book.

Enjoyed it.



**The Longest Campaign.** by Brian E. Walter. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 332 pages. 2026 reprint of 2020 book.

Subtitle: *Britain's Maritime Struggle in the Atlantic and Northwest Europe 1939-1945*

The subtitle says it all -- a nice one-volume encapsulation of the naval battle in the Atlantic, primarily through British eyes.

As you might expect, much of the text revolves around the U-boat war with the occasional surface battle and mine attacks. From the desperate efforts to bring in supplies to the numerical and technological advances that brought about a balance to the virtual elimination of the U-boats, the book offer excellent analysis of why certain events became important within the wider context of the war.

The early battle over Norway, raid on Dieppe, and D-Day operations receive ample coverage. Four indexes cover warships, U-boats, convoys, and operations -- a nice touch to find something.

The book contains 29 black and white photos, three black and white maps, and numerous tables.

It's a pleasant read through the naval war in the Atlantic between the Germans and the British.

Enjoyed it.

**Strategies of Ukrainian War.** by Vladimir Shirogorov. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 406 pages. 2025

Subtitle: *Russia, Poland and the Ottomans, Conflict Over Hegemony 1500-1800*

I got to page 34 and stopped reading at the following paragraph:

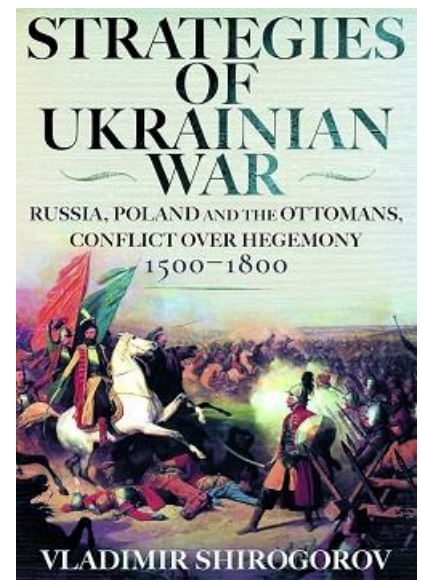
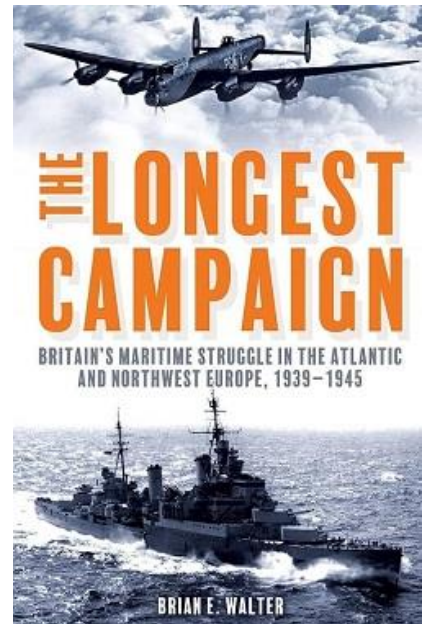
"Nothing existed in that realm before the establishment of the Muscovite Ukraine's fortress towns. Nobody survived there as it was a sterile space vacuum-cleaned by the nomadic bloodsucking of population. The Wild Field strategy laid it out to the Muscovite Ukraine as a *tabula rosa*, a barren terrain where the new social structures, administrative regimes and military order might have been introduced, implemented or rejected without any restriction. It was an experiment in its purest form to implant military-social structures. The *tabula rosa* social principle of the Wild Field strategy turned the Muscovite Ukraine into a dynamic society of ongoing experimentation characterized by the novel military-social structures which were generated onsite, invented by Muscovite rules or imported and implanted." (p34)

The entire prose is exactly the same mish-mosh of either: a horrible translation program, a horrible AI, or a horrible AI translation program.

The only hint that some human hand touched this is a possible typo: "desk-to-shore fire by the ships" (p28), which is likely "deck" not desk.

Whatever it was, Pen & Sword editors never read word one of the text -- and that is a disturbing thought. What would be a horrible disturbing thought is that Pen & Sword editors actually read the text and OK'd it.

Horrible.



**The Armed Forces of North Korea: Asia at War No. 58.** by Stijn Mitzer & Joost Oliemans. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 76 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Volume 2: The Korean People's Army Air and Anti-Air Force*

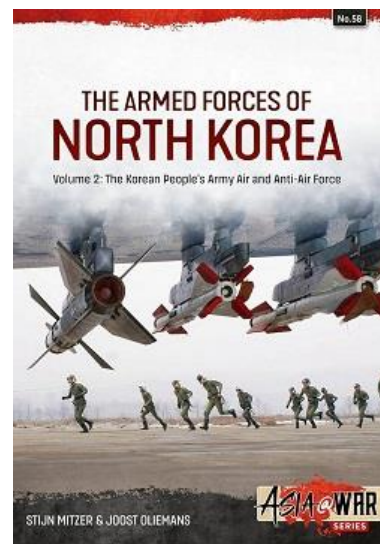
The series continues with the second volume (although Volume 1 was divided into two separate books) covering the current North Korean military's Air Force and AA force.

As with the other volumes, it's an overview. The aircraft, helicopters, drones, missiles, and guns receive a mix of operational deployment and technological analysis. Training, industrial production, and strategic objectives weave in and out of the prose and are all supplemented with a considerable number of photos and illustrations.

The book contains 10 black and white photos, 134 color photos, four color maps, 16 aircraft color camouflage profiles, four helicopter color camouflage profiles, and three drone color camouflage profiles.

It's a nice compilation of non-classified information about the North Korean air and AAA forces.

Enjoyed it.



**Weapons, Warriors & Battles of Ancient Greece & Rome.** by Fernando Quesada Sanz. Hardback (7.3x10.0 inches). 406 pages. 2025 reprint of a 2010 translation of a 2008 book.

I have a feeling this may have been a much larger form factor, for the type is tiny and the main text covers only 3.5 inches out of a 5.2-inch wide text layout -- the difference is a margin often used for small photos and captions. I understand the use of white space in formatting, but I will continue to argue that leaving a third of the book pages empty while shrinking type into visual abuse territory is no way to format a book.

As I squinted my way through the text, the bad news is that I couldn't read more than a chapter at a time. The good news is that each chapter is basically a self-contained unit.

And the book's contents deserve better formatting. This sweeping overview of the militaries of ancient Greece and Rome, including forays into mercenaries, navies, and gladiators, offers excellent analysis of the broad operation of phalanxes, legions, and specialty troops.

I especially enjoyed the section on 5th Century BCE mercenary pay in relation to day-to-day expenses and the cost of armor and weapons (p97). Hence, mercenaries earned three to six obols per day, while subsistence food was two obols per day. A simple tunic costs 10 obols while a full set of armor costs 300 obols.

The analysis of bow and sling missile weapons (p118-122) is also interesting. A regular bow had a range of 175-200m while a composite bow went out to 300m. To my surprise, a sling was in the range of 200-300m. This was lower in actual combat, but provides a good guideline for your tabletop.

And on it goes through the ages, weapon by weapon and troop type by troop type, offering analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of various forces as battles played out across the Mediterranean area.

One typo: the end of a chapter (p238) is cut off mid-sentence and its conclusion is erroneously placed at the beginning of the next chapter.

The book contains 10 black and white photos, 23 black and white illustrations, 146 color photos, 92 color illustrations, and 18 color maps.

The contents are informative and the illustrations well crafted. It's a shame the text is so squeezed when plenty of space is available to increase the font size. Get past or at least suffer the squinting and you'll find a wide-ranging book on the classical ancient period of warfare.

Enjoyed it.

