

WWII Commie Rescue: *Chain of Command 2*
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Allied Assault on Hitler's Channel Islands
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A Bloody Business: Convoy PQ 17
Devil's Fire Southern Cross: Oct 43-Feb 44
First World War in the Baltic Sea: Vol. 1
Revolts Against Rome: Rebellions Mutinies
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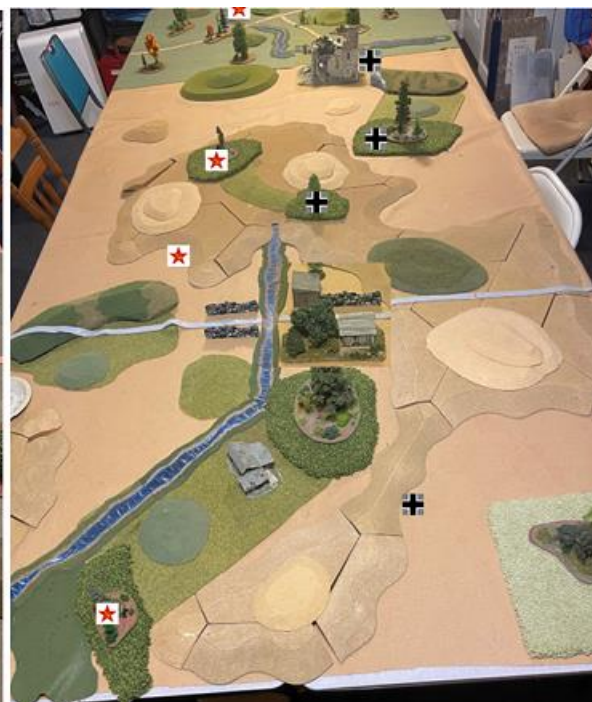
Chain of Command 2: At Start. L to R: Ed, John, GM Dan, Fred, Keith, and Mike.

WWII Commie Rescue: Chain of Command 2

by Russ Lockwood

With the second edition of *Chain of Command* (CoC) out, we decided it had been too long since our last CoC game and wanted to give the revised rules a spin. By random selection, me, Ed, and John were the Soviets while Keith and Mike were the Germans and Fred played Italians.

The battlefield (from both ends) with the JOP locations. Photos by Dan.



Ed was given the choice of which table edge we Soviets would defend. He picked the edge based on offensive potential. It seemed A-OK with John and me.

Each sides' goals were secret from the other side. Our Soviet goal was to secure one of the two roads off the German end of the battlefield to relieve a trapped Soviet force. We Soviets did not know the German goal, so we didn't worry about it.

Each of us commanded a platoon of three squads plus a MG, Mortar, or other support team or two. In addition, the common reserve contained additional squads, teams, and tanks. In our case, it was mainly the T-26, T-34/76, and T-

34/85 plus LMGs and Anti-Tank Rifles. In the German's case, it was a PzIV, STuG III, and Italian M11/39 plus flamethrower, Anti-Tank gun, and other teams. Dan's write-up below has the full OOB.

The Command Dice

If you are unfamiliar with *CoC*, each player rolls 5d6 to see what can be done in a turn. The result on each die determines what type of unit you can select to activate. A 1 is a team or either the gunner or driver of a vehicle. A 2 is a squad ("section" in the vernacular of the rules). A 3 is a NCO of a squad or inside a vehicle. A 4 is a senior leader like a Lieutenant. A 5 is no unit, but you get a small command chip and when you get six small chips, you trade them in for a big Command chip with special abilities. A 6 is a whiff...unless you get two 6s, in which case you get an extra turn immediately after ending the current one. More than two 6s end the turn.

As we find extra turns to be quite devastating, we use a house rule that if a player gets the extra turn, he rolls only 4d6 instead of 5. If he manages to roll an extra turn on those 4d6, he will get another extra turn, but only roll 3d6.

Activations

To simplify: An activation is either move, shoot, half move and half shoot, go Tactical (get better cover), or go on Overwatch. An NCO has two activation points (APs) and a Lieutenant has three APs. Each AP can activate one unit (team or squad) or reduce "Shock" from combat results. In addition, the Lieutenant can use his APs to call in a unit from the reserve. If the unit was a vehicle, it arrived anywhere on the friendly edge of the table. If infantry, it arrived at a JOP.

Firing is a number of dice per figure or team, depending on the weapon. The to-hit number depends on the quality of the firer -- we needed a 4, 5, or 6 to hit. Damage is based on what type of terrain (open, light cover, or heavy cover) the targeted unit is in.

Armored Piercing (AP) fire vs vehicle is 2d6 to see if a hit occurs, and then a number of d6s equal to the AP value (varies by gun or tank) are rolled looking for 5s and 6s. Then the targeted tank rolls a number of d6s equal to its armor value for saves. When hits exceed saves, damage charts are consulted with another 1d6 die roll.

There's much more to it than that, but that's the gist of the rules.

Deployment

Actual rules as written bring on Jump Off Points (JOPs) from the edge of the table and move until they come within a certain distance of an enemy JOP. We use a house rule that alternates placement of one JOP per side within 18 inches of the table edge. We find it quicker to start a game and approximates the location of JOPs had they been moved.

I deploy the Partisans and MMG by the JOP (red star) and fire at the Germans in the woods (top),



A player can use any of his side's JOPs to enter the board. Deployment of the entering unit is within 6 inches of the JOP and that ends its "movement." It can fire upon deployment.

We do vehicles slightly different. They enter on the edge of the table, not the JOP. I'm not sure if that's the way the rules are written, but it works for us.

Each side had four JOPs. We Soviets spread three pretty much across the table and hedged the fourth towards the right.

The Axis went first.

German Advance

The first thing we noticed was that the Axis ignored the entire wooded area on our left flank and didn't place a JOP there. Fred's Italians popped up and occupied a stone house (heavy cover) with a squad and a HMG team. Another squad filtered into the woods (light cover) to block the ford of a road leading to the house.

Fred's Italians occupy the house with a German HMG and line the stream at the ford.

Keith's German squad and accompanying MG team occupied woods in the center of the board. Mike's Panzergrenadier squads and LMG team popped over a ridge to occupy woods and advance. His mortar team hung back and set up to provide covering fire.

As there were no Soviet units on the board, there was no firing.

John's Soviets (left) advance to engage the Axis at the ford.

Soviet Advance

John on the left flank popped his squads into the woods all by his lonesome. Ed popped out a squad and advanced beyond the woods into open ground to engage the Panzergrenadiers.

As for me, I emerged into the center woods with a Partisan squad supported by a MMG team and a Lt. As you can fire when deploying on the table, I unleashed a storm of bullets on Keith's Germans in the woods. The two woods were exactly 12 inches apart, which is just within long range SMG fire, so SMG troops can add a couple d6s of firing. I rolled well enough to KIA a couple Germans and put lots of Shock onto the unit.

Digression: Shock and Morale

A word about the Shock results from firing. Each two shock on a firing unit reduces the number of firing dice by one. Now, a basic 10-man rifle squad (10d6) plus a MMG team (6d6) is going to toss 16d6. Losing a couple dice from shock isn't that big a deal. Losing a couple more to KIAs begins to hurt.

When the number of Shock equals or exceeds the number of surviving figures in the unit, the unit is Pinned. It's not entirely useless, but a leader better be around to start using activations to reduce the Shock. If Shock is twice figures, the unit Routs.

That's bad on two levels: the unit heads for the friendly table edge as fast as its feeties can take it, and, the player rolls on the Bad Things Happen chart. Each player has a certain morale level and things like Routed or Eliminated units, wounded and killed NCOs and Lts, and enemy capture of a JOP force a roll. This usually results in a loss of one or two morale points -- and most players start out with 7 or 8. When you get down to 4 or so, you start losing activation d6s. And if you can't activate, you become a sitting duck...and then likely a dead duck.



Do you remember that you can trade in six small command chips for one big Command chip? One of the uses of this big Command chip is to not roll one the Bad Things Happen chart. Very handy, that.

Back to the Battle

On our left, John steadily advanced, first to protect the road and second to advance a squad down the road to get off the German edge.

John advances his T-26 and two squads.

The Italians stayed put in their house. Most of the time, the HMG sprayed in my direction with limited effect, but as John's troops drew closer, the HMG switched focus.

Ultimately, we decided that John needed the T-26, which he swung to support his infantry. He decided to trade shots with the Italians with limited effect on both sides.

Meanwhile, an Italian M11/39 tank appeared on the edge and drove up to the top of a small knoll.

The STuG arrives.

Keith brought out the STuG and rumbled towards the center woods held by my Partisans and a Lt. It would take a while to reach a firing spot. In the meantime, besides firing the Partisans into the German-held woods with good effect, I brought out a regular squad that crested the plateau and also brought fire onto the German woods. The first German squad routed and the MG team was eliminated. Keith replaced them with another squad.

Two Russian squads on one German squad eliminate the Germans in the woods. The JOP beckons.

On the right, Mike was making progress against Ed's "wave attack" Soviets out in the open. Many a Soviet was gunned down, doing damage to the Germans, too, but not enough.

Mike brought his mortar into play and at one point managed to send a barrage into his own squad, killing one poor soldaten. The Panzer IV made an appearance, but Ed brought out the T-34/85. The PzIV kept plinking away at the T-34/85.

The Real Tank Duel

With a STuG and a M11/39 against me, I brought out the T-34/76. The STuG was bogged down in constricting terrain, but the M11/39 was in range. I deployed and shot. Easy-peasy, right?

Nope. I put two hits on the Italian tank. Fred rolled 3d6 for his armor and saved with two of the three and thus saved his tank from harm as well.

Then, he fired his 4d6 AP from his 37mm gun and got hits, of which I failed to save and one hit went through. A ping, but a -1 ping to me.

My shot. Three hits. Three M11/39 saves.



His shot, saved. My shots, two more hits and two more Italian saves. His shots added a Shock here and there.

So it went, activation after activation with my T-34/76 doing hits but the paper thin armor of the M11/39 making save after save. How could this Italian have the luck of the Irish?

Should I mention my Anti-Tank Rifle team that pumped shot after shot into the Italian tank that saved versus those hits as well? It's enough to make Stalin cry.

That M11/39 deserves to be an elite crew after this battle. The STuG never got into a firing position on my tank, although it shot HE in my Partisans with limited effect.

The M11/39 Advantage

The M11/39 had a 37mm gun in a hull sponson and a twin MG turret up top. They could target independently and his MG would target and ping my Partisans in the woods for Shock.

The T-34/76 has a main 76mm gun and a hull MG. The hull MG can only target infantry in the open. If a target is in cover, it can only suppress the target, giving it a -1 on each die for the hit.

My T-34/76 arrives (squint – it's under my camera) to duel with the M11/39 (opposite side of the table atop that knoll between the evergreen tree and Keith's hand). Photo by Dan.



So, a M11/39 shoots 4d6 for hit versus 6d6 for saves in AP fire. How that 37mm gun gets 4d6 is beyond me.

And then it can fire its MG for damage at infantry. My Anti-Tank Rifle team felt the wrath of Italian bullets and was first pinned and then obliterated. Down morale for that.

Now, Fred also brought out a 75mm AT gun and crew, which fired at the T-34/76 with no effect. That's more like it. Then the M11/39 did more damage. That is not like it.

Granted, some really clutch die rolling by Fred... Yep. Elite crew status for this M11/39.

Struggle All Across The Front

On our left, John successfully exited a squad, much as he hated to "lose" it, off the road on the German side. He fulfilled our victory condition.

His battle at the ford took a turn for the worse when Keith used a big Command chip to stage an ambush with his flamethrower team. He sprayed, the Soviet squad fried, and the German team went back into reserve (as ambush allows).

Some brave soldaten tried Molotov cocktails against the T-26, but did nothing. The T-26 decided to charge the wavering somewhat shot up Italian squad at the ford. It made it all the way to the house, but this overrun mechanism needs a lot more Shock on a targeted unit to be effective.

So, it seemed like a stalemate at the ford, which was fine with us Soviets. We didn't need the house, just the road.

In the center, the STuG was ineffective.

I had enough of its shelling and sent Private Ivan screaming out of the woods with a Molotov cocktail. He reached the STuG, but failed to dent it. Ivan screamed even louder running back to the safety of the woods.



I was able to Rout another squad and even advance a squad to capture part of the German woods. That is, until the German counter-attack came. The German flamethrower team made another appearance and wiped me out to a man, but proved brittle once my good shots took hold.

Nonetheless, Keith finally lost enough units to fail morale and retreat his remaining troops, including the STuG.

On the right, Ed's T-34/85 was Shocked so many times by the PzIV, the crew bailed out. Squads were gunned down in the open, including the reserve LMG team. Ed's morale dropped until he had none. The Soviet right flank was wide open.

Ed and his Russians advance to meet the Germans. Photo by Mike.

Right Flank

With German Keith gone in the center and Soviet Ed gone on the right, it was still an even-up game. Soviet John had completed our victory condition, but we didn't know the Axis victory condition. So we played on.

Here is where German Mike made a mistake, even after being told. He did not occupy the Soviet JOP. He turned towards the center, but forgot that any Soviet player could use any Soviet JOP. Thus, it remained an active Soviet JOP.

Ed's Russian troops reach the farmhouse while his MG deploys on the hill. Photo by Ed.

I had one squad still remaining. I rolled my 5d6. I needed a 2 or 3 to activate the squad, deploy it, and bring fire upon the unsuspecting Germans.

My 5d6 bounced on the table and I rolled a 1 and four 5s!

Oh, Rushtavovich! I got four small command chips which I added to my existing chips to gain one big Command chip. That would help shore up my morale, but Mike got away scott-free.

Mike, obviously lulled to complacency from nothing appearing from that JOP, moved his Lt to the top of a hill for better sight to call in the mortar. His Panzergrenadiers advanced, leaving other shot-up units behind.

My turn. Finally, a 3 for the activation of the squad's NCO and deployment from the JOP. My troops deployed. Half fired at the beat-up German squad and the other half fired at the all-by-himself Lt. Both were eliminated.

Down went Mike's morale, even as he tried to move the Panzergrenadiers into a firing position. My squad moved out and targeted a lagging team and overwhelmed them with fire. That was the end of Mike's morale. His troops withdrew.

Victory

As noted, John secured out victory condition by securing the road in the woods. The German victory condition was getting a squad off the Soviet edge of the board. With two commands retreated and the Italians going nowhere the entire game, unlikely, so the Italians withdrew voluntarily.

Soviet victory.

On the Axis side, I nominate the M11/39 to be elite. It survived every shell I fired at it.

On the Soviet side, I nominate the Partisans to be elite. It survived every attack while dealing out considerable damage.



John gets the Hero of the Soviet Union medal for completing our mission and keeping his force mostly intact while pinning the Axis to the house. Ed gets a medal posthumously for taking on Panzergrenadiers armed with MP44 assault rifles (three times the firepower of a rifle-equipped squad).

Mike gets the Learning award for learning something new about JOPs that he is unlikely to forget.

Thanks Dan for hosting, umpiring, and feeding us. Well done, all.

Lessons Learned: CoC

by Mike

I did hear pre-game that we could use any of our side's JOPs. I can't even claim I forgot. I simply assumed that having Ed's command cleared from the table meant I achieved my immediate objective. Obviously, I should have asked how to remove the Soviet JOP marker. Having Russ' smelly Commies jump up from the sewage system behind my unit is an experience that will stay with me. I hope.

Mike might make this into a poster to hang in his next CoC game. Photo and embellishment by Mike.



Also, I learned that if you fire your mortar five or six times, you can actually have the directional die point straight at yourself and roll "11" on 2D6.....twice!! Oh well. Friendly fire happens all the time.

Other Take-aways

The Unit Cards are very helpful, but I still clearly messed up the units. It helped a bit when I placed the Unit Cards immediately adjacent to their respective units, but that makes for a messy tabletop. My units will be organized "permanently" and identified by color coded bases, corresponding to the color codes on my Unit Cards to be printed.

Russ' squad pops out behind Mike's line.



I suspect I failed to consider the "shock" taken in a number of the early combats. If so, my apologies to Ed. I have just ordered a bunch of dial counters on Etsy. I hope placing one of these adjacent to the unit when a shock has occurred will do the trick.

I will have my "leader" figures (NCO, Senior, Superior) clearly color-coded and will use white rings to mark them when wounded. Depending on my ever-corroding memory chip is a fool's game.

Rules

I think TFL's rules have introduced a fresh new way to play historical miniature games. Of the WWII skirmish rules I have played, I like the CoC the best. Yes, there is a lot of "friction" and, as I demonstrated, if you fail to think, you are likely to get hurt.

Ed and I both found the experience of being denied the customary immediate and predictable response you have as a player in the typical I Go-You Go game rather painful. In reflecting on the mechanics, I concluded life isn't always fair....or predictable.

However, the result of two sixes when rolling five D6 dice is highly predictable (1/6 or 16.08% to be exact) and is expected to occur with some frequency in a CoC game. I have, sort of, concluded that I, as a player, simply have to consider this as a likely event and make my dispositions accordingly. The risk-reward trade off means different things to different players, but I think the CoC actually force us to think of our minis as "less expendable" than we, perhaps, do in most other rules. That is not a bad thing, but it will likely mean longer games.

An early overview of the game. L to R: Ed, Russ, John, Keith (standing), and Fred. Photo by Mike.

Note by Umpire Dan:

There are some ways to mitigate this with some foresight:

Overwatch has been seldom used in the last few games, but I use it at many of the convention games I've played in. It keeps the other side a little more "honest" when they know you could open fire during their move (whether it be a bonus phase or not). It depends if you have a squad or team available to use for Overwatch or whether you need them to fire on a target during your turn. Note that it works as a safeguard against an enemy double "6." When the Turn ends, all Overwatch and Tactical markers will come off.

Then there is the End of Turn when rolling three sixes. The likelihood of that is 3.22%. However, when you have six players roll their Command Dice 5,6,7,8 times in a game, it is bound to happen. So, the same conclusion as above.

Note by Ed:

Rolling two 6s for free turn was overall too much of a much when the extra turns went three times.

On the other hand, I welcomed the unpredictability the "extra turn" mechanic introduced, as it gave the field of battle a more "realistic" feel.

The other issue I think both Ed and I found "surprising" was the close combat (melee) occurring when any one figure is within 4 inches of any one figure of the opponent unit. There is a risk of the placement of your figures gets a bit "gamey," but then the formation and deployment of military units is hugely important in real life. I think that is just how it is. The random selection of killed figures is probably a good approach opposed to, say, removing those figures closest to the firing unit.

John's Soviets seal off the road to the Italian-held house. The T-26 grinds up the road in the woods. A squad moves off to secure the victory (bottom left corner). Photo by Dan.



Note by Umpire Dan:

Depends on the situation: If the target is in more than one cover category, you can choose to gun down the ones in the more vulnerable situation, but you can't kill more than there are in that situation -- but the Shock will still count. In that case, taking out the ones in the most vulnerable positions makes more sense than random. Otherwise, I prefer the random roll to see which figure gets removed as a "house rule."

My above comments on the rules are simply reactions to events in the game. I, obviously, need to read and understand the rules better. I am totally aware there are several terms, including Tactical and Overwatch, that I didn't even consider. They are there for a reason.

A post-game reading of the rules (*CoC1*, 7.6, p30 and clarified in *CoC2*, 10.4, p42), it would take more than "stepping on the JOP marker" to have denied Russ the use of the jump-off point. I would have had to commit one of my two remaining squads, the LMG team, mortar team, or the Panzer IV to stay on top of the JOP until the end of the turn.

Most of these were not within range, of course. I did still have my big Command chip when I had dispatched Ed from the table. I should have played that to end the turn then and there, which would have removed the Russian jump-off point from the game.

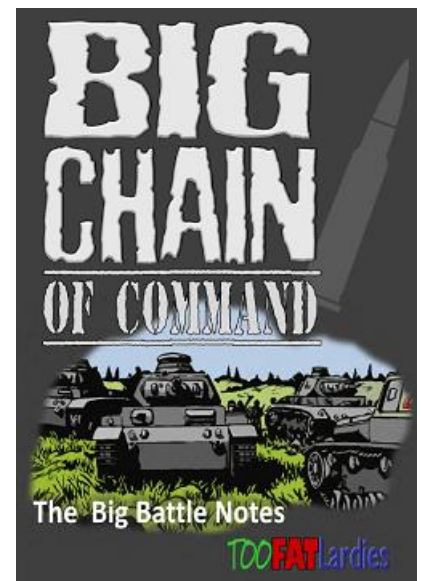
Thank you, Dan, for hosting and feeding us. I truly enjoyed the game -- in spite of my game-losing moments of "brilliance" and the company. Also, a special thanks to Keith for his hand holding on the rules. I lost the game for the Axis all on my own.

Big Chain of Command: Supplement

by Keith

With regards to rolling three or more 6s, the *Big Chain of Command* supplement suggests electing an overall commander for each side. For everyone except that player, three or more 6s are considered as rolling two sixes plus any normal *CoC* points generated. Only the CinC on each side can end the turn with the multiple 6s roll.

The supplement also contains an expanded "Bad Things Happen" table, such as friendly commands losing command dice or routing from the field.



The typical game: Chuckles all around. L to R: Ed, Russ, John, part of Fred, and Keith. Photo by Mike.





Chain Of Command: Axis vs. Russians

By Daniel

The 2025 “Black Friday” Game was *Chain of Command (CoC)*. The 2nd Edition was released earlier this year which added some new rules and options and changed some others. I embraced this game the first time I played it at Historicon in 2014 and try to sign up for as many games as I can each time I go to a show. I especially enjoyed the Spanish Civil War scenarios.

After picking up German and Soviet 25mm WWII figures at the flea market to put together a company of each, I introduced the game to our group, which has become a favorite to play (but never often enough – maybe two to three games a year). Several players now have commands of their own, so I encourage them to BYOT (Bring Your Own Troops) whenever the opportunity arrives.

We had six players for this event, pitting a German-Italian company against a Soviet company, each well supported.

Orders of Battle

AXIS

3 x Platoon HQ (2 Senior Leaders each)
 3 x *Panzer*grenadier Squads
 5 x *Grenadier* Squads
 2 x Italian Infantry Squads
 2 x MMG Teams
 2 x LMG Teams
 1 x Flamethrower Team
 1 x 81mm Mortar Team
 1 x SdKfz 251/1 Halftrack
 1 x M11/39 Tank
 1 x Pz IVF1
 1 x AB41 Armored Car
 1 x 75mm Infantry Gun
 4 x Entrenchments (Team size)

SOVIETS

2 x Platoon HQ (2 Leaders each)
 1 x Submachine Gun Squad
 8 x Rifle Squads
 1 x Partisan Squad
 2 x MMG Teams
 4 x LMG Teams
 1 x ATR Team
 1 x 82mm Mortar Team
 1 x 50mm Mortar Team
 1 x T-26S Tank
 1 x T-34C
 1 x T-34/85
 6 x Entrenchments (Team size)

German/Italian squads averaged 10-11 men while Russian squads averaged 11-12 men.

Each player rolled for starting Force Morale: Odd = 9, Even = 8 + one CoC point.

Russians chose table side.

Four Jump-Off points per side, which could be placed anywhere within 2' of their table edge. Any player could deploy on any Jump-Off point on their side. Axis placed Jump-Off point first, alternating.

Axis Goals: A surrounded Soviet force was isolated to their rear off-table, which other elements would be responsible to eliminate. The Axis company was to dominate or control the table and clear a section for future advances.

Russian Goals: Open a road or pathway across the table to enable a relief force to liberate an isolated Russian force.

The Axis side started the first turn.

Opposite sides of the battlefield after Jump-Off Points have been placed. Photo by Dan.

One side of the battlefield has a large expanse of woods, but had a road network. The rest of the battlefield was broken by several hills and ridges, a stream and smaller sections of woods and brush. One small building and a 3-story ruin were present.

The Axis clearly chose to not contest the woods, despite initial pre-game discussion to at least place a small force to cover it. The Russians chose to drive along either road as best presented itself. Despite pointing out that each player could deploy on any of their Jump-Off points, each Axis player chose a different Jump-off point to deploy exclusively. The Russians did this as well to a large extent, but did remember to use other Jump-Off points later in the game to great effect.



Deployments

Fred's German/Italian platoon deployed behind the three-story ruins and brought out an M11/39 tank to cover his left side. John's Soviet platoon would deploy in the woods to push up the road, diverting most to challenge the Italians. A T-26S tank was brought up to back up this attack.

Keith's *Grenadiers* would deploy in the center, which quickly attracted a lot of attention from Russians. Russ would deploy in the center as well. Russ brought a T-34C to cover his left, which started a long, often exciting, exchange against the M11/39 that lasted to the end of the game.

Michael's *Panzergrenadiers* would deploy on the Axis far left, opposing Ed's Rifle platoon. Ed had early success with a slow-walking "wave attack" of two squads in open order, allowing each to fire through the gaps of the other wave as they advanced and giving out better than they received. This was soon countered by Michael deploying an MMG team and an LMG team, which soon cut down the first wave. Michael's 81mm mortar team often had problems getting their bearings with indirect fire throughout the game (a house rule using a "scatter die"), almost killing as many of his own men as enemies.

Duel on the Left

Fred's German/Italian platoon held its own. Taking few casualties, he drove off an entrenched Russian ATR team Russ brought up to attack the M11/39. The T-34 and M11/39 exchanges shots, hitting each other often, but never dealing enough damage to take the other out. Each player often used a 3-pip Command die to activate the tank commander to remove Shock, keeping their vehicles in the game (accumulating 4+ Shock will force the crew to bail out and abandon the tank).

Fred's German squad facing John's Russians stood off a Russian SMG squad and a Rifle squad, plus the T-26S tank as casualties slowly accumulated on both sides. Italian "anti-tank" raids against the T-26S caused minor damage after the T-26S tried to overrun the German squad, prompting the T-26S to withdraw behind the Russian infantry. John's third platoon successfully crossed the table to exit off the opposite board edge. The road network was now secured. John's on-table infantry would grind down the German squad and eventually rout it.

Escalation on the Right

Michael and Ed continued their escalating firefight. Ed brings on a T-34/85 and Michael brings on a Pz IVF1, starting a tank duel that almost rivals the other tank duel between the T-34C and M11/39. The T-34/85 accumulates Shock and Michael eventually forces the crew to bail out. Ed would get a “bonus phase” from rolling two ‘6’ results, allowing an opportunity to advance and inflict more casualties on the *Panzergranadiers*. Michael would get a similar opportunity later, when he rolled three ‘6’ results the same time Fred rolled four “6” results, ending the turn, but granting the Axis the first phase starting the new turn.

Ed (bottom left) brings on more troops while Russ (standing) takes propaganda photos. John pushes through the woods. Photo by Dan.



Ed would later admit that as much as he really likes *Chain of Command*, he hates it when the other side keeps on activating while he just sits there – but also likes it when he’s the one that keeps the activations going. Both sides have been racking up the casualties and the Force Morale checks have now lowered each player’s Force Morale low enough to reduce their Command dice to roll. Ed’s Force Morale is driven to zero first after Michael wipes out Ed’s LMG team and senior leader. Ed’s Jump-Off point is now undefended, but Michael decides to ignore it and move his force towards the center to help Keith deal with Russ.

Central Showdown

And Keith *does* need the help. With a few occasional shots from Ed’s Russians, Russ assembles an intimidating array of troops pouring many dice-worth of bullets into Keith’s lone squad, routing it. Keith brings up more squads and an StuG III to counter this show of strength, but Russ gets the Command dice he needs to keep his on-table forces active and the carnage continues. Keith does not help his situation when two NCOs are wounded and rolls a ‘6’ each time to lose 2 Force Morale each. Soon after Ed’s Force Morale is reduced to ‘0’ to rout his platoon, Keith’s platoon suffers the same fate.

Each side has had a platoon driven off the field. Russ and Michael now start to face off against each other, as Michael clearly has his sector of the battlefield secured – but now a significant oversight come back to bite Michael in the ass (at least on the battlefield): The Jump-Off point Michael could have easily captured after driving Ed’s platoon off is now used by Russ to deploy his third squad he prudently kept in reserve.

Michael would later explain he thought the Russians had deployed all their troops by now, but he’ll never make that mistake again. While a sudden surprise for Michael, he unleashes enough firepower to inflict 2 casualties and 5 Shock on this new Russian squad. Checked briefly by this unexpected damage, Russ still has enough left to drive Michael’s Force Morale to ‘0’ and drive it off the field, which are the last of the German forces, leaving the Italians remaining on the battlefield. While still in good shape, Fred was willing to call it quits.

The Russians fulfilled their mission and opened a pathway to relieve their isolated comrades.

John’s Soviets secure the road network as a T-26S comes down to use it. Photo by Dan.





The road from Moscow to the bridge. L to R: Dave M., Phil, Chris, Marc, Mike, Larry, Sam (moving troops), Jay, Rich, and GM Dave W. Right: Turn 1. The ordeal begins...

Men Who Would Be Frozen: 1812

by Russ Lockwood

How appropriate: An 1812 retreat from Moscow game using a slight variation of the *The Men Who Would Be Kings* rules on the day it really snowed. Well, dusting of snow is more accurate, but snow is snow when you have to brush it off your car.

By standing around, I became French and in charge of two units: 10 stragglers of dubious value and 16 soldiers in good order. I also had a wagon, but it was less a unit and more a target of roving Russians.

The French were marching along a road passing a farm and heading for a bridge and relative security. The Russians were harrying them from behind. For a change, we used the long side of a 6 foot by 12 foot table. The road sure looked long to me.

A deck of cards provided random events to spice up the fog of war. Two cards were drawn and played per turn and contained everything from lost figures to new units entering.

My three units: Stragglers at bottom. Organized unit on road. Wagon across road. The 5 indicates 2d6 morale roll to save.

Blizzard

The road looked open, but looks were deceiving. A blizzard rolled in, limiting movement to six inches.



Our rearguard was having a tough time holding off the Russians. Then again, sometimes the Russians had a tough time moving. During the blizzard turns, movement was limited to six inches and each unit needed to make a 2d6 morale roll equal to or more than your morale rating in order to actually move. Morale was from 5 to 7 at start, but could go up or down.

Sam consoles Larry after blown morale roll. Russian Marc and Russian Mike strive to whack the rearguard French units.

Event cards had a lot to do with that. You could even designate a unit to forage for food, which if the 2d6 rolls was successful, would improve your morale. Likewise, event cards also took out figures and made your morale worse.

Firing was six inches as well instead of the usual 12 inches. You can't hit what you don't see. If a unit remained in place, you could hit on a 4+ tossing 1d6 per figure. If a unit moved and fired, it was a 5+ on a d6 per figure. If you fired at long range, that is, 6.1 inches to 12 inches, you fired only half the dice.

French Rich (blue shirt) advances past the farmstead. The rest of us follow as best we can.

Our bravest of the brave commander Rich managed to roll six straight 50-50 rolls that kept the blizzard in play. We finally took the weather d6 away from Rich. Mike rolled to continue the blizzard. We took the die away from him, too. Jay finally rolled off the blizzard and sunshine bathed the column.

Cossacks

The event cards' charm revolves around Russian and French units - mostly Russian -- popping up on the flank to launch attacks.

The French file past the farmstead as best they can. Cossack cavalry would pop up on the other side of the buildings.

Cossack cavalry came out of the left side and attacked a French



artillery gun in the farmstead. The gunners were slaughtered. My French infantry gunned many Cossacks down and Sam's French gunned down the rest.

Then a unit of regular Russian infantry under Dave appeared in front of Rich and began a firefight. Rich rolled well and gunned down half the unit, which failed morale and backed off. They eventually regained morale. Dave passed command over to Jay, as the unit was on the left side of the road and within Jay's easy reach.

The blizzard hit again, but only lasted one turn.

My stragglers race up the road towards the bridge. Rich's troops shoot up the Russian regulars (lower right side of photo). Marc and Mike's troops close upon the rearmost French units.

I'm In The Lead

My stragglers took advantage of good morale rolls and clear weather to march quickly towards the bridge. All was going well until a random event card placed a roadblock, a cannon, and a unit of Russian regular troops at the base of the bridge.

I lost half my unit from the Russian fire. I lost the other half in the next turn. Sheesh. Good shooting.

In the meantime, Rich brought up his victorious unit and shot up the remnants of the Russians. Larry brought up a unit as well. Now we had three French units in a semi-circle around the Russian earthworks.

Rich's cannon boomed and slaughtered all but one Russian gunner and pushed the cannon back up the bridge. His next shot took out the last gunner.

Right: What's this? A Russian roadblock (thanks, random event card!). I used to have lots of stragglers. The red disc indicates Pinned.

Lower right: Well, there used to be a French rearguard...

Rearguard

Chris' French troops were having problems fending off the Russians. Indeed, he seemed the victim of multiple event cards. Typhus killed off a pair. Another deserted in madness. Two more froze



to death. His morale plummeted.

Then, an event card gave him five French soldiers that caught up to the column. No matter, the Russians under Marc and Mike shot them up and meleed them to extinction.

Jay showed up with a unit of peasants at the farmstead, but Sam gunned them down quickly.

Phil's French cavalry kept pace with the column as he wondered whether to turn around and help the rearguard or keep guarding the flank. A good thing he stayed -- Jay received a 12-trooper cavalry unit on the right side in between my regular soldiers and Phil's cavalry. Jay was pointing directly at a wagon. Phil moved up.

I turned around and fired all 16 dice and took out five Cossacks. Jay failed morale and they were pinned. The next turn, I fired again and took out four troopers. Jay failed morale again. The third turn I fired again and took out the last three. Flank threat removed.

Alas, that also kept me from advancing against the Russian roadblock.



Phil's cavalry (lower right corner) backs up, smashes a Russian unit, then continues in reverse to smash the infantry. Meanwhile, Russian cavalry attacks Sam's unit (middle) as Russian peasants gather on the other side of the farmstead.

Cavalry in Reverse

By now, the Russians behind us had overrun just about all our rearguard units. Phil charged Cossack cavalry that had gotten too close.

Actually, he put his cavalry in reverse and backed into the Russian unit. Technically, in this scenario, all figures had 360-degree movement and fire. It was easier for Phil to move the figures backwards to contact.

Russian Cossacks appear behind my unit on the hill and on the flank of the wagons. I needed three turns of shooting to annihilate the Cossacks.



Better yet, he annihilated the unit in melee and did a breakthrough charge in reverse on another unit. That battered unit also was eliminated. Russian Morale checks all around resulted in a couple Pinned units. The only thing a Pinned unit can do is attempt a 2d6 Rally vs Morale.

Alas, the Russians were too numerous. Musket fire emptied all the French saddles. But Phil had performed a spectacular spoiling attack.

The Roadblock

I advanced on the roadblock and fired. I only had half dice and I needed two hits to kill one figure. I got all of one figure.

Rich charged and meleed the Russian roadblock unit,



but was repulsed.

That left me.
Jay's Russian dice were awful, causing me only two casualties. All I had to do was get three casualties on him and the way would be open. Granted, I needed six hits to do it, but I had 16 d6s and a 50-50 chance of a hit.

The final charge of my intact unit.

The mass of dice rolled and...

Merde! Three lousy hits. I was repulsed. Not pinned, but repulsed. I could try again, but the three hours of evening gaming expired with that attack. The

Russians in the back would overrun the wagons, leaving us bereft of supplies even if successful on the non-existent next turn.



Good Game

Thanks to Dave M for hosting, thanks to Dave W for GMing, and thanks to all us other non-Daves for gaming.

Rich Adds:

It was fine time and the table sure looked like a winter wonderland -- sort of like the weather we drove home in. The ruined buildings were a very nice touch.

We French were a wretched lot and I think we learned to stay "out" of Russia in the winter.

Gadzooks...less than two months away!





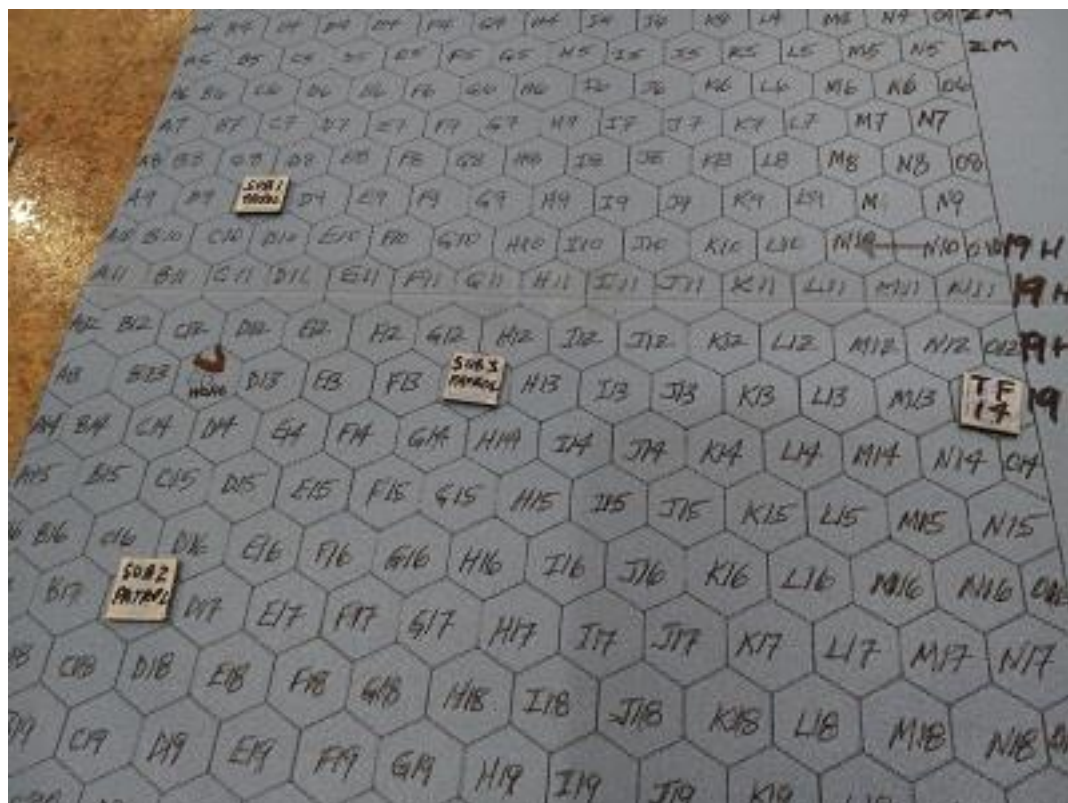
GM Bruce consults his charts next to the tactical combat table. Across the room, the Japanese players Garth (left) and Steve.

Wake Island: Double-Blind Relief Operation

by Russ Lockwood

Bruce, master of the WWII double-blind naval game, embraced a what-if scenario centering on the relief of Wake Island. The initial Japanese invasion had been repulsed, leading the Japanese to withdraw and regroup. The second time, they diverted carriers to supply better air support, and the invasion succeeded.

Most of the map. TF 14 is me. Other counters are Phil's subs.



In between, US command put together a relief effort with aircraft carriers escorting more Marines and supplies. Alas, a change of command led to delays as second thoughts occurred and then cancellation of the operation. But suppose the relief expedition had gone ahead? What a perfect scenario for a double-blind wargame.

How Does Search Work?

Each side gets a hex or square map with counters to indicate Task Forces, individual submarines, and aircraft. The TF and sub counters are moved in secret on the map. Then, a number of searches are called out one side at a time --

ala Midway or Battleship -- depending on the OOB. The opposing players check the hex or square number and say whether anything was found or not. GM Bruce relays the information about what was found -- sometimes accurate and sometimes not.

Depending on the scale of the map, the search area is a single hex per search or sometimes the hex and the six surrounding hexes, or, a single square or a big square made up of nine small squares. I've played both. For Wake, it was a single hex.

If an attack occurs, ships and planes are transferred to a tactical table located in between the US and Japanese player tables. The tactical tables is a hexfield.

US F4F CAP intercepts Japanese Nell bombers over Wake Island. Unescorted bombers suffer heavy losses.

How Does Combat Work?

If something is found, and aircraft are in range, a strike is sent out. The defending ships are placed on a hex grid, usually two ships per hex, and then the attacking aircraft and defending Combat Air Patrol (CAP) are set out in waves.

CAP vs Escort fighters comes first, then CAP vs bombers. Then surviving bombers are assigned to hexes and face AA from the ships. Surviving bombers then attack a ship in the hex.

Bruce uses 1:1200 scale ships. Aircraft are usually counters, although sometimes he uses tiny planes. The combat system is Axis and Allies Naval Miniatures -- roll a number of d6s depending on the model. Aircraft have an abort number and a destroyed number. A typical plane might be five hits to abort and seven or eight hits to destroy. Hits are on 4, 5, and 6 with a 6 counting as two hits.

Likewise, bombing is expressed as a number of dice needing 4, 5, and 6 to score hits, with a 6 counting as two hits. Each ship has a number of hits needed to inflict one damage and a higher number of hits to sink it outright.

Torpedoes are slightly different: Only a 6 hits, but when it does, a torpedo causes two damage.

Air strikes require a turn to rearm and refuel. CAP does not.

Fighter sweep. The two F4Fs confront four Zeros.

The Plan

I selected the US and my co-commander was Phil. The Japanese team was Garth and Steve. Bruce was the GM.

Phil assigned me two TFs, each with one aircraft carrier and supporting ships. The carriers also carried F2A fighters to be delivered to Wake Island. Phil had a task force along with a merchant ship that was to deliver troops to Wake. Each task force had one search up to five hexes away.



Phil controlled three submarines. Each of them had one search in the hex it was in. We jointly controlled two PBYS and two B-17s used for searching. They had four searches, but as they were based at Midway, they didn't have the range for the whole map.

That might seem a lot of searches, but the map was 14 x 20 hexes, or about 280 hexes. So, 10 searches in 280 hexes, although you could cut off half the map looking for carriers coming from the north.

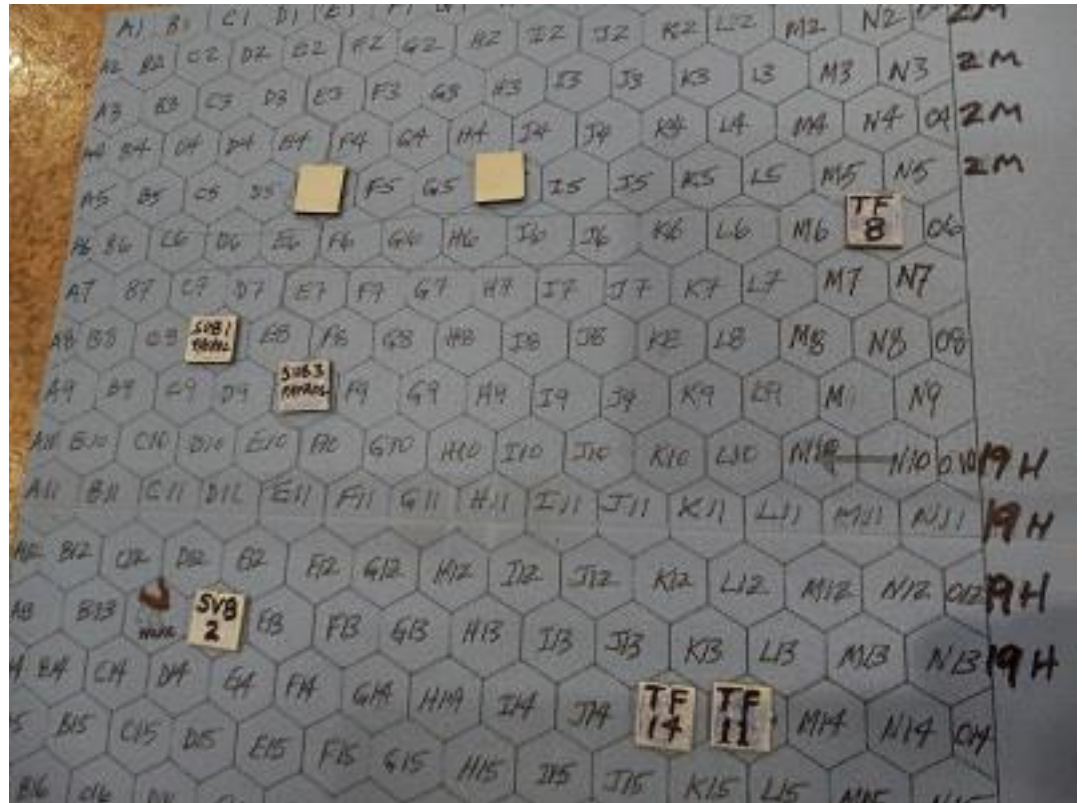
Japanese carrier searches were seven hexes. Plus they had their own land-based planes from Kwajalein. Japanese fighter and carrier bomber aircraft had about a 50% advantage in range.

We had assigned entry areas, so our first objective was to get my carriers into range of Wake and fly in the F2As. We couldn't fly at night and the F2A range was only eight hexes, so the entire first day was spent heading WSW in the general direction of Wake, slip south, and then come up and launch. Phil would come in and try to deliver the merchant ship as fast as he could.

The two flights of Wildcats on Wake would perform CAP.

Of course, we had no idea of the Japanese plan, but we assumed it would involve bombing Wake Island's airfield. If the airfield took 20 hits, it was put out of action. The US civilian construction "battalion" could repair two hits per turn.

Dec. 21, 1900 turn. I control TF 14 and TF 11, while Phil controls TF8 and subs. Blanks indicate our searches for Japanese fleet.



Dec. 22, 0700 turn, squalls blanket Wake Island and surrounding areas. They move randomly.

December 21: Bombs Away

Sure enough, at 0700 on December 21, 1941, the US search planes lofted into the air and found... nothing. The Japanese also found nothing.

However, six Nells from Kwajalein found Wake. The Wildcats and AA engaged and shot down two, aborted three, and the sixth one put a hit on the airfield. A good start for the US. The hit was repaired at the end of the turn.

At 1100, search found nothing, but a massive Japanese carrier strike arrived over Wake. This time, no Japanese planes were injured in the making of this bombing run and eight, count 'em eight, hits rained down on the airfield. Two hits were repaired.

At 1500, another Japanese strike on Wake put in another hit or two, which were repaired. No ships were found by either side.

This being December, night fell for three turns. The construction battalion repaired six more hits, but four remained as the sun came up on December 23.

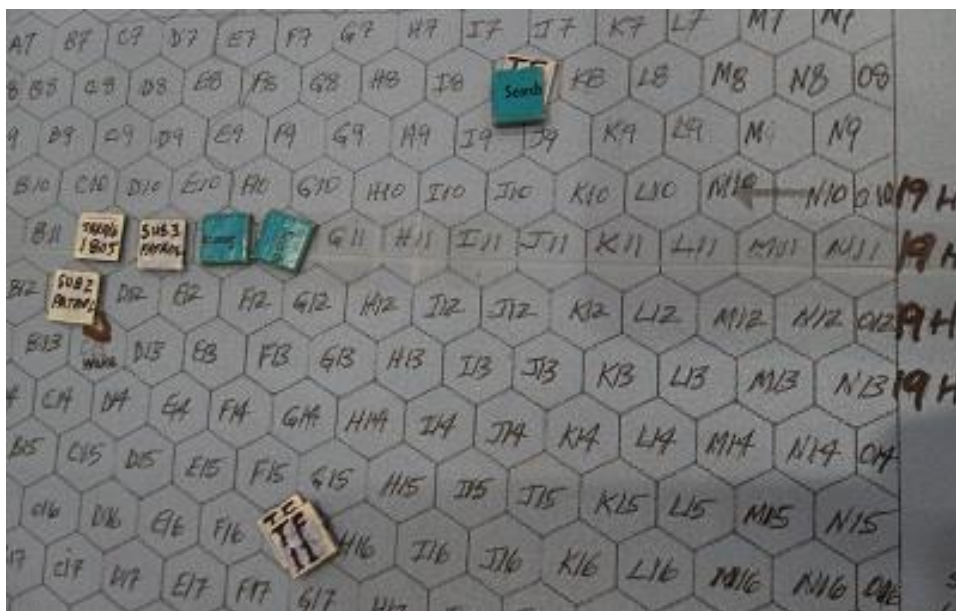


Weather

Each turn, Bruce rolled for weather. Clear weather is, well, clear. Cloudy weather places one seven-hex cloud on the tactical map. Targets under the cloud receive a saving roll (needing a 6 on a d6) to turn a hit into no effect.

Dec. 22, 1900 turn. TF 14 and TF 11 combine. Subs collapse around Wake. Blue counters are searches. Nothing found.

Squalls place three of these clouds on the tactical map and also require a 50-50 die roll for searches to take place. Otherwise, no search.



December 22: Squalls Ho!

On our December 22, 0700 turn, five out of our seven searches were disallowed. The Japanese suffered, too. Neither side found anything.

The biggest air raid of the game on Wake occurred that morning. The F2As were flown off to join the Wildcats on defense. Despite the squall atop Wake, the Japanese put a whopping 15 hits on the airfield and none of them were saved. A Zero, a Kate, Nell, and a Val were destroyed.

That meant that Wake airfield had collected 19 hits -- one short of obliterating the airfield. Two hits were repaired, but the holes way outnumbered the repair ability.

At 1100, another strike put the last few hits on the airfield. Also destroyed were the Wildcats and F2As, which could not land on the carriers. The squalls continued into the night.

Searching proved pointless.

Wake Island found the Japanese invasion fleet. Fortunately, I had TF 14 and TF 11 covering the island. The US first wave targeted the three troop transports. A weak second wave of fighter and two dive bombers awaited the results.

December 23: Surprise

Phil drew his submarines close to Wake Island. I kept TF 14 and TF 11 combined and close to Wake. As my search range was five hexes, I made sure my farthest reach was one hex beyond Wake. Phil filled in the rest of the northern approaches with long-range air. We had one "extra" search and I pointed to a random hex up north -- D7 to be precise -- on a whim. Nope. Our searching found nothing there or in any other hex. The Japanese didn't find anything, either.



On the 1100 turn, the weather broke into clouds. Phil remembered that the Wake Island invasion force was sailing from Kwajalein in the south, not with the carriers in the north. We called out searches to no avail. We escaped being found, too.

That's when the Japanese team gleefully chided us to call out the hex containing Wake Island. Phil and I looked at each other. Uh-oh.

"Wake Island?"

"Invasion!"

The US Strike

I wish I could say I was a genius at deployment, but I had fixated on the five-hex search range. It was sheer good fortune that the hex north of Wake was five hexes away, placing Wake four hexes from my carriers. As it turns out, four hexes was the maximum range of my fighters and bombers. Whew!

The invasion force was formidable. Five cruisers, 12 destroyers, one seaplane tender, three troop transports, and two fast destroyer troop transports. They appeared just out of range of Wake's 5-inch guns.

I sent everything I had. I cleared the decks. This was no time to hold back.

I created four strike packets: one fighter (F4F or F2A), one torpedo bomber, and two dive bombers. I sent three packets in the first wave and kept back one for a second wave.

The Japanese had floatplane CAP -- three of them. They assigned one each to the three important troop transports.

The results of the first wave. The second wave would likely sink one of the heavy cruisers.

Digression: Plane Allotment

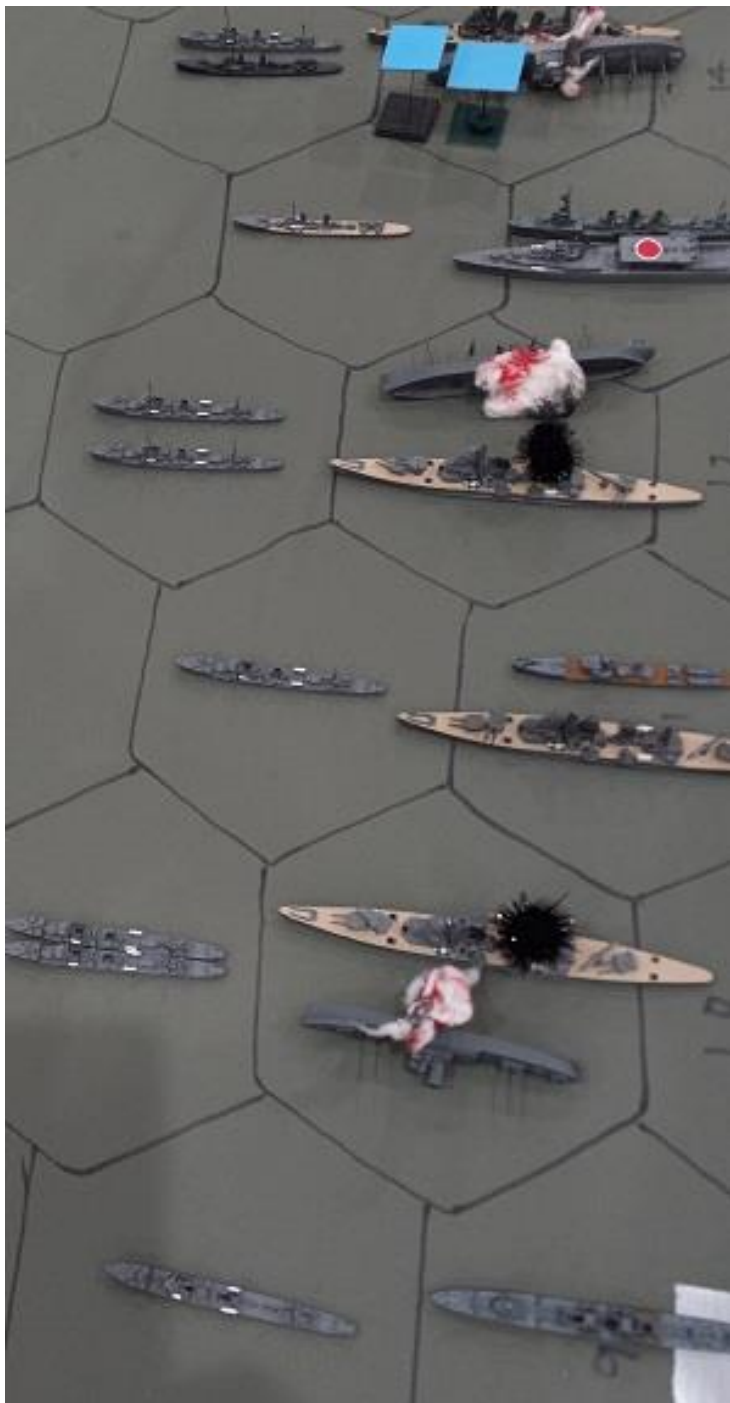
Each side rolls 2d6 for initiative. The loser must place one plane, then the winner places one plane, and so alternate. In the Japanese air strikes against Wake, I consistently failed to gain the initiative. Hence, the Japanese placed Zeros against my fighters to prevent them engaging the bombers.

This time, I won the initiative, so the Japanese had to allot his floatplane fighters first, which I matched. Escort fighters vs CAP are separate combats and winning fighters do not continue to dogfight.

US Bombing

With the Japanese floatplane fighters occupied, and one shot down, that left the ship AA to try and abort the bombers. The torpedo bombers got 2d6, looking for 6s. All missed.

Here was a US boo-boo, but fortunately no harm, no foul. The TBDs only had a range of three hexes, not four, and could not be part of the US strike on the Japanese invasion fleet. As they missed their attacks, we didn't have to resurrect sunken Japanese ships. As the two ships per hex always targeted the SBD dive bombers, no harm no foul there, either.



The SBDs tossed 10d6 each. The first sunk the troop transport and the second put a hit on the escorting cruiser. The second air strike did the same thing on the second troop transport and cruiser. The third air strike did the same.

As the invasion needed at least one of the troop transports for success, sinking all three ended the invasion threat. I even had the second wave to go after one fast destroyer troop transport and escort, but the Japanese had enough and called it a day.

Phil had two subs prowling the Wake waters, but they didn't get to loose a torpedo.

The Japanese invasion fleet turns around. Wake is saved.

US Victory

Neither side found the other side's carriers, although we came close and so did the Japanese. By close I mean one hex away at times.

The final score after calculating point totals (taken from War at Sea) for ships sunk, planes downed, and objectives achieved. The US scored 80 points and the Japanese 54. It was a clear US victory.



Thoughts

Another great, tense, double-blind naval game. Bruce certainly has it down. There are always scenario rules, like the airfield damage and repair, as well as blind-man's bluff searching. The game took three hours on one evening, although Bruce had set up everything beforehand.

The Japanese invasion fleet landed as soon as it could, which was daylight and so subject to US air strikes. The force could have invaded at night, although that would also mean another turn or two waiting around to make the run into Wake. Given the difficulty of finding task forces, that might have worked better, although the daylight turn after night would bring the US air strike, either at Wake or in the hexes around it.

What's In a Search?

The searching mechanic is simple: call out a hex. Obviously, aircraft would look at all hexes from launch point to end point and back, but it would be impossible for a GM to run that in a live game. Or a three-hour session would consist of one search phase. Bruce and I chatted a bit about that, but there is really no good answer off the top of our heads. Computers, sure. A play-by-email game where players plot the hex/square flights, sure -- time-consuming, but sure. Live... no.

The only thing I could think of is that the GM maintains his own strategic map with both sides. A little extra time, but doable. Then, the players can choose from a set of pre-cut aerial recon and search templates and write down the search origin and the hex direction.

The GM takes the templates and places them in the originating hex at the correct orientation. If the template drops over a hex containing opposing ships, success. If not, failure.

I know, a bit clumsy and would take extra time. How long, I don't know. If not too many searches, possibly doable. Dunno.

Another Triumph!

In any case, another triumph. Thanks, Bruce for GMing and hosting and all the gamers for making this another interesting night of double-blind naval warfare.

Spain 1813: GM Report of *Snappy Nappy* Campaign

By GM Mike

"We always have been, we are, and I hope that we always shall be, detested in France."
-- Duke of Wellington.

Historical Background and Campaign Development

Last year (2024) was my first time creating a *Snappy Nappy* Campaign In a Day. Players said it was a good campaign, so I decided why not try it again. This year I wanted to do Spain to see redcoats on the tables. The French and British have always had a natural rivalry throughout the 18th & 19th centuries. I always enjoyed playing the Peninsular campaign in *War and Peace*. As a matter of fact, part of my research included buying and playing another of Mark McLaughlin's games: *Wellington*, which was about the 1812-1814 Spanish campaign.

I read a lot of internet articles on the campaign, including Britishbattles.com but the most interesting discovery was Project Gutenberg's *A History of the Peninsular War, Vol. 6, September 1, 1812-August 5, 1813* by Charles Oman.

So how to choose a campaign? Portugal 1808? Corunna 1809? Talavera 1809 (done previously)? Salamanca in 1812 seemed interesting. Well, inspiration came from Peter's basement while playing *Field of Battle*. Kevin Carroll suggested Vittoria, which I had not considered. Hmmm... I could do another 1813 campaign, build off my previous 1813 Saxony campaign. 1813, This could be my year. The forces were relatively even at the Battle of Vittoria. And to top it off it was a pivotal battle that decided the Peninsula campaign. Sold!

Next, I had to find a map. My first map choice was the June 21st Vittoria battlefield. Do a one-day campaign of a one-day battle. But the Basque region had so much more to offer, with rivers, mountains, and a coastline to include the Royal Navy. I then found Peter's maps of the entire European theatre. I carved out a section of northern Spain. These are very clean maps, but I discovered my table network would be too easy to figure out. Finally, I settled on an old nostalgic map. A plethora of terrain, roads, and ambiguity would cause some confusion. Plus, I could include good ole Northeastern towns called LaGuardia and Bayonne.

The Opposing Forces

Wellington's army comprised 52,000 British and 28,000 Portuguese troops. An army of 25,000 Spanish troops co-operated in the campaign. Wellington's army had 90 guns.

The French army, drawn from the Army of the South, the Army of the Centre and the Army of Portugal, comprised 68,000 troops (including 7,000 cavalry), with 150 guns.

George Nafziger's online OOB is amazing. It has both armies arranged and detailed down to the regiments and batteries. This was good because the scale I needed to do was not Corps size as is typical of a *Snappy Nappy* campaign, but Division level. Units were represented by Regiments instead of Brigades.

Divisional Game Scale:

Each Infantry Unit = 900 men

Each Cavalry Unit = 300 horses

Each Artillery Unit = 12 Guns

I used the actual OOB of the opposing sides for the battle of Vittoria, or in the general vicinity and had participated in the Pyrenees battles in the following month of July. This gave me 15 French and 14 Allied divisions. With this I could accommodate up to 29 – 31 players... YIKES! That is a lot of players. We actually had 19 Generals on game day, so it was very manageable.

The Miniatures

There were 131 British units and commanders vs 142 French with two stands per infantry and cavalry unit and one per artillery unit. I knew Peter had the figures to cover me. I used James' scoring of units based on quality and staying power for a balanced point.

Guards = 12

Elites = 8

Veteran = 6

Conscript = 3

The British Infantry were **Veterans** after fighting in Spain for four to five years. The Portuguese were just a notch lower, so I assigned **Seasoned**. There were Spanish, which we ended up not using, that were a mix of **Season and Conscript**.

The British had 9 Infantry divisions with an average of 8.7 units.

The French had 8 Infantry divisions with an average of 10.3 units

The British had 1 Cavalry division and French 2 Cavalry divisions; four units each

The French had an 18-16 advantage in Artillery.

		British Army		Br Pts
Player 1		Commanding General: Field Marshal Wellington	Pts	
	W	Major Arriaga's Battery (9pdrs) HEAVY	6	6
reinforce	W- R	Independent Brigades:	28	34
Player 2	W	3rd Division: Lieutenant-General Sir T. Picton	50	84
Player 3	W	4th Division: Lieutenant-General Sir G.L. Cole	54	138
Player 4	H	8th Division: General O'Callaghan	56	194
Player 5	H	2nd Division: Major-General Byng	40	234
Player 6	G	1st Division: Howard	54	288
Player 7	G	5th Division: Leith	54	342
Player 8	W	Major-General W. Ponsonby Cav Division	46	388
Player 9	W	6th Division: Pakenham	50	438
Player 10	W	7th Division: Lieutenant-General Earl of Dalhousie	44	482
Player 11	W	Light Division: Major-General Baron Alten	42	524
Player 12	G	Spanish Division: General Longa	23	547
Player 13	H	Portuguese Corps: Silveria	24	571
Player 14	H	Spanish Division: General Morillo	25	596
Player 15				
		French Army		Fr Pts
Player 1		Joseph Bonaparte	Pts	
	S	2 Batteries & Train (5/365)- RESERVE ART HEAVY	8	8
Player 2	S	6th Division: Général de division Daricau	62	70
Player 3	S	2nd Division: Général de division Conroux	64	134
Player 4	C	5th Division: Général de division Darmagnac	48	182
Player 5	C	7th Division: Général de division Cassagne	44	226

Player 6	P	4th Division: Général de division Sarrut	54	280
Player 7	P	8th Division: Général de division Lamartiniere	50	330
Player 8	S	1st Cav Division: Général de division P. Soult	28	358
Player 9	S	3rd Division: Général de division Villatte	50	408
Player 10	P	2nd Cav Division: Boyer	28	436
Player 11	S	1st Division: Général de division Leval	46	482
Player 12	C	<u>King's Spanish Army:</u>	37	519
Player 13	P	9th Division: Général de division Foy	30	549
Player 14	N	1st Division: Général de division Abbé	34	583
Player 15	N	2nd Division: Général de division Vandermaesen	26	609

I arranged the weighted divisional units to create a balanced force structure. In anticipation of a players coming and going, I set the divisions in sequence 1-15 by division to try and always keep a balance on game day. We actually had three players drop out, so each side was minus one division, and Brandan graciously gave up his small cavalry division to add to Picton's command and he took on the Wellington command role.

Speaking of Wellington, many AARs (I mean the French ones on Peter's Blunders on the Danube blog) refer to Wellesley as the British commander because they claim he earned the title Duke of Wellington in May of 1814. In truth, Wellesley earned the title **Viscount Wellington** of Talavera after that battle in 1809. So he is rightly referred to as Wellington throughout my 1813 campaign.

Map and Table Design

The beauty of the *Snappy Nappy* campaign is in its multiple tables, all potential battlefields. Russ has written a great summary about the details of this on a previous *Snappy Nappy* post so you can look that up on the campaign on Peter's blog "La Patrie en Danger!" January, 1814 Campaign in France.

My two main goals as a map designer is one to give the players the opportunity to maneuver before battle and two to try and create smaller separate battles. I have heard or read about how sometimes the players all congregate on a single table. No room for maneuver. A slugfest. And LONG turns which may dampen the excitement.

I had 14+ tables, each six feet by four feet, utilizing every one that the Portal had. To enhance the maneuver of Corps, I watched a video that Russ sent two years ago about a Spanish *Snappy Nappy* campaign run by an Australian gaming group. They used additional "Transit Tables" or Transit Towns (X) inserted between actual tables. I added time delays -- mostly 5 minutes -- with some longer due to distance or mountains to simulate the time it takes to march across an actual table. I printed 15 of these 8.5 x 11-inch tables. I made the combatants record in a log the time they entered and the time they left these transit tables. This provided much good information of each division's whereabouts during the day. Generals were of course on the honor system to wait the appropriate time before moving to the next table. A network of 49 index cards represented the road network. I allowed the players to find their route from table to table.

The Double Table

I suspected that due to the set up and victory conditions that the forces would collide along the main road... at Vittoria (Table 6). Well, that is the heart of this campaign, so that would be good to recreate, right? But if that happened, it could become very crowded on a six by four table and break my number two goal. I really would like to avoid that.

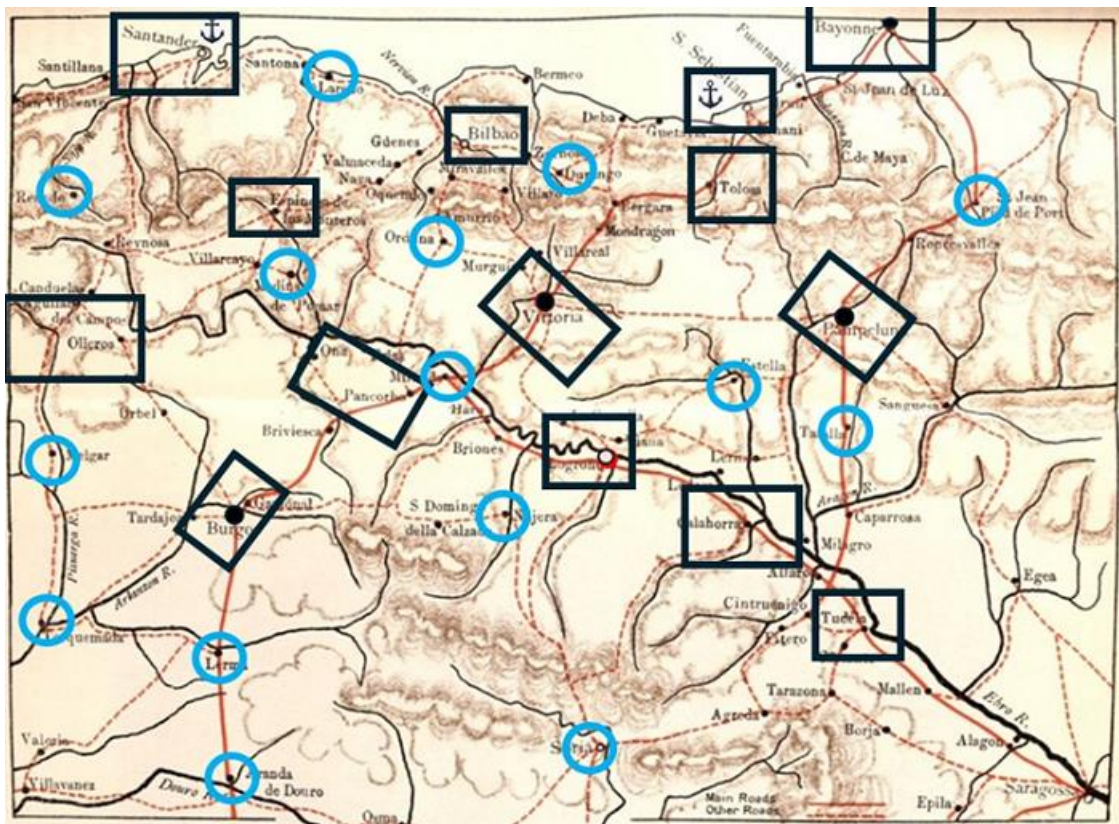
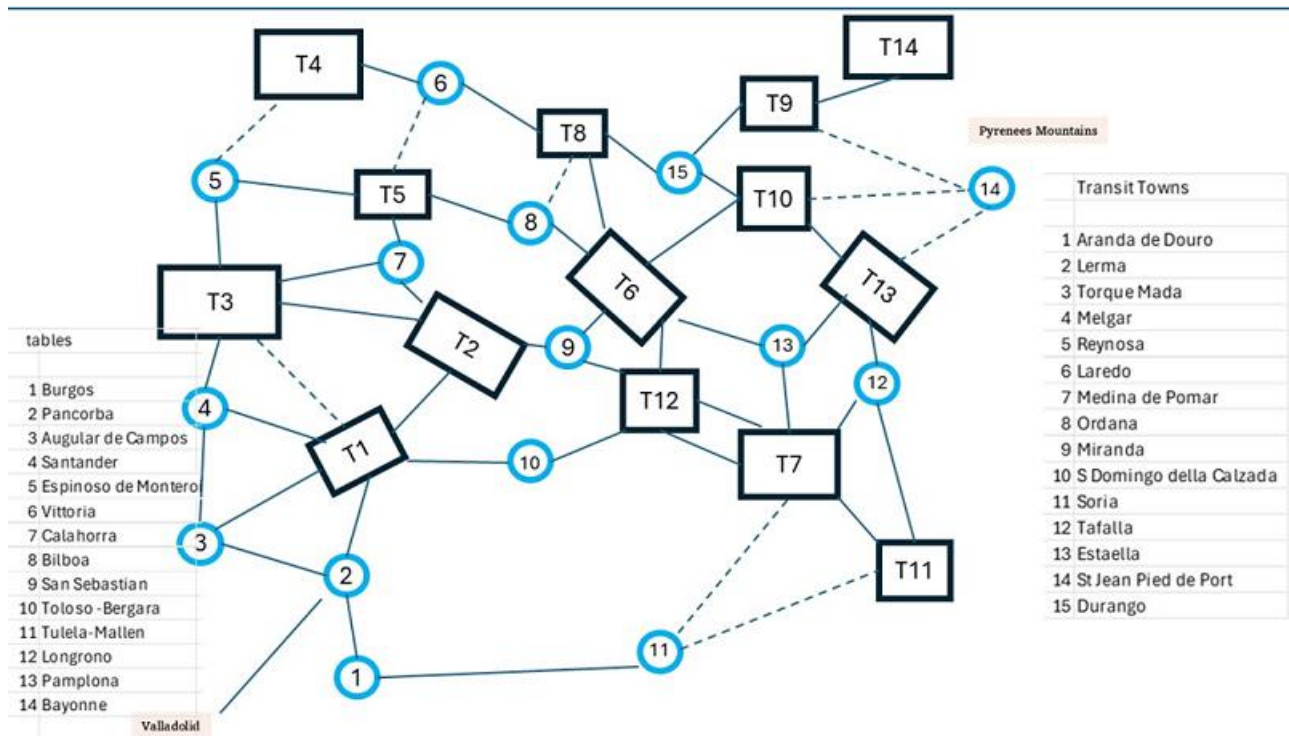
So I designed a double table to create the room needed. How well did my plan go?... I'll let the report from Major Gen Ponsonby speak for me... "Ponsonby led the British into view of the city and as the French positions came into view, he realized that Lief and Alten were already within sight of the city as well. Now three divisions who had not been ordered to take Vittoria were staring down the city's French defenders with a possible two more divisions behind."

Sometimes you get lucky! Through the day, there were three to four French, and three to four British players on the Vittoria table at the same time. The day ended with a three versus three battle on the table. The double table worked out well.

The terrain in Northern Spain has a lot of mountains and rough terrain. And of course the Pyrenees mountains were the most dominating feature. I had only one transit town in the Pyrenees, and I put a limit of TWO units ONLY able to travel the road. I think Daricau (James) was the only player who scouted out the town in the mountains.

Only one River, the Ebro, was a major river. This was on the mind of both sides. While three tables had the Ebro with bridges (and one ford), I made the main road from Burgos to Vittoria a transit town (Miranda X9) so as not to hinder movement across a major river. I anticipated multiple divisions moving in that direction and didn't want to break my number one rule of maneuverability.

My maps...



Victory Conditions

Objectives: Napoleon needs his Marshals in Spain to repel the British Army approaching the frontier. Taking Burgos would set the British back, as this traces supply all the way to Portugal. He also needs to avoid a major defeat, as that likely would persuade Austria to join the coalition forces in Germany. The British need take the major cities and to push the French out of Spain and capture the main road to Bayonne, which is France's main source of supply.

I put these Victory objectives into a points system.

Control the following

Burgos +2
Vittoria +2
Pamplona +2
San Sebastian +1
Santander +1

Division Exhaustion: Casualties exceed 75% = -1

Enormous Train of Booty: French earn if wagons gets to Bayonne +1

Control of main road from Burgos to Bayonne: British earn if they can control 3 / 5 tables +1

British Capture Bayonne : British earn +10 VPs

I almost made the capture of Bayonne an Automatic victory, since this would be catastrophic to Napoleon's reign to have British occupy a French city while he was facing down the Allies in Saxony.

At the start, the French owned 5 VPs and the British 2 VPs. That would put the burden of attack on the British. The train of booty and the control of the road I considered bonus opportunities in case of a tight game.

Special Scenario Rules

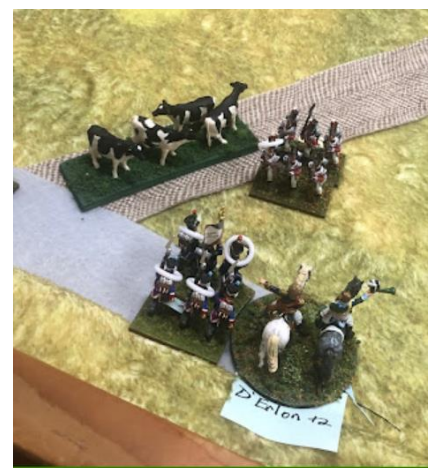
Each side had unique concerns, unknown to the opponent. Supply in Spain's rugged terrain was an issue for both sides. The British were a long way from their ports in Portugal. It was important for them to capture a Northern Spanish port to alleviate this situation. Only two ports were available: Santander and San Sebastian. Historically the British used Santander. So did our Generals. The French had to deal with Partisans disrupting their supply. I tried to keep the Partisan rules simple: garrison certain towns, mainly along the main road or pay the penalty. I marked the seven towns with a Flag that needed a garrison, failure to do so would result in random morale checks.

King Joseph had the choice to use the Bayonne garrison as a reserve, or disperse to these towns. He chose the latter, relieving the burden of every French Division commander from having to give up a unit for garrison duty. I chuckled when I heard a British post-game comment, "I wondered why I kept running into all these towns with a garrison."

Also French messages had a possibility of 5% chance getting intercepted by the partisans. Only one message during the day got stopped.

The British also had the opportunity to involve the Royal Navy. But only for bringing reinforcements to the battle, as this was a land battle game. Pre-Campaign, Wellington had to determine where his big guns and Portuguese reserves would land. I needed a specific time and location. The Navy would wait up to one hour for the Brits to capture that port or they would leave without dropping the reinforcements. Wellington chose Santander, 1 pm. General Graham made it happen capturing the town at noon and holding it from a pesky French Cavalry threat. Two Heavy Artillery units and some Portuguese infantry made it to shore.

The French had the "Enormous train of booty" located in the city of

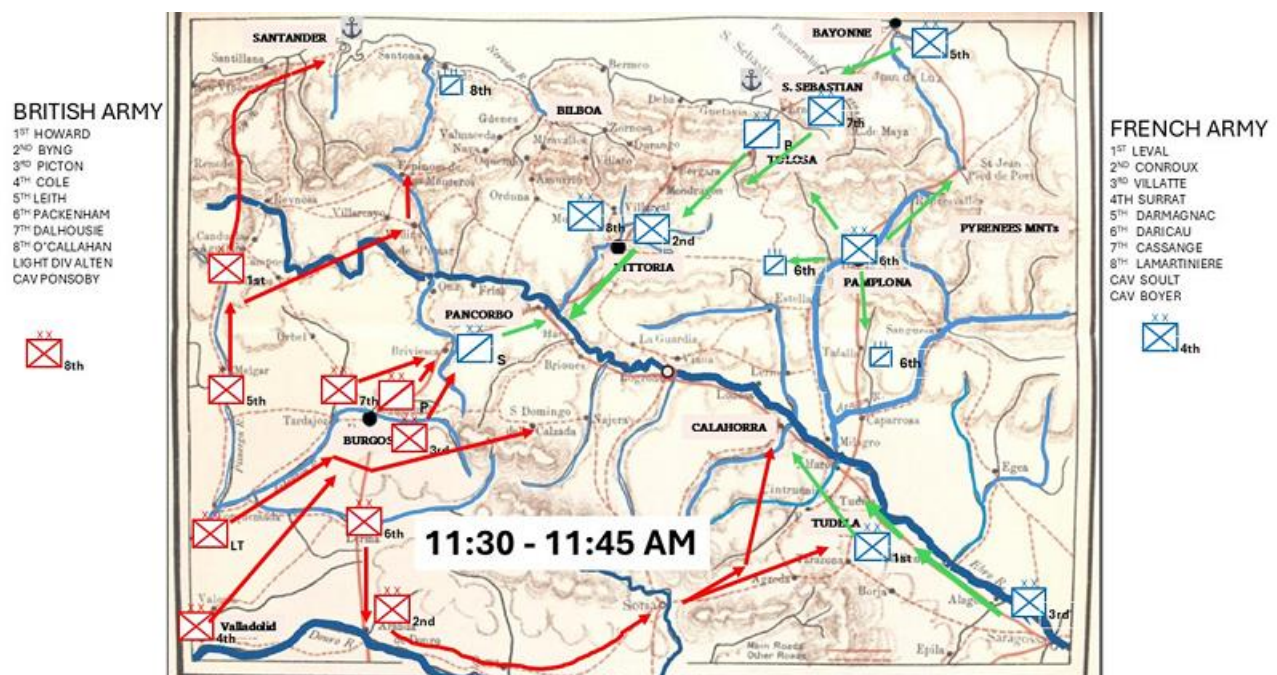
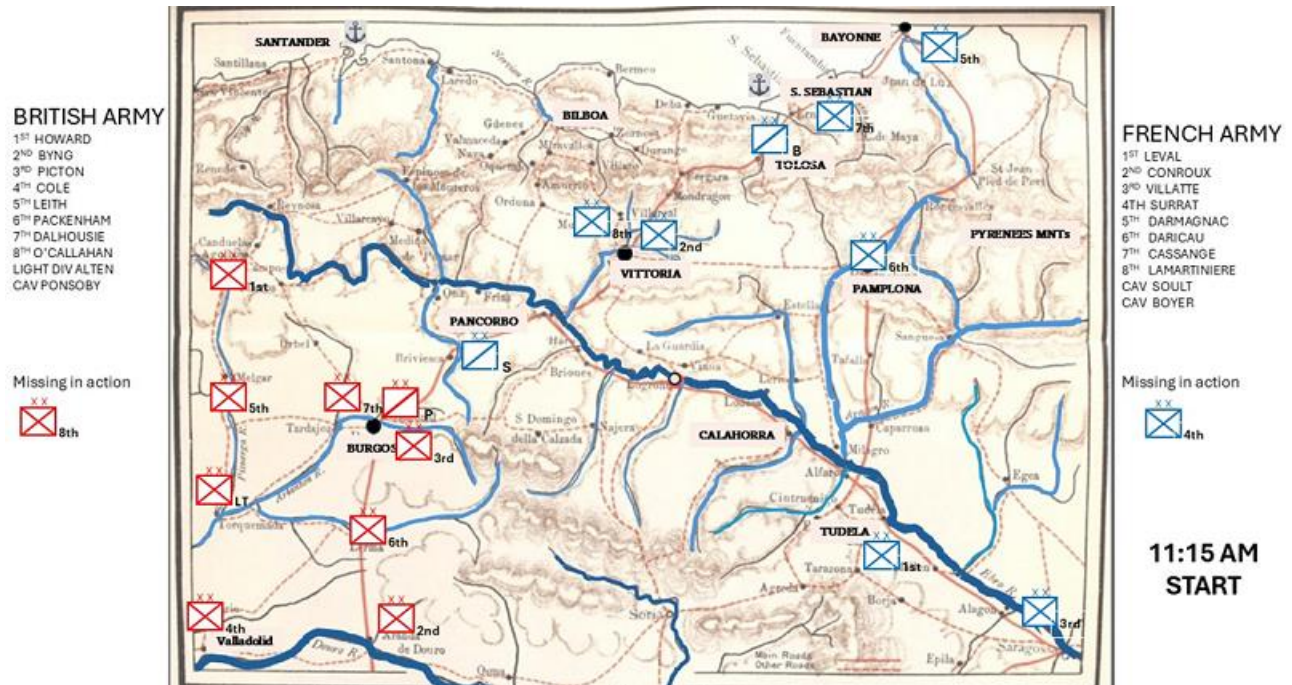


Fresh beef tonight for the Brits!

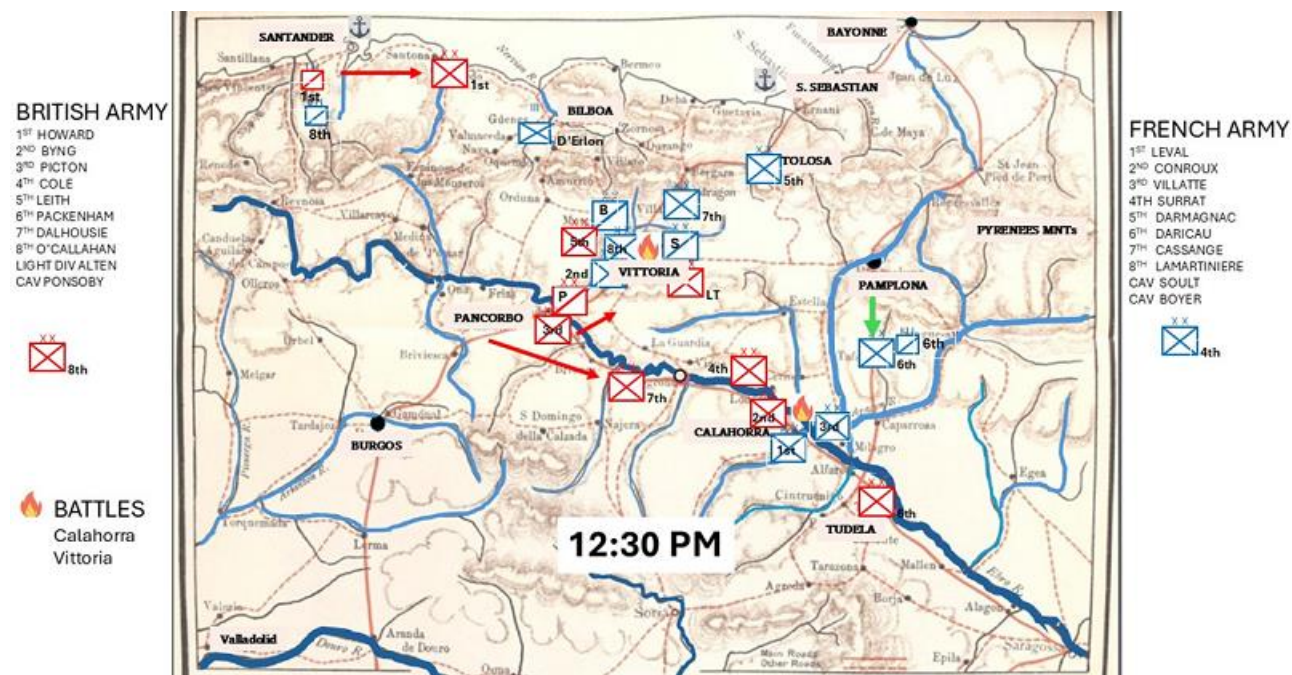
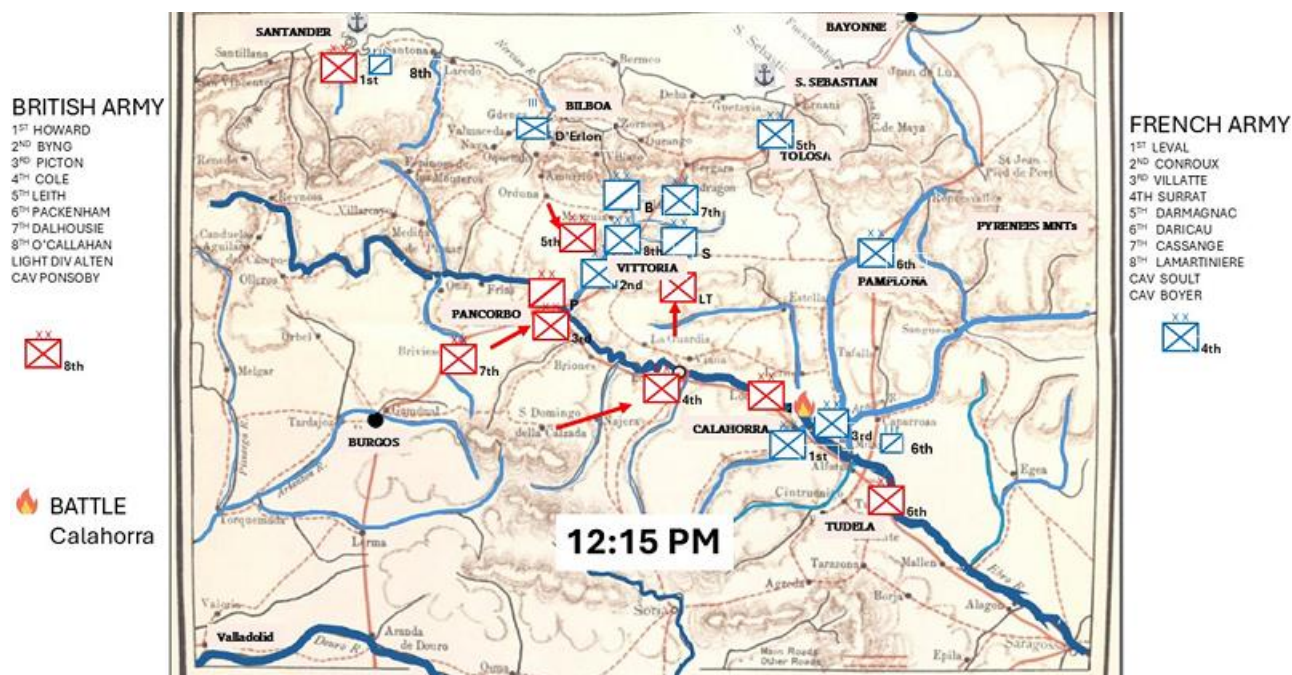
Vittoria. It began moving north around noon. It moved at a speed of the sum of 3d6 inches every 15 minutes along the main road until it reaches Bayonne. The French command put a road priority to this loot and did their best to ensure Bonaparte got his wealth. Unfortunately, it ended up behind British lines. **All the troops had Beef Wellington that night.**

Campaign Recap From GM Perspective

1813, June to July. The stage is set. Since April Wellington has continually out maneuvered and out flanked the French forcing them behind the Ebro River. The British are gathered around Burgos. The challenge now is to push the French back beyond the Pyrenees.



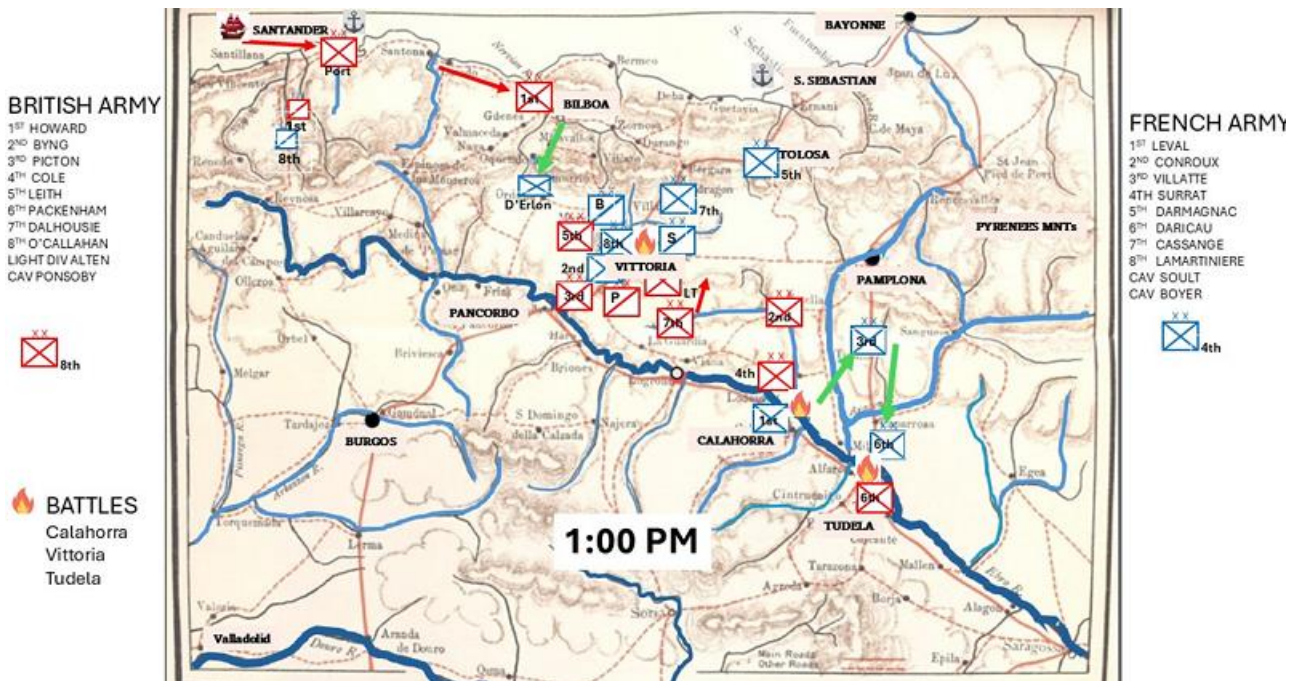
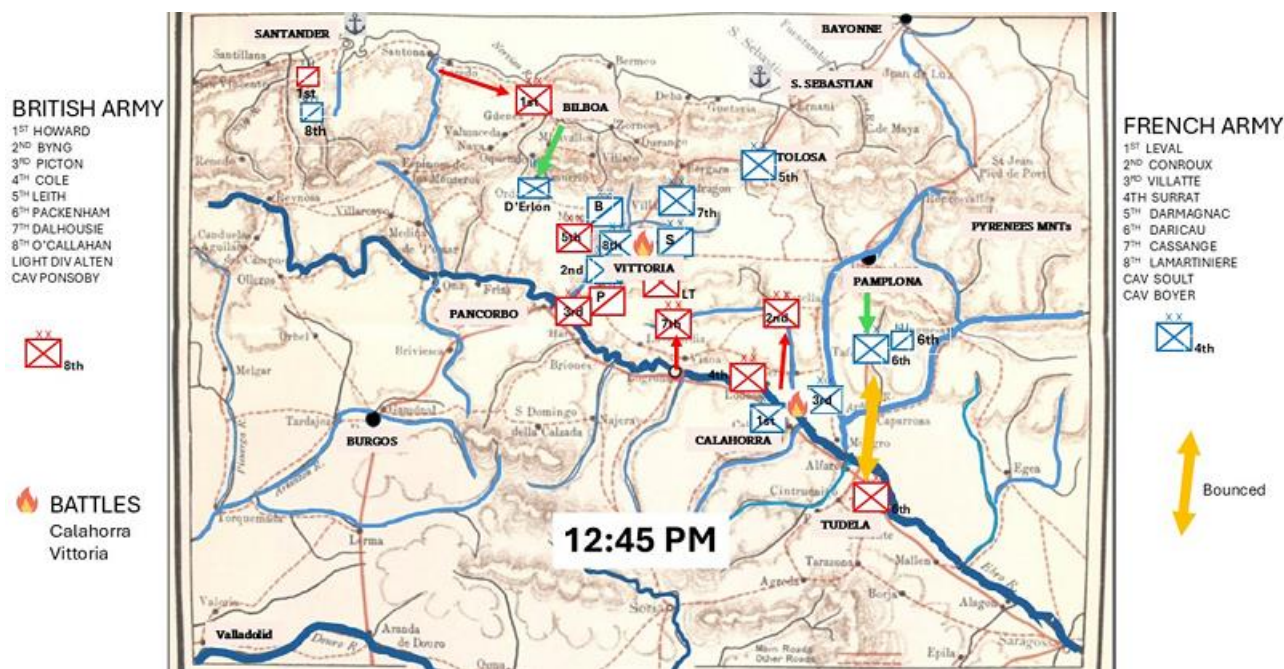
D'Erlon establishes more garrisons at Bilboa and **Gdenes** to shore up the French western flank. Daricau has returned to **Pamplona** and is hurrying forward to confront Packenham who is ready to cross the Ebro but is awaiting further orders from Wellington having already achieved his early objective.



The British 5th Division fire the opening shots of the Battle of **Vittoria** as they attack the French right flank village of **Mendoso**. Alten begins a push directly toward the city from on the French left flank. Conroux's 2nd Division is in a salient, with the British Cavalry directly in front of them hot on its heels coming from **Pancorbo** and **Miranda**. The British 1st light horse pursue the wounded 8th cavalry unit as it moves south out of trouble. 1st Division infantry secures the town of **Laredo**.

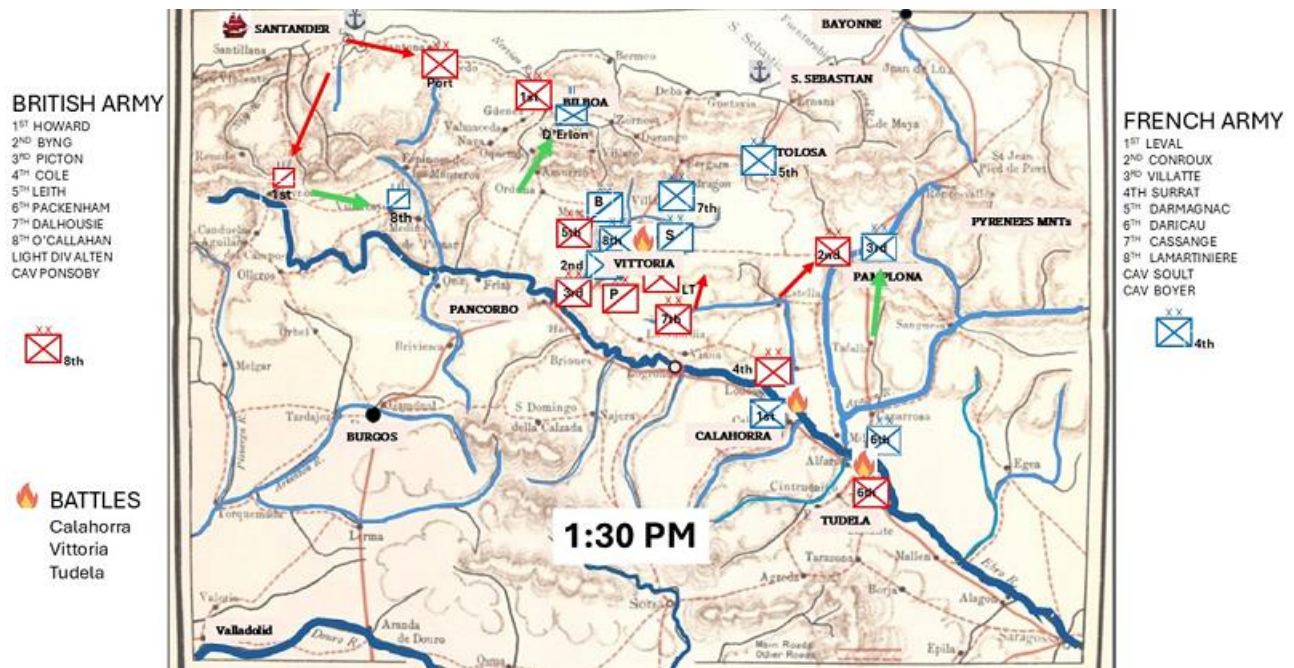
Packenham advances on **Tarfella** but is bounced by the slightly larger French force of Daricau who is advancing south from Pamplona. At **Calahorra**, the situation is changing. Cole's British 4th Division arrives on the NORTH side of the Ebro to even up the battle. Byng's 2nd Division has orders to push onto **Pamplona**. The arrival of Cole enables Byng to take a chance to move North over the Ebro since he controls the bridge. He leaves a rear guard to fight off a Leval's French 1st Division at the South side bridge.

At **Vittoria** the musket fire is getting louder. Leith's 5th Div is engaging both Fr 2nd and 8th Divisions. Ponsoby's elite and guard horses are attacking Fr 2nd division cav on either flank of the line anchored by the village of **Subijana De Alava**. 7th Division under Dalhousie has taken an alternate flank march and arrives to support Alten's push to **Vittoria**.



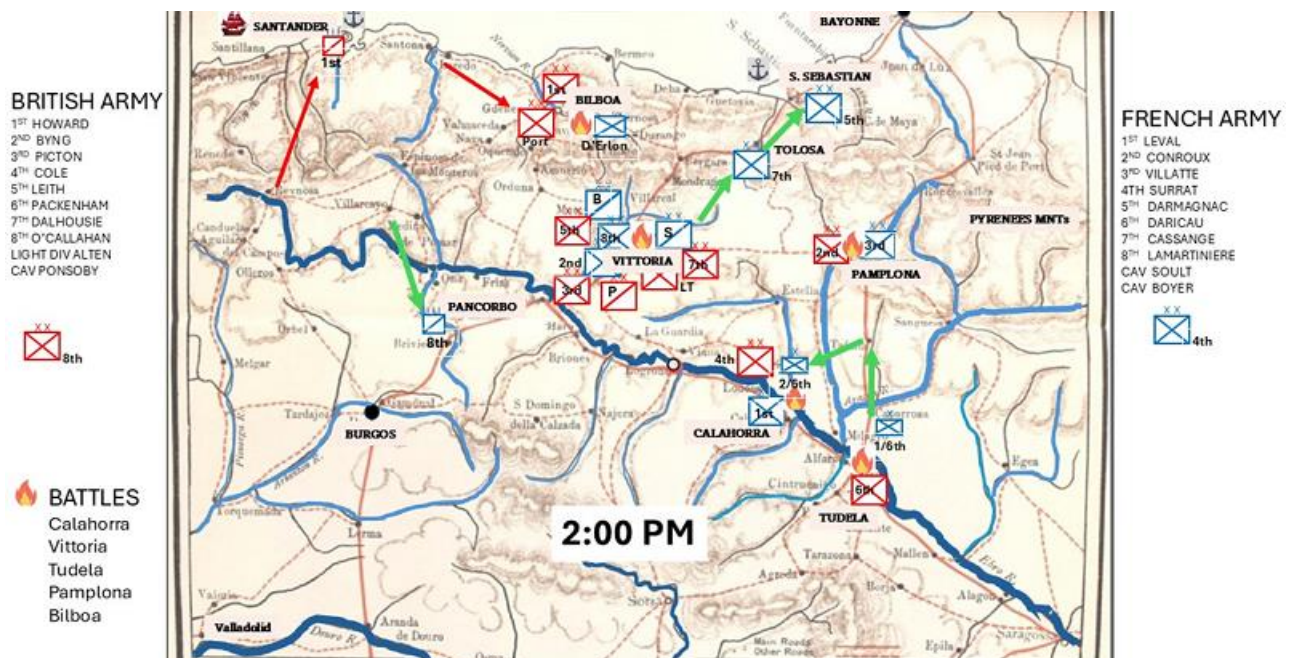
A 3rd battle now begins to take shape at **Tudela**. Daricau has forced Packenham back to the south side of the Ebro. Both sides exchange long range cannon fire. At **Calahorra** Cole's 4th division now faces south while Leval on the other side of the Ebro faces north and is forming up for an assault. Byng has left the battle and is at the town of **Estella**. Villatte sees that Byng is threatening the French owned **Pamplona** and smartly takes a parallel route over the Ebro onto **Tafalla**, a town Daricau who moments before had just left. The race to Pamplona is on.

At **Vittoria** the British vice is beginning to tighten. Conroux is expertly delaying three British divisions with timely Squares and positioning giving the French time to bring in reinforcements and establish a defensive line at the city. But his 3rd Division is taking on casualties. Meanwhile to the North the long-awaited British reinforcements arrive. 6 fresh Portuguese regiments and two heavy siege guns. Howard's 1st Div looks to force the surrender of the **Bilboa** and **Gdenes** garrisons.



Graham commands the Portuguese reinforcements and heads west to support Howard. D'Erlon has returned to try and defend the **Bilboa** area and has ordered Cassagne's 7th Div to about face and march back north to San Sebastian. This will leave the French **Vittoria** force outnumbered. Soult's cav must stay on the east flank to watch as Dalhousie's 7th Div is extending the British right flank to try and overlap the French position. Boyer's cav begins to move across the minor river to try and threaten the British attack by Leith's 5th Div. Ponsoby and Picton divisions are applying massive pressure on Conroux in the middle.

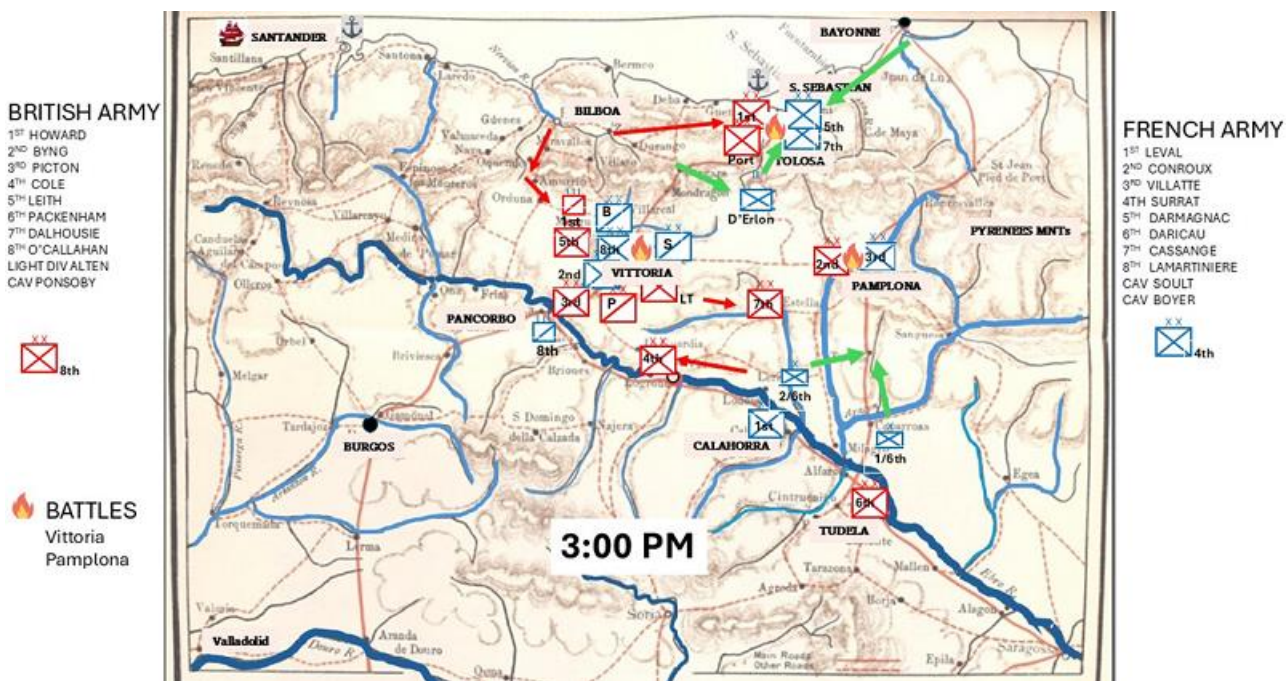
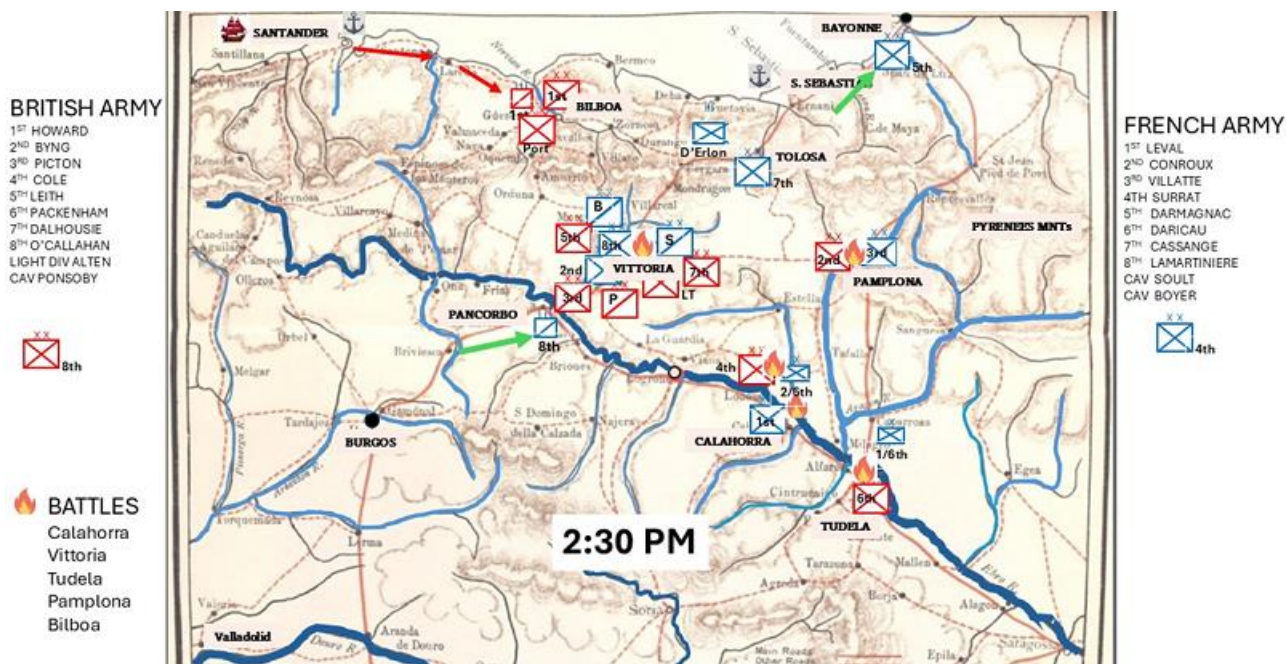
At **Calahorra**, Level is making a methodical attack across the Ebro while Cole's 4th Div holds its ground. Farther south the battle at **Tudela** has subsided a bit as neither force wants to try and make a river crossing in front of an even foe. Villatte has won the race to **Pamplona** by a mere five minutes. Byng allowed his troops to rest and cook a meal at **Estella** after their long march and hard fighting at **Calahorra**.



The wounded French 8th Cavalry is making its way back to French lines, as is the British 1st cav. **Bilboa** is about to fall to the superior numbers of the British left wing. The steady British advance at **Vittoria** continues, as Cassange and Darnagnac retreat north to protect the route to Bayonne. **Calahorra** might appear to be a stalemate, but Daricau has something up his sleeve. He splits his 6th Div into two parts. While holding in place vs Packenham he has put a reserve

force in the town of **Tafalla**. From there he sends his cavalry down to **Calahorra** to take a look at the action there. Stay tuned.....

Meanwhile another battle has just begun at **Pamplona**. Byng is beginning to maneuver (my favorite word) to take Pamplona as Villate had won the race to Pamplona and has secured the bridge over the minor river.

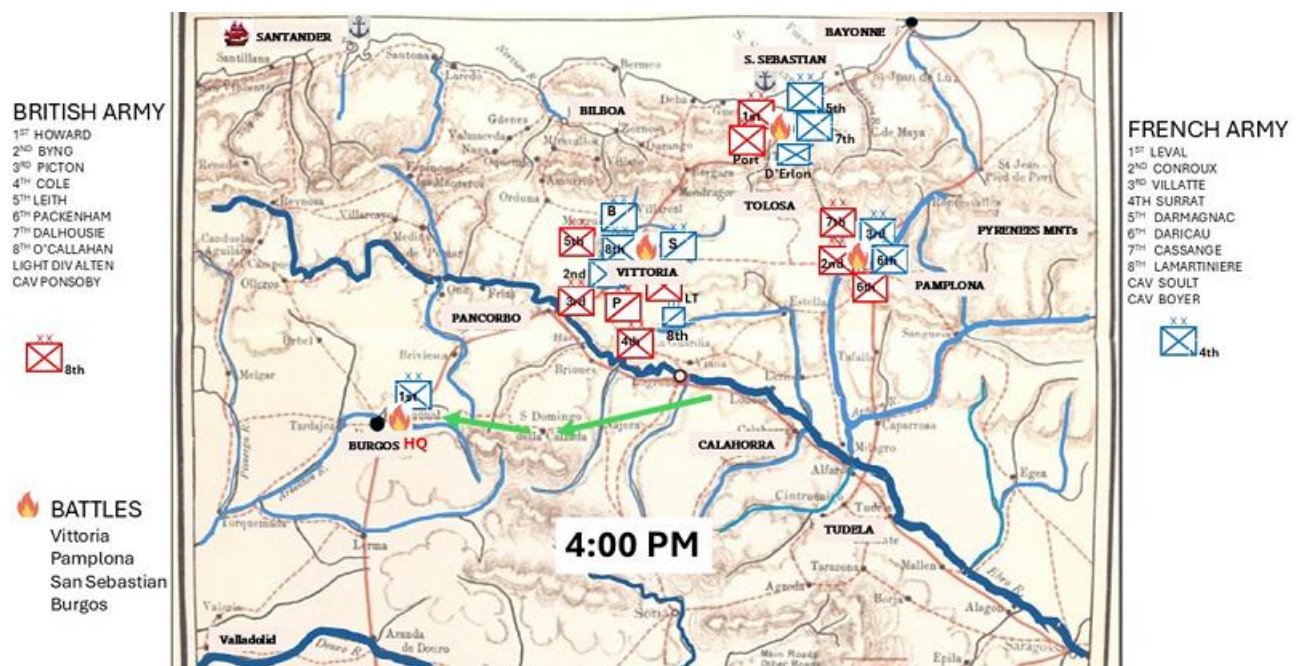
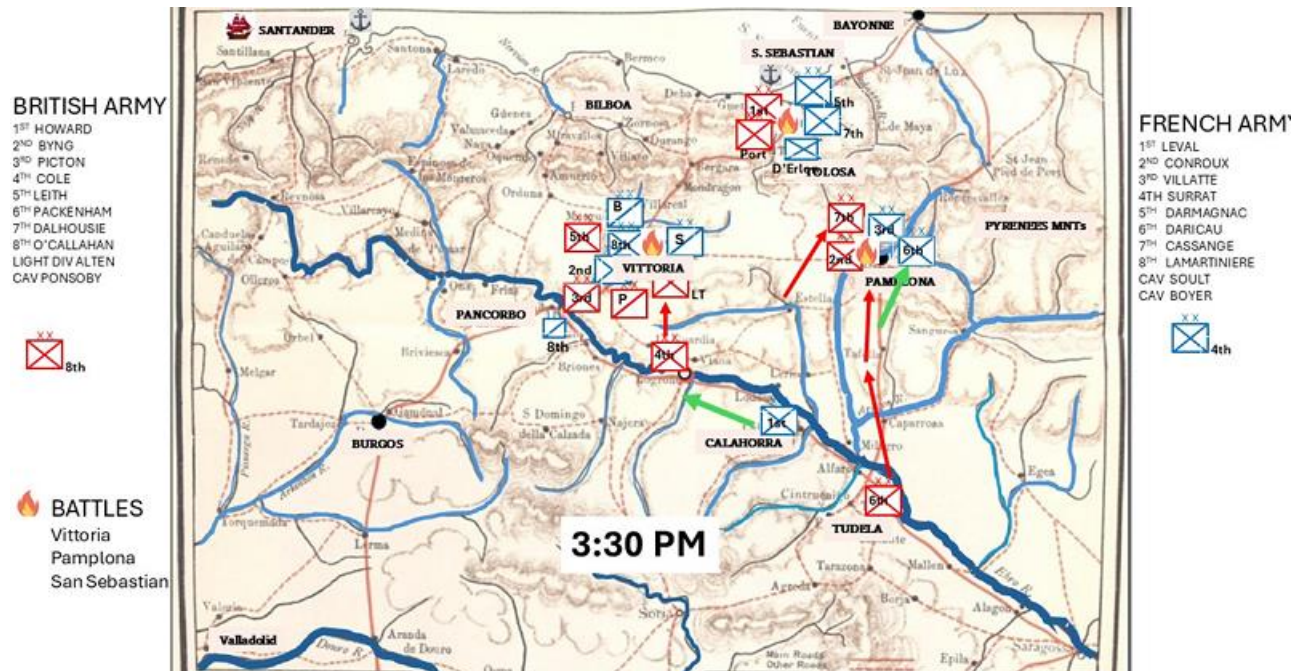


The British 1st Div takes **Bilboa** and prepares to move east along the coast to Durango. D'Erlon is retreating toward **San Sebastian** with the remnants of the Bilboa garrison.

The Battle at **Vittoria** is raging. Alten and Dalhousie are making a push on British right flank as Ponsoby cav is wrecking Conroux's 2nd Div. Leith continues to attack but is slowed by Lamartiner's Artillery in Vittoria. At **Pamplona** Byng's 2nd Div is looking for a weak spot in Villattes's 3rd Div. Tudela is quiet as half of Daricau's 6th division is defending the route north vs Packenham's 6th Div. Daricau sees an opportunity at **Calahorra**. He sends reinforcements there and the cavalry moves onto the flank of Cole's 4th Div. Cole has the French 1st Div in his front and 6th Div cav on his flank. He doesn't have enough troops to face against the new arrivals. He sends a one word message to Wellington. "HELP".

The Elite 2nd Dragoon regiment crashes into the British line near the village of **Lerma**. At **Tudela** Pakenham makes a flank march across the Ebro and threatens Daricau's rear guard who falls back to protect the road north to Pamplona. Cassange's 7th Div takes up a position just to the west of **San Sebastian**. Darmagnac's 5th Div arrives to back up the Cassange. They have beaten the British to the port city.

The 4th Division takes flight back west thru **Longrono** and heads...North to Vittoria. Leval's 1st Div consolidates and begins its march east on the south side of the Ebro toward Longrono. Meanwhile Daricau two half divisions meet at Tafalla. His timing is perfect, as Pakenham's 6th Div is hot on the heels heading north from **Tudela**, but is bounced at **Tafalla** due to owning the larger force by +1 unit. At **Vittoria** the noose is starting to tighten on the French as he British continue a steady advance on three sides. Dalhousie 7th Div realizes it is better served at Pamplona, and heads east toward **Estella**. Howards British 1st Div arrives at **San Sebastian** to find a line of French regiments awaiting. D'Erlon's one-regiment detachment arrives on the British flank with the baggage train right behind coming from Toloso.



At **Pamplona** Dalhousie's 7th Div has changed the status quo. Villatte's 3rd Div is now outnumbered and pulls back behind the river for a better defense of the city. But soon Daricau arrives to bolster the French. However, soon Pakenham arrives throwing the balance in the British favor again. Leval's 1st Div soon arrives at **Longrono** and begins

to take out the British garrisons. Cole is at **Vittoria**, witnessing the British horsemen positioning for an attack on the French cav poised on the left flank. At **San Sebastian** the British move in for the attack. Darmagnac's cav moves on the British right flank, which promptly form square. D'Erlon is battling to protect the baggage train, and in the process wounds the British General Howard. Wing commander Graham is there to steady the troops.

The home stretch. British make advances towards the three cities, but the French give ground stubbornly and hold the key objectives. Leval has received orders from King Joseph to move to Burgos. Leval complies. After disposing of the Longrono garrisons, 1st Div moves through **S. Domingo** and arrives at **Burgos** table. The retreating garrison at Gamonal is quickly disposed of. Leval moves in on the garrison at Burgos with Wellington defending with two units. They cannot hold, and the French enter Burgos.

Wellington himself is captured. This is devastating for the British cause. Losing their leader and the supply source will cause a cessation to the offensive. At least they got a steak dinner.

Victory

Overall, the French won on points 6 to 1. While this might seem lopsided, it really came down to the last 10 minutes of the day, as the capture of Burgos was a 4 pt swing. Still would have been a French marginal victory 4-3.

Quote from Wellington: *"Victory is the ability to fight five minutes longer than any other army in the world."* Apparently, he was off by 10 minutes this day.

Putting this campaign together was really a team effort. I want to thank Asst. GMs Peter and Mark, and also James and Russ for all their assistance. I could not have done this without their help. Also thanks to Nate and Sean with help on my pregame efforts and tables. And a big thanks to the Portal game store in Manchester, CT, for hosting us.

After the battle of Vittoria, I read, in the expressive language of an officer who bore his part in the victory, *"They were beaten before the town, and in the town, and through the town, and out of the town, and behind the town, and all around the town."*

What a magnificent, comprehensive GM report, complete with maps, on the troop movements during the 1813 Spain Campaign in a Day! Fantastic!

Last AAR, the November 2025 issue, has my own recap. For all the recaps submitted by French and Allied players, see Peter's Blunders on the Danube blog. It will have table maps and more. – Russ L.

Spain 1813 British Messages

By the Commanders

GM Mike compiled the messages that passed between the British players, usually to and from the C-in-C Wellington. The time is time sent. Time received is usually five minutes later. If you match the time to the GM's maps, you can see how fog of war is often well represented even though the tables are in the same room. Imagine trying to do this over miles with actual couriers. – Russ L.

Time	To	From	Location	Message
11:43	Wellington	Graham	Santander	Duke, Santander in sight of vanguard. No enemies in sight
11:45	Wellington	Graham	Santander	Santander secure. Securing Santillana to hold supply. Howard arriving
11:48	Graham	Wellington	Burgos	Let know size of enemy force when able
11:52	Wellington	Leith	Espionsa	Passed thru Villareayo onto Vittoria
11:52	Howard	Wellington	Santander	French Cav sighted on road to Santander

11:53	Wellington	Packenham	Tudela	I was supposed to go to Tarazona but the road network took me to Tudela, just south of the Ebro. What are your orders?
11:54	Wellington	Alten	Longrono	Bridge over Ebro near Longrono Captured. No enemy activity
11:56	Wellington	Byng	Calahorra	1st contact w/ French of equal force
11:58	Wellington	Graham	Santander	Only one regiment of light cav in sight
12:05	Wellington and they have Artillery	Byng	Calahorra	More French troops have arrived. Lots outnumbered 2.5 to 1
12:10	Wellington	Leith	Vittoria	Reached Vittoria engages enemy. Baggage train spotted
12:11	Wellington Div	Alten	Vittoria	Road to Vittoria open. Baggage spotted. Made contact with 5th Div
12:12	Leith	Wellington	Burgos	Continue east. Communicate with Graham
???	Wellington	Leith reply	Vittoria	NO. Leith needs to stay let's crush Vittoria
12:12	Graham	Wellington	Burgos	Move along coast if able
12:13	Graham	Wellington	Burgos	Will attempt to reinforce you
12:15	Wellington Vittoria	Alten	Vittoria	French force retreats North. Picton on tail. Soult already at Vittoria
12:18	Packenham	Wellington	Burgos	Alten moving on Vittoria. Attempt to push thru flank. Make sure road to Burgos safe
12:16	Wellington	Packenham	Tudela	French cav have appeared on the road to Pamplona
12:16	Wellington	Cole	Longrono	Successfully arrived, awaiting orders
12:23	Wellington enemy	Packenham	Tudela	French Cav have left, headed North. No further sign of the enemy
12:26	Alten Pamplona to cut lines	Wellington	Burgos	Talk to Division commanders. If possible send division to Pamplona to cut lines
12:30	Wellington	Graham	Santander	Fr Lancers delayed movement, repulsed, will move along coast
12:30	Wellington	Picton	Vittoria	Picton, Ponsby, Alten, Dalhousie all at Vittoria
12:40	Wellington Portuguese arrive	Graham	Santander	Lancers retreated towards Reynosa. Will hold here until Portuguese arrive
12:50	Wellington and continue East unless instructed otherwise	Howard	Bilboa	Minimal resistance found at Bilboa. Will remove the French and continue East unless instructed otherwise
12:50	Graham	Wellington	Burgos	Move to San Sebastian ASAP
12:52	Leith	Wellington	Burgos	Graham moving East along coast. If possible send any division east or north. Understood may not be possible

12:55	Wellington	Howard	Bilboa	Marchal Drout has arrived to the field. Will delay us
1:05	Wellington	Graham	Santander	Portuguese arrived. Will leave garrison and follow Howard to Bilboa
1:05	Wellington	Packenham	Tudela	Daricau - French 6th Div bounced me back to Tudela. He is now withdrawing North
1:16	Howard	Wellington	Burgos	Portugese on the way
1:26	Wellington	Packenham	Tudela	The French have withdrawn North. If I follow them we may be able to flank them. Do you want me to go North?
1:30	Wellington	Byng	Estella	I am at a dreaded Corp at Pamplona. Looks like the French have 2 corps+ on getting on the table. I have some units in the deployment zone but will not move into a buzz saw, Any help available? Let me know
1:39	Packenham	Wellington	Burgos	Move north. Leave garrison
2:05	Wellington	Packenham	Tudela	The French have returned from the North. I will stop them
2:19	Wellington	Packenham	Tudela	The French retreated North bank of the Ebro. Unless he makes a mistake, I will be unable to move North
2:30	Wellington	Cole	Calahorra	SEND HELP
2:34	Wellington	Howard	Vittoria	Found back route to Vittoria. Can disengage. Do we pursue Vittoria or San Sebastian
2:58	Cole	Wellington	Burgos	Hold on fall back if have to. No more than 1 table
3:00	Wellington	Howard	San Sebastian	Had to seize initiative, moved with Graham to San Sebastian. Large Garrison encountered. Will engage with caution
3:03	Wellington	Packenham	Tudela	The French have retreated. I am leaving a garrison and moving North, as per your last order
4:13	Alten	Wellington	Burgos	A Division must pull back to Burgos
???	Wellington	Alten	Vittoria	Vittoria is Taken! God Save the King!

(GM: The British capture of Vittoria of course did not happen. As night fell, the battle saw the French clinging to the city. --Mike)

Spain 1813 French Messages

By the Commanders

And now it's the French messages.

As with the Allied messages, GM Mike compiled the messages that passed between the French players, usually to and from the C-in-C Joseph. The time is time sent. Time received is usually five minutes later. If you match the time to the GM's maps, you can see how fog of war is often well represented even though the tables are in the same room. Imagine trying to do this over miles with actual couriers. – Russ L.

Time	To	From	Location	Message
11:45	Larmaneric towards me. Need support	Soult	Pancorbo	In Retreat at Pancorbo. Have a Cav Div & INF Div moving
11:46	Soult tell your subordinating commanders	Joe Bonaparte	Pancorbo	If possible when moving use Road movement, but make sure to
11:46	Reille tell your subordinating commanders, Mark	Joe Bonaparte	Vittoria	If possible when moving use Road movement, but make sure to
11:46	Napoleon	Cassagna	Tolosa	Arrive Tolosa with most of Div. D'Erlon in Durango
11:48	J Bonaparte	Conroux	Miranda X9	2nd Div has taken a blocking position at Miranda
11:50	Joseph	Reille	Santander	Found British Division at Santander Table 4.
11:50	Boyer	Reille	Santander	Found British Division at Santander Table 4.
11:50	Burr	Reille	Santander	Found British Division at Santander Table 4.
11:50	J Bonaparte	Leval	Calhorra	Table 7 British Div Contacted
11:51	Lacmmure	Reille	Santander	Found British Division at Santander Table 4. Come Join us
11:55	Boyer priority	Joe Bonaparte	Vittoria	Through Road movement is priority 1. Wagons are higher
11:57	Napoleon	D'Erlon	Durango	Heading to Bilboa w/D'Erlon and 3 units of Infantry
11:59	Joseph	Reille	Santander	Found British Division at Santander trying to concentrate.
12:00	Leval well as consolidate to fight. By the way what town is table 7? {GM reply was Calhorra}	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Be both thorough and careful, use firepower + movement as
12:00	Soult counter punch	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	If possible delay them; String them along and be ready to
12:00	Russ	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Be ready to move to support Vittoria
12:00	Reille they weaken	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Test them; but do not overstretch be ready to counter teh m if
12:00	Conroux	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Good, if no foe, be ready to support other units in your side
12:04	Reille them in detail	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	If possible; delay them and when opportunites present destroy
12:04	Napoleon countryside	D'Erlon	Bilboa	Arrived on Bilboa Table. No troops of either side at city or in
12:08	Napoleon Gdenes	D'Erlon	Bilboa	Will garrison city w/ 1 unit. 17th Ligne. Heading towards
12:10	D'Erlon to Pacorbo, Briviesca then to Burgos	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	If possible make your way around and down by way of Orduna

12:10	D'Erlon	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	By all means head down towards Burgos be the safest road of your choice! Of course if you have troops in your own command. If not how're you without troops?
12:11	Napoleon	Cassagna	Tolosa	Exiting towards Vitoria from Tolosa
12:12	D'Erlon	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Good idea! Back door approach! I really approve the cunning!
12:12	Russ	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Good! Head down that road but do be careful to allow priority for baggage train if conflicts come up
12:15	Bonaparte	Daricau	Tudela	Brit 6th Div (Packenham) is at Tudela. I will move to engage
12:20	Joseph	Reille	Vittoria	Big Battle HERE!
12:20	James	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Good but there your task priority once and if successful is to move to seek out Coalition supply lines
12:25	Reille	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Yeah, I know I can hear the guns as it were; Take care and if possible condense and destroy the Coalition! I know you guys have the skill
12:44	Napoleon	D'Erlon	Bilboa	Brit Coldstream Gds arrive on Bilboa table Got one garrison unit only. Nothing behind me at San Sebastian except garrisons
12:46	Bonaparte	Daricau	Tudela	I have driven Packenham back across the Ebro River at Tudela
12:50	Le Roi	Reille	Vittoria	Come and play with us!
12:54	Napoleon	D'Erlon	Bilboa	D'Erlon returns to Bilboa table in attempt to stop Brit 1st Div from storming Bilboa and into Fr rear
1:00	James	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Good; If his units aren't demolished, make sure to keep blocking troops to fear him off and move on to cut off Coalition supplies going north. Make sure Pamplona is secure
1:00	Reille	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Given the circumstances I may well move down myself
1:00	D'Erlon	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Good mobile defense move, given the situation update
1:07	Joseph	Reille	Santander	British Fleet is at Santander Table 5
1:12	Reille	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Unless you have men there, how'd you know. If you do prepare to intercept them if they land troops
1:28	Joseph	Villatte	Pamplona	Moving North-now at Pamplona- Request orders. 1 Enemy Division move toward Pamplona from Calhorra on table transition -- may retreat, may not.
1:29	James	Reille	Vittoria	You are needed. Do following: Take British supply base at Santander and Garrison and move to Bayonne
1:33	Darmange	Reille	Vittoria	Garrison Bayonne with a few units. Men march to Vittoria
1:42	Napoleon	D'Erlon	Bilboa	Bilboa Falls! D'Erlon being chased. Gdenes falls!
1:45	Reille	Daricau	Tudela	Am holding against Brits advancing from the South and from the East. Will try to succor San Sebastian but it will take hours for me to get there. P.S. your message said "Santander"

1:50	D'Erlon	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Make your way to a ??? In defending main road and seek to reach cowork with Co. Gen. Army du Midi around ???; on at San Sebastian
1:50	Bonaparte	Daricau	Tudela	Pakenham is on south side of Ebro R. Heading east parallel along the Ebro R. he has no Cavalry. I am holdinig him at Tudela but with no combat
2:00	Russ	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Retreat countermanded. Firm up to block enemy offensive in region of Tolosa + Bergarm
2:11	James	Reille	Vittoria	Take Santander. Is their only supply base. It has 1 unit + Fleet
2:25	James	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	If he lacks mobile interference forces; but is up to that; if possible artillery dominance if you have better fire power crumble him and move on
2:26	Russ	Reille	Vittoria	Make haste to Vittoria! And tell the other guys with you
2:26	Bearded Guy	Reille	Vittoria	Make haste to Vittoria! Tell Russ to hurry too
2:36	Reille	Daricau	Tudela	I am at Pamplona with Enemy blocking all my avenues east and north. I CANNOT reach Santander sorry
2:40	Russ	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Head for St. Sebastian Port. Haste. Seems a main enemy force is heading into the area. You are rewarded with the dignity of ensuring the the baggage train reaches Bayonne in repayment from me!
2:48	Reille	Cassagna	San Sebastian	2 Corp Brit Gd + Portug on road to San Seb and Bayonne. Napoleon ordered me here w/D'Erlon to Tolosa
2:49	Joe Bonaparte	Leval	Calahorra	Victory! Have taken Calhorra and Lerma
2:50	Napoleon	D'Erlon	Tolosa	Arrived to scout. Nothing but cows and wagons
2:53	Napoleon	D'Erlon	Tolosa	Brits on San Sebastian table, cutting off cows and wagon road to Bayonne
3:00	Russ	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Okay, you and G2 your colleague in the region of San Sebastian demolish them in time for the baggage train
3:00	Leval	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Head in force to Vittoria and assist; if feasible head to Burgos ASAP!
3:01	Reille	Daricau	Tudela	Packenham has forced a crossing of the Ebro R. I am falling back to Pamplona to defend and regroup
3:32	Bonaparte	Daricau	Pamplona	The Brit Divisions of Byng, Dalhousie & Packenham have converged on the Pamplona. We can hold to the end of day, just barely
3:35	James	Joe Bonaparte	Bayonne	Good. Hold them; holding when outnumbered 3:1 or even 3:2 is a worthwhile task

(You'll notice spelling is sometimes off. Sometimes, messages are unreadable. Sometimes, names reflect the historical commanders, the player, or "bearded guy." If you think it's easy to manage such chaos... Russ L.)



Renaud and the British marching along near the Clarke House while my Americans move to intercept.

1777 Battle of Princeton: *RUSE* Revised

by Russ Lockwood

The skirmish version of Renaud's *RUSE* system works well, but he wanted to stretch the skirmish-level game into a slightly higher unit-level game while keeping the *RUSE* basics.

So, he picked the American Revolution Battle of Princeton as the test scenario. By random die roll, I became the Americans and he the British. The scenario had the Americans intercept a British march.

RUSE Revised

Renaud contemplated three states of troops: Survival (run away from danger to avoid getting hurt), Prey Upon (put hurt on the enemy while trying to stay safe), and Aggression (advance upon the enemy to deal lots of hurt and discomfort to the enemy). With these in mind, he "automated" a number of what used to be activations.

For example, Firing is the first phase in a turn. If a unit is doing nothing, but enemy is in range of muskets, rifles, or cannons, the unit will fire. The usual *RUSE* system of the target rolling a number of defense dice depending on situation and the firer rolling a number of attack dice depending on the number of figures and traits (i.e. Marksmen fire double dice on first fire in the game). All dice that equal or exceed the highest defense die roll puts a hit on the target. Consequences ensue as hits accumulate.

Obviously, *Yahtzee* rolls are inevitable. One of my units, rolling but a single die, kept rolling a 6 for the defense die. Thus, only 6s hit it. It stood strong behind the fence. On the other hand, Renaud rolled 2d6 defense dice for a unit and rolled snake-eyes. Every roll I had equaled a 1, so I put a world of hurt on that unit. It all evens out over the course of a game, but like any other die-rolling system, dice can run hot and cold. It pays to have reserves.

He also refined the activations into something called Fatigue. Everything except the basic 6-inch move generates one fatigue on a unit, but the unit has the chance to roll off the fatigue in three of the phases: Firing, Command (when

activations occur), and Lull (last phase). Sometimes, rolling off Fatigue allows a paired action. For example, roll off Fatigue in the Firing phase and the unit can fire.

Endurance and Hits

Units can have varying Endurance -- the number of hits it can absorb before becoming Shocked (think disordered) or Double Shocked (rout and remove from table). Also, when hits equal Endurance (because Shock can be removed), the unit routs from the table.

To keep it simple in this test, Militia had Endurance of 1 per figure (10 figures in a unit), regular troops were at two per figure (usually eight figures for 16 Endurance), and cavalry were at three per figure (usually four figures for 12 Endurance).

Seems a bit more like Cohesion to me, for he allowed hits to be regained with a devilish voluntary system. You can roll a number of d6s equal to the number of hits on a unit. It's a 50-50 roll. On a 4, 5, and 6, you reduce the number of hits by one. On a 1, 2, and 3, you increase the number of hits by one. Double-edged sword!

The American militia form up as the riflemen head across the fence into the fields.

Now, I surmised that it should all even out, and indeed, the first few rolls did, or maybe swung hits by one. However, dice being dice, Renaud once rolled six or eight dice and regained all but one hit. Alternately, two of his units hit the rout road when he rolled 15 d6s and added hits, breaking the units because they had 16 Endurance. So, "Do you feel lucky, punk?"

Activations

One final tweak. Renaud used a *Chain of Command* activation idea: Activate an officer and all his units within 3 inches activate for free. I had previously noted that "line commands" were impossible in the original *RUSE*. Here was his answer.

With judicious placement, an officer can command three units in a line as long as the units are fairly close in a line. That helps get more units involved in a fight.

That's most of the refinements. The usual card selection was altered to allow the lowest card to decide whether to go first or second. Onto the battle. For the record, the Americans outnumber the British: 17 units, including five of fragile militia, to 10, including two of tough grenadiers.

Turn 6. The British shake out of road march as the Americans close in.

The Interception

The American troops found themselves flanking the British, who trudged along the road. I quickly sent the riflemen and four of the five militia units on my right towards the hill. I eventually moved the riflemen into the fields close to the Clarke House and formed the militia into a line.



In the center, I advanced the four state regiments, two inside the fenced in field and two around to the right to link with the militia.

On my left, I sent Gen. Mercer and the Continental lights into the woods while Gen. Washington and the dragoon cavalry swerved to link with the state line units in the field. It left a gap, but nothing I could do about it at the moment.

British lights charge the riflemen.

Now, all these maneuvers took time and many cards. Renaud's British units were far from idle. His own dragoons turned off the road and shook out into a line formation near the Clarke House. The two brigades, each of three line regiments, that followed also pivoted 90 degrees and advanced towards the Patriot forces, going from column to line. A cannon was deployed and the fearsome grenadiers deployed behind one of the line units near the woods.

On the left, the American lights give as good as they got, but flee. The red dice indicate hits. The blue die indicates fatigue. The amber bead is Shock.

Getting To Grips

At the Clarke House, I posted the riflemen along a fence line facing the house. British lights deployed around the house, just out of firing range.

I had two more state line units and a cannon in reserve, so I brought up the line and sent the cannon to join the militia front line. I figured on blasting the British line, but Renaud cleverly advanced and I found my cannon lacked a line of sight to his Brits. My own militia unit blocked me. I had to push the cannon forward before I could fire.

In the center, I linked with the militia with two state line units and lined the fence facing the oncoming British with the other two.

On the left, a firefight developed between Mercer and the American lights vs British line. The British possessed a trait that doubled their firing dice on the first shot of the game. The effect on the Americans was devastating, although the lights gave as good as they got and more.

Alas, failed morale sent the lights running off the table and Gen. Mercer died in the woods under a tree that would be named The Mercer Oak. But the British line was virtually incapacitated -- in Shock with considerable casualties.

Gen. Mercer suffers his fate by an oak tree.

With Gen. Washington feeling a little isolated, I brought up my reserve two Continental infantry regiments, one that swerved to the edge of the woods and the other behind. The cannon took a long while for me



to shake loose an activation and it deployed and sighted down a cleared lane of fire.

Two American state line regiments face off in a firefight with British regulars.

A Line of Firefights

The British lights at the Clarke House, eight figures strong, charged my six-figure riflemen. Alas, I could not fire in defense and half the unit vaporized from melee. As the riflemen fled, I used an activation to Rally them, which they did, and the unit about faced.

I turned the supporting militia unit slightly and unloaded on the British lights. The fire took out a quarter of the Brits. That firefight lasted until the end of the game.

Firefight in the center atop a hill.

Meanwhile, the rest of the militia faced off against the two British line units atop the hill. One state line unit pivoted to help the militia while the other supported the two state line units that lined the fence.

All units from both sides fired away, loading and firing again, sometimes with two units on one and other times one on one.

The left-most state line unit lining the fence proved a most formidable opponent -- kept rolling 6s on the defense die, which meant the British needed 6s on a d6 to hit. The other units rolled the gamut, although 4 seemed to be in play more often than not.

One spectacular fail was Renaud rolling 2d6 and getting snake-eyes, which means all shots hit. That put the unit at 15 hits out of a 16 Endurance. One more and the unit would rout.

Meanwhile, the British were hammering the American units along the line. The state line stood toe to toe. The militia a little less so, but they hung in there, too.

On the American left flank, the British Grenadiers skirt the woods and advance. The severely hit British regiment stays in the woods.



On the left, I advanced a regular Continental line unit into the woods and fired at the damaged British unit with good effect. That unit also was at 15 hits out of a 16 Endurance. So close to routing it, but all it did was withdraw slightly, allowing the Grenadiers to take their place.

On the American right flank, the American militia swap shots with the British lights in the field. Another militia unit advances to the edge of the hill and looks over the British dragoons. American Continentals wait in reserve (bottom pf photo)

The End Is Nigh

My riflemen fled after the British lights at the Clarke House gave them another volley. My militia responded with average fire, dropping another British figure. One more hit and the unit would suffer from Shock and start thinking about withdrawing or routing.

I had advanced a militia unit up the hill so that it looked down on the other side -- right at the British dragoons. I thought the cavalry would charge me, but Renaud had other problems up and down the line. I gave them a good volley and chased them to the center. My militia unit wheeled after them...

In the center and center left, first one British line unit took enough of a pounding to rout, and then another. There was a hole in the British line. True, the cavalry was just about plugging it, but they were winged a goodly amount.

The two line on the hill charged my militia. Well, one charged. The other failed its stress test and stayed put. The result was predictable -- my militia routed back to ol' Virginny. However, the state line wheeled and charged the now damaged British line.

I still had two more Continental line and a militia unit in reserve that could plug the hole if worst came to worst.

A big hole opens up in the British line.

Grenadier Vulnerability

In the woods, the Grenadiers and my Continental line were in a terrible firefight. My lads suffered considerable casualties, but gave almost as good as they got. However, superior British discipline saw the unit Rally seven of eight casualties!



The big hats regiment didn't count on George Washington's bold measures. I sent the dragoons directly into them because the dragoons had two advantages: they got in a first strike, which meant damage doled out counted before damage came back, and the Grenadiers had a higher fatigue factor than the fresh dragoons. The Grenadiers were swept from the field.

American Continentals (left bottom corner) take severe hits swamping fire with Grenadiers, but do enough damage to allow the American cavalry to charge. The Grenadiers were swept from the field and the dragoons gained a breakthrough charge and swept the decimated British line unit.



The dragoons took their breakthrough charge against the rear of the original British line unit that only needed one more hit to rout. They got it and the dragoons stood alone next to the woods and on the flank of the British line.

Turn 16: End

We started to look at what units were left on the battlefield and how intact, or not, they were. The British had a number of holes in their line with a couple units in Shock, but the rest were fairly intact. My Americans were sticking around, but most were heavily damaged and in Shock.

The difference was that I had three untouched Continental line units, two intact cannon units, one intact dragoon, and two intact militia units -- virtually a second line.

I believe the British were at 50% unit losses/Shock while the Americans were one away. By the barest of margins, the Americans won. Given the reputation of the Continental Army at the time, the roughly even exchange of units was as impressive a victory as the real Battle of Princeton in 1777.

We did 16 turns in about 3.5 hours, slight slower than the usual *RUSE* game, but this included talking about various mechanics, if this then that consequences, and other playtesting questions.

Thanks for the game. The "Skirmish *RUSE*" makes for a good quick convention sort of game, while the "Unit *RUSE*" adds a layer of complexity, but increases the decision making and reflects greater historical accuracy.



Mechs Un-Abandoned: *Abaddon*

by Russ Lockwood



Long ago in the 1980s, or at least that's as far back as I can remember, our gaming group tried a game called BattleTech. Loosely based on Japanese mecha, but not tied to any particular anime series that I know of, big manned battle robots (mecha) from 20 tons to 100 tons strode across the battlefield.

At first, we were enamored with the game, skirmishing with 20- and 30-ton mechs. Soon, we bought bigger tonnage mechs and that's when the game came crashing to a halt.

Each mech had a number of circles to fill in for damage. Firing was by individual weapon using 2d6 and hits generated a certain amount of damage. With smaller mechs, damage could accumulate fast enough in an evening game so mechs would blow up and the game come to a conclusion.

As we used larger and larger mechs, the number of circles expanded exponentially. As each player controlled a "lance" of four mechs, when we got to the 60-70-80-ton mechs, hardly any were even scratched after three hours of moving and shooting. We gave it up as a design that couldn't get out of its own way.

The Lockwood Touch

Well, I was quite taken by the mecha, so I decided to design an alternative system. First I linked the total number of weapons together to collectively fire at one target. Then I used a sliding chart of distance interlocked with target speed for the to-hit number -- changed to a d10 instead of 2d6. Then the damage die or dice were based on a sliding scale of weaponry.

It all worked well enough, although the big complaint was picking the different type of damage die (d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20) or combinations of dice. Too much time identifying d8s from d10s, etc.

I also included a critical hit mechanic (3% chance).

The other aspect I eliminated was the heat generation. It never made sense to me that in the eleventh-century designers couldn't design a combat vehicle that wouldn't overheat with every shot. First of all, in the original BattleTech, players would hem and haw over what to fire based on calculating and recalculating heat. What a waste of time.

My design worked fairly well....except...

The critical hit mechanic caused problems when tiny weapons on mini-mechs of 5-tons and 10-tons scored the 3% and blew up 100-ton mechs. "No fair," cried the players whose big mech was turned into a pile of junk. The mini-mech players didn't think so, until the tables turned as they usually do.

I instituted a simple 10x modifier. If a critical hit was rolled, weapon damage x 10 must equal the targeted tonnage or less. If not, no critical hit. If so, a critical hit occurred. For example, if a minimech with a 3 HP weapon scored a critical hit, the targeted mech had to be 30 tons or less to actually score the critical hit. Any mech 35 tons or more was immune to critical hit damage from such a puny weapon. Normal damage would score.

The other problem was that the players wanted the some sort of traditional heat limits, so it was back to the drawing board.

Engineering Rules

I created engineering rules to build your own mech. The engine size would limit the speed of the mech and the amount of weaponry. Heat dissipaters were abstracted into the engine size, which determined the calculations. Thus, you had the heat limitations on weaponry without having to track a heat index.

As part of the overhaul, I only used d6s for damage dice. Toss a certain number based on weaponry and count up the pips -- cross off damage boxes.

Oh, it was a bit of a kluge of engineering rules, but they did provide for a wide variety of mech designs within the same tonnage format. One of my gaming buddies, an Excel whiz due to his day job, quickly created a spreadsheet.

As rules go, it lasted a while, including a campaign among six "house" players and other show-up-and-play players.

Alas, computer crashes and old file formats obliterated my electronic version -- although I have a paper version hanging around somewhere.

Abaddon Beckons

My traispe down memory lane prompted Renaud to pull out the Richard Borg-designed mecha board game *Abaddon* -- with a few tweaks.

Renaud noted the original map was a grid of squares. You could move orthogonally and diagonally. Firing is orthogonally and diagonally, but...firing lanes were fixed and gaps (er, blind spots) existed between those lanes. For example, you can fire three squares up and fire three squares on the diagonal, but any square that fell between those two lines could not be targeted. That made no sense to me either. Maybe it had an advanced rule to fire in the gaps. Dunno.

So, Renaud exchanged the squares for a hex grid and got rid of the gap rule.

Once you pick your mechs (technically called Links -- of the heavy, medium, light classes) and infantry squads based on a point system, activation is by die roll. A player rolls five d6s, with the face indicating which of three mechs sizes may be activated. The fourth die side is pick a card, the fifth is Infantry, and the last die face is Command which means either pick a card, play a card, or activate any friendly mech.

Clumsy Crystals

There's some backstory about three to five crystals powering each combat unit. On the tabletop, these crystals are cardboard slivers that fit into slots on the mech's base. When you take damage, you pull one or more of these out. When all such cardboard slivers are removed, the mech blows up.

These slivers were rather clumsy and ruined the look of otherwise marvelous looking mechs.

Granted, there are only three different mech models, but I suggest putting the slivers into the slots as the mechs take damage. Less fiddly. It would have been nice to have built-in base sliders or dials like the Lord of the Rings collectible miniatures game. Even plastic "explosion" pegs like in the game Battleship would be an improvement. Jus' sayin'.

Set Up The Game

We alternately placed the four victory towers on the board along with the dozen or so pieces of blocking terrain. The mechs and infantry line up at the edge and it was off to the battle.

Abaddon at start.

The five dice rattled through the dice tower and it didn't take us long to learn that you should take at least one unit of each type. I ignored infantry and sure enough, when an infantry die face showed up, it was a waste of a die roll. Renaud didn't take Medium mechs and found the same problem.



When activated, a mech moves a number of hexes (heavy = 1, medium up to 2, and light up to 3) and infantry moves 1 hex. You are allowed to move and fight. You cannot activate the same mech twice in your turn.

Direct firing range is two to five hexes. Adjacent hexes are close combat. Some cards allow for indirect fire, sometimes only from six to eight hexes. Some cards allow for a killer satellite zap anywhere on the map, but you need to roll the appropriate die face to eliminate a targeted mech or infantry.

For direct fire, it's a die roll off: A firer's targeting card value + d6 vs. defender's targeting card value + d6. High roll inflicts damage on the enemy.

And that's about it. Well, maybe a little more, but it's not mecha science.

In the game, I advanced on my left and kept feeding units into the battle, lucking out at times with the d6 combat rolls.

Some of the targeting cards add additional damage. Only once were we able to target a unit with the killer satellite zap and actually zap it. Mostly it was death by a thousand firings -- or at least concentrating multiple mechs on one mech.

Slowly, I picked off more of Renaud's mechs and infantry than he picked off mine. I also captured three of the four VP towers.

Turn 7. My mecha advance.

Thoughts

Well, it was fast enough. We played a game from shrinkwrap to cleanup in about two and a half hours, including some rules reading and re-reading.

You are at the mercy of die rolls for activation -- you might have a mech in a prime spot for firing, but unless you roll the specific die face (or the Command face), it just sits.

Of course, you have five dice, but it sometimes is surprising how many times you can't roll a specific mech face. Note that you can select two rolled dice with useless faces, remove one, and re-toss the other die.

End game. My mecha defend three of the four towers.

Those cardboard slivers are clumsy, but the mechs look cool. A little paint job would go a long way. A Shattered Command supplement was released in 2016, but didn't include any additional mechs, just a rules upgrade and more cardboard components.

Firing combat is well done: opposing $d6 + \text{targeting card number}$. Deciding when to use a big 5, 6, and 8 targeting number card versus the usual 1, 2, or 3 card offers nice decision making. Some cards add additional damage if the player gains a hit -- another nice touch, that.

It's different from the usual Borg design of random cards for unit movement, so selecting units (assuming the appropriate face shows up) is better than running out of sector cards. At least you mostly get to pick the combat unit across all of the map. Although it feels like Yahtzee for activations, it's a pleasant playing game.

Thanks, Renaud, for hosting.

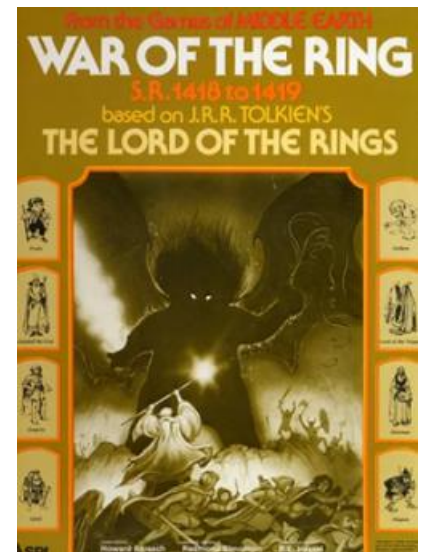
SPI's *War of the Ring*: Character

by Russ Lockwood

As noted in the Fall In convention recap (see the Nov 2025 AAR), I picked this up in the flea market, thanks in no small part to a trio of gaming buddies musing about playing *War of the Ring*. I started with Renaud with the Character game. The box also contains the Campaign game with lots of Army counters.

All nine characters of the Fellowship started in Rivendell. The nine Nazgul started three each in three various forts. Each of these 18 has a character card listing various characteristics. Three event cards were also dealt to each side.

A turn sees both sides draw an event card to make four event cards in a hand. All or none may be played, but each player's hand can have no more than three cards at the end of an event phase. If not played, a card is discarded face down.



Next is the Sauron Points d6 roll. That gives the Sauron player a number of points to move a Nazgul (2 each) or search with orcs (1 per hex searched).

A magic card.

In the Search phase, the Sauron player draws a Search card and sees if the province listed matches where any of the Fellowship characters are located. If not, no effect. If so, the Sauron player may move a number of Nazgul or Orcs listed on the card to the hex containing the Fellowship characters, paying Sauron points to do so. A d6 is rolled on the search chart, which may flip the Fellowship counters right side up (except the hobbits, which always remain face down). Orcs have a chance to capture Fellowship characters.

Nazgul never capture, but may fight the Fellowship characters. A d6 roll on the Melee CRT or on the Sorcery CRT takes care of this. A roster sheet contains a number of boxes per character. When hit, a box is marked off and when all boxes are marked off, the character is dead.

Exception? Gandalf the Grey, who comes back in d6 turns as Gandalf the White.

The Fellowship characters try to make it to Mount Doom with the ring and the Sauron characters try to stop them. Event cards help or hinder, and the Fellowship starts with some magic items and will pick up more if they reach certain hexes on the map. Likewise, certain hexes on the map contain monsters that must be defeated before moving on - think a Balrog in the Mines of Moria. However, six cards (four monsters and two "rumors") are randomly assigned to the four monster hexes.

That's the gist of the system.

By random selection, I was the Fellowship and Renaud was Sauron. I'm not sure, but I think he gave me the evil-eye as we started...

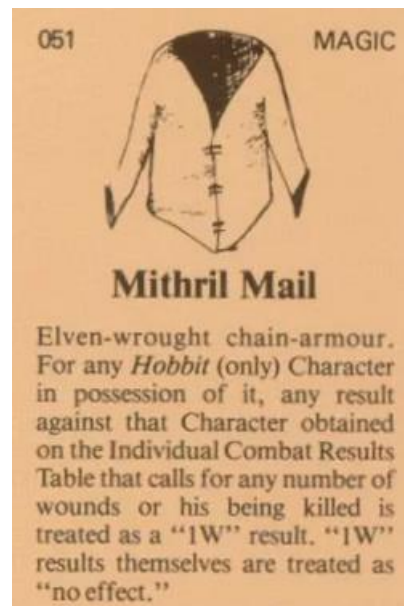
The Game

I immediately split apart the characters into three piles. Nothing like making it difficult to find the Ringbearer. I ignored the Mines of Moria, mostly because the rules stated that the tunnels must be "open" to enter, but didn't define what open meant.

Turn 1: Nazgul (black) menace the Fellowship (yellow) on Turn 1.

The Nazgul swarmed the province, but failed to spot me. Alas, orcs from Saruman also searched and found one of the piles -- and captured the hobbit Merry and Boromir. My lads failed to initially escape and were brought closer to Saruman, but did escape before being dragged into Isengard. Phew!

Meanwhile, Renaud formed a skirmish line of Nazgul, diverting me a bit west until he surrounded me. Then he tossed a Storm Event card that limited movement.



With nothing to lose, I shuffled Boromir and Merry back into the counter pile and split into two piles and raced past the Nazgul line. They failed to spot me and I made it into Helm's Deep with one pile and Edoras with the other. I picked up magic cards in Edoras.

Talk about ring around the collar. Nazgul set up a picket line as the Fellowship aims for Helm's Deep. Saruman waits in his tower for more orc search cards.

One pile went down the road and ran into monster trolls, but defeated them. They made it beyond Minas Tirith. The other pile, with Gandalf, Aragorn, and Frodo, used the Shadowfax magic card to pop Frodo and Gandalf on the horse and race to Minas Tirith. Aragorn strode as fast as he could to keep up. They all met up in Osgiliath.

Heading for Minas Tirith. Turn 7.

All nine entered Minas Morgul, which is a tunnel. Again, no mention of what was "open," but as I had Galadriel's Light, I assumed that opened the tunnel. The monster

within was a rumor, not Shelob, so no battle.

I got to the hex adjacent to Mount Doom with all nine Fellowship characters. The best Renaud could do was put three Nazgul on Mount Doom. Then he played Fierce Storms, which doubled all terrain costs. As mountain hexes cost 3 MP normally, this meant 6 MPs. As the Fellowship only move 5 MP per turn, that meant I couldn't move.

I assumed that magic cards like Shadowfax were used once and discarded. Otherwise, Gandalf the Gray and Frodo could enter the Mount Doom hex and battle three Nazgul.

When I couldn't move, Renaud moved in the other six Nazgul. Uh-oh.



The Battle of Doom

Here's where it became hilarious. Character battles are always one-on one. I sent Gimli forward. Nazgul number 9 stepped forward. Gimli died quick because non-magic weaponry only does half damage to Nazgul. Legolas stepped forward and died just as quick. Merry and Pippin fell next.

An illegal move through the tunnel at Minas Morgul. I'm told there's a card. In any case, storms prevent me from moving one hex and the nine Nazgul hop on Mt. Doom.



That's when we read that magic items, like magic swords Glamdring and Sting, can be picked up if a character dies. Too late for those four...

So began a continuing battle, this time with magic swords. Samwise and Boromir fell next, but at least slew Nazgul 9 and 8. Aragorn was next and fought Gothmog (who was an orc in the book, not a Nazgul). Down Aragorn went.

That left Gandalf, who fought a sorcery duel with the Witch King. A bad Gandalf roll did no damage. A great Witch King roll took out most of Gandalf. Gandalf died the next roll.

Now we had to determine when Gandalf the White appeared -- d6 turns.

Frodo died fighting the Witch King. The ring became Sauron's.

Thoughts

Double blind with an umpire would be a better character game. I mean, the Sauron player always knows where the Fellowship counters are located, regardless of what the Search card says.

The original rules have any spotted Fellowship counters become unspotted if they move across a province border. The 1.2 rules eliminate this unspotting, but not sure how Fellowship characters get unspotted.

I am hoping 1.2 has clarification about when tunnels are "open." Speaking with Fred, he said certain cards open tunnels. I guess we did not pull them.

The 9 on 9 melee on Mt. Doom was hilarious and ridiculous at the same time. Excellent time for Renaud to play Fierce storms to force the battle, but the Fellowship needs to be lucky to have a chance. We also found a section in the 1.2 rules that says magic items may NOT be picked up when a character dies in combat. If so, then even three low-level Nazgul will likely kill off seven or maybe eight of the nine Fellowship characters.

We ruled that Mithril Mail did NOT protect against Sorcery hits.

On the other hand, Frodo gave his mail to Sam, and then picked it back up again. We chuckled over stripping Sam's cadaver...

The one tactic the Fellowship player can use is to send Gandalf the Gray out to battle Nazguls in the hope of taking out one or two before dying. He comes back as a more powerful Gandalf the White, which is a bonus for the Fellowship player.

Another 1.2 difference is that searching in Mordor is automatic -- the Sauron player needs no search card. In the character game, the Fellowship doesn't have an Army drawn up outside the Black Gate to distract Sauron's eye.

So, the 9 on 9 melee on Mount Doom was hilarious, if not even close to the plot in *Lord of the Rings*. An interesting design. Thanks, Renaud for a chuckle-filled game that swayed between the serious and the absurd.

NEWS

Year-End Wargaming Survey: 2025

by Russ Lockwood

The third annual, year-end Armchair Dragoons survey is ready to go.

Please give us your feedback on how your 2025 year in wargaming unfolded, as well as some thoughts on wargaming media channels, conventions, and your purchases.

Open until December 31, 2025.

wp.me/pae4WL-dfu

Armchair Dragoons Digital Convention: January 2026

by Russ Lockwood

Armchair Dragoons will hold its seventh digital convention on January 16 (12 midnight to 2 am), 17 (6 am to 2 am), and 18 (6 am to 9 pm) in 2026. Times are EST (i.e. New York City time). Games include: Air & Armor: Würzburg; Battle Of Zorndorf – Seven Years War; Catastrophe Games' Afghanistan & True Command; China's War; Cracking The Hammer Bastion; GCACW tutorial; NATO: The Cold War Goes Hot; Queen of Spies; Raider Drop Zone; Rebels Against Rebellion; and Washington's War.

Seminars include Welcome Happy Hour; Saturday & Sunday Morning Coffee Wakeups; Pearl Harbor: Japan's Greatest Disaster; Drone Warfare Today; The 2026 ACDC Keynote; America's Plains Indian Wars; Guderian's Panzers: From Triumph to Defeat on the East Front; The Chit Show; and Closing Happy Hour.

Armchair Dragoons use Discord as the central hub.

A Badge is \$4.00 and events require tickets for participation.

Info: <https://armchairdragons.com/the-acdc/>

Badges and Tickets: <https://tabletop.events/conventions/the-acdc-january-2026>



Tiger Wings WWII Air Combat: Kickstarter Met

by Russ Lockwood

Against the Odds magazine reports that *Tiger Wings*, the next WWII aerial wargame in the *Fighting Wings* series designed by J.D. Webster, opened its Kickstarter campaign on December 7, 2025 and on day one tripled the original \$8,000 goal: \$23,731. The already met stretch goals include the Aircraft Data Cards cards on heavier cardstock.

Tiger Wings covers the mostly ignored WWII air campaigns of Burma, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, and China. Planes include the P-40, Zero, P-35, Oscar, P-36 Hawk, Nate, and Nick fighters as well as Japanese Betty, Sally, Nell, and Lilly bombers.

Cost \$55.00

Kickstarter:

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/atomagazine/tiger-wings>

Against the Odds: <https://www.atomagazine.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=198>

Ki.21-IIA "Sally" M class, Twin-engine Bomber Defense Factor = 6 Dam. Factor = 13 / 19 Bomb Load = 2.0 Crew Size = 7 <table><tr><th></th><th>Clean</th><th>Loaded</th></tr><tr><td>Aircraft Ceiling:</td><td>32,800</td><td>25,300</td></tr><tr><td>Max. Speed:</td><td>5.5</td><td>5.0</td></tr><tr><td>Min. Speed:</td><td>2.0</td><td>2.5</td></tr></table> Per Engine Out Speed Loss = -1.0 Sev. Damage Min. / Max Spd. = +0.5 / -1.0  Size = +1 VPs = 6 - 12		Clean	Loaded	Aircraft Ceiling:	32,800	25,300	Max. Speed:	5.5	5.0	Min. Speed:	2.0	2.5	Ki.48-IB "Lily" L class, Twin-engine Bomber Defense Factor = 5 Dam. Factor = 9 / 14 Bomb Load = 2.0 Crew Size = 4 <table><tr><th></th><th>Clean</th><th>Loaded</th></tr><tr><td>Aircraft Ceiling:</td><td>31,100</td><td>24,000</td></tr><tr><td>Max. Speed:</td><td>5.5</td><td>5.0</td></tr><tr><td>Min. Speed:</td><td>2.0</td><td>2.5</td></tr></table> Per Engine Out Speed Loss = -1.0 Sev. Damage Min. / Max Spd. = +0.5 / -1.0  Size = +0 VPs = 5 - 9		Clean	Loaded	Aircraft Ceiling:	31,100	24,000	Max. Speed:	5.5	5.0	Min. Speed:	2.0	2.5	Hudson Mk.I / II MF class, Twin-engine Bomber Defense Factor = 6 Dam. Factor = 11 / 16 Bomb Load = 2.0 Crew Size = 4 to 5 <table><tr><th></th><th>Clean</th><th>Loaded</th></tr><tr><td>Aircraft Ceiling:</td><td>24,300</td><td>19,700</td></tr><tr><td>Max. Speed:</td><td>4.5</td><td>4.0</td></tr><tr><td>Min. Speed:</td><td>2.0</td><td>2.5</td></tr></table> Per Engine Out Speed Loss = -1.0 Sev. Damage Min. / Max Spd. = +0.5 / -1.0  Size = +1 VPs = 6 - 11		Clean	Loaded	Aircraft Ceiling:	24,300	19,700	Max. Speed:	4.5	4.0	Min. Speed:	2.0	2.5
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B-17C/D "Flying Fortress" H class, Four-engine Bomber Defense Factor = 7 Dam. Factor = 24 / 36 Bomb Load = 8.0 Crew Size = 8 to 10 <table><tr><th></th><th>Clean</th><th>Loaded</th></tr><tr><td>Aircraft Ceiling:</td><td>37,000</td><td>33,300</td></tr><tr><td>Max. Speed:</td><td>5.5</td><td>5.0</td></tr><tr><td>Min. Speed:</td><td>2.5</td><td>3.0</td></tr></table> Per Engine Out Speed Loss = -0.5 Sev. Damage Min. / Max Spd. = +0.5 / -1.0  Size = +2 VPs = 7 - 15		Clean	Loaded	Aircraft Ceiling:	37,000	33,300	Max. Speed:	5.5	5.0	Min. Speed:	2.5	3.0	B-17E "Flying Fortress" H class, Four-engine Bomber Defense Factor = 7 Dam. Factor = 27 / 40 Bomb Load = 10.0 Crew Size = 10 <table><tr><th></th><th>Clean</th><th>Loaded</th></tr><tr><td>Aircraft Ceiling:</td><td>36,600</td><td>34,600</td></tr><tr><td>Max. Speed:</td><td>5.5</td><td>5.0</td></tr><tr><td>Min. Speed:</td><td>2.5</td><td>3.0</td></tr></table> Per Engine Out Speed Loss = -0.5 Sev. Damage Min. / Max Spd. = +0.5 / -1.0  Size = +2 VPs = 8 - 16		Clean	Loaded	Aircraft Ceiling:	36,600	34,600	Max. Speed:	5.5	5.0	Min. Speed:	2.5	3.0	Martin WH-3 M class, Twin-engine Bomber Defense Factor = 6 Dam. Factor = 11 / 17 Bomb Load = 6.0 Crew Size = 4 <table><tr><th></th><th>Clean</th><th>Loaded</th></tr><tr><td>Aircraft Ceiling:</td><td>28,200</td><td>23,200</td></tr><tr><td>Max. Speed:</td><td>4.5</td><td>4.0</td></tr><tr><td>Min. Speed:</td><td>1.5</td><td>2.0</td></tr></table> Per Engine Out Speed Loss = -1.0 Sev. Damage Min. / Max Spd. = +0.5 / -1.0  Size = +1 VPs = 6 - 10		Clean	Loaded	Aircraft Ceiling:	28,200	23,200	Max. Speed:	4.5	4.0	Min. Speed:	1.5	2.0
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Canberra Games Society Inc.: French Sounds of Summer *by Russ Lockwood*

The Canberra Games Society was honored to be invited to the Embassy of France's Sounds of Summer festival on Sunday the 30th Nov.

Lots of people were interested in our wares, many fliers to the club and to CanCon handed out, and many stories of "I used to play that....."

Despite the wind and the occasional drop of rain everyone had a great time at the festival, and the embassy staff were really friendly and professional.



Rattenkrieg: New Wargame *by Russ Lockwood*

Tiny Battle Publishing released an upgraded version of *Rattenkrieg*, a man-to-man solitaire wargame of the Battle of Stalingrad. Originally published in *Yaah!* #14, the heart of the system is an "AI bot" implemented through a Player Aid Card that outlines the logic governing enemy behavior. Movement is determined by the physical size of the unit counter to reflect the claustrophobic reality of urban warfare where a wrong turn has real consequences.



The game includes 88 die-cut counters, four 4x10-inch geomorphic maps, four Player Aid Cards including 8 scenarios, units, terrain, and the AI Bot, full-color rulebook, five d6s, and a 9x12-inch box. Complexity: 5 on a 10 scale and Playing time: 2 hours. Price: \$44.00. PDF version from Wargames Vault: Not yet listed, but from other TBP titles: About \$10.00.



Battle of Princeton: Jan. 4, 2026 Princeton, NJ *by Russ Lockwood*

A big American Revolution re-enactment on the Battle of Princeton battlefield in Princeton, NJ, will be held on Sunday, January 4, 2026, from 9:30am to 12:00 noon. Tickets are \$10.

The Princeton Battlefield is at 500 Mercer Rd., Princeton, NJ 08540.

Info from Princeton Battlefield Society: <https://pbs1777.org/experiencethebattle/>

Battle of Princeton: 2025 Re-enactment Video *by Russ Lockwood*

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection offers a 1 minute 7 second YouTube video of the 2025 Re-enactment.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlLgE8jAf9Y>



HMGS Next Generation: Expanding Historical Gaming

by John Spiess

Battle of Bastogne in New Canaan: CT

Since the kids program in New Canaan has been doing very well, the Director of the library had reached out about starting an adult program. So the first session registration was for adults and the following late afternoon session was for the kids.

John Spiess (left) and the gamers at New Canaan.



We had a nice turnout for both games. The streamlined *Bolt Action* rules worked out very well. Most players figured out the tactics right away as all the tanks just started shooting at each other right at the outset. For some reason, everyone just loved putting on the smoke to mark a tank that had been knocked out. I also think I overheard one of the adults telling another player that his interest in the game was because his father was in the battle and that he had toured the battlefield.

One of my regular kids from Greenwich, Andrew, also showed up. He actually now has his own WWII club in Greenwich High School and is currently switching from *Flames of War* to *Bolt Action* rules. Some of you might remember him from Historicon when he played in the NYWA game on Saturday night. Given the crowd at that table, he did very well. He's a great kid.

New Canaan already has their 2026 kids schedule set up, so hopefully we will be adding more adult events in 2026 as well.



Battle of Monmouth in Larchmont: NY

I hosted the Battle of Monmouth at the Larchmont (NY) Library.

It's always a great game, but I thought I would mention a few other items I have noted about the Larchmont crew.

Gamers at Larchmont. Photo by John Spiess.

A lot of these kids are now coming to our conventions. You'll see in the photos below a very dark shot (sorry about that) of some dark age archers, and another shot of a young boy holding one of them up. That's Nick, who fell in love with our flea market and made some purchases. I have to send him an email with instructions on basing.

And they are painting as well. Another photo is of some Napoleonic British cavalry. Those are Perry plastics painted by Allister. Not bad for a 12 year old. I let him use them in the game spread around as British officers.

Some other news that might be pretty interesting down the road...

One of the Larchmont parents recommended Next Gen to the Boys and Girls club of New Rochelle. They wanted us to participate in their after school elective program starting early next year. I spoke with the director about what they wanted and the commitment needed. After speaking with Jim Stanton (just back from Pax), we decided we didn't have the bandwidth to commit to such a big program right now, but we have reserved a spot in their 2026 Fall program. By then, I'll have people and resources to do it right. So more on that down the road.



Battle of the Bulge in Rye: NY

I convinced a group of kids that were playing chess to try miniatures. I basically told them that chess was a wargame. The pawns were infantry and the knights, bishops, rooks, and queen were all different tanks.

Bulge-gaming grown-ups at New Canaan (not Rye).



The game was a simple meeting engagement of tanks, with infantry coming in later on. We used a streamlined version of *Bolt Action* rules. The kids picked up the mechanics right away.

I have to say that the best part of the game was something that happened spontaneously. One of the kids playing the German side googled “Battle of the Bulge Soundtrack”, and started playing the German marching song from the movie. If you have seen the old movie, you know what I’m talking about.

So every time the German team destroyed an American Sherman, the German marching song played. Not to be outdone, the American players started playing “Born in the USA” by Bruce Springsteen when they finally knocked out the Tiger.

You probably needed to be there, but it was pretty funny.

HMGS Outreach

PAX

by Scott Landis

Jim Stanton rocked it at PAX with the Paris siege game. I had a couple of guys that played the joust game but were eyeing Jim as he was setting up the game. When he finished setting up, I told them to tell Jim they want to play in his game -- they did I think for the next four hours! No walk up demos there: They wanted to bring down some walls.

PAX gamers.



Figures were getting slaughtered left and right, including some by their own side. “Those are not my Vikings,” one guy said.

The game was a big hit, looked great and pulled people in on just the first day.

We also connected at PAX with a vendor that gave us a couple sets of AWI rules to help teach school kids about the Rev War. Jim met with them and should have gotten a copy or two. We are going to try to help them a bit as they are new and small.

This generous Vendor was Flagbearer Games, which just released a Campaign guide, almanack, and various maps to their rules *Nations and Cannons* -- an American Revolution version that uses *Dungeons & Dragons* as the base system for characters and melees. No magic, just colonial-era history. I dropped an additional \$100 on Card decks, Screens, and Poor Richard's Almanack of 1776. I guess you can say I'm all in.

PAX Unplugged 2026: After Action Report

by Cliff Brunken

John Hollier led a team of seasoned HMGS volunteers and Game Masters into PAX Unplugged 2025. Since our start three years ago, we have expanded our footprint by 50%. This year, we had room for two showcase games on the ends of our booth, ran five learn-to-play games, and ran four smaller games all day Friday through Sunday evening.

Gaming Stalingrad at PAX.

Showcase games were the award-winners: Siege of Paris as well as *Hail of Fire: Stalingrad*. They were scheduled for several three-hour time slots on Friday evening, Saturday late morning, Saturday evening,



and Sunday late morning.

Learn to play games were Gale Force 9: *World of Tanks*, ARES: *Wings of Glory*, Mark's Gameroom / LittleWarsTV: Ruthless: OK Corral, Wiley's *Fistful of Lead*: Muskets and Horse AWI/ACW; Studio Tomahawk: *SAGA*, To Cry Joust, and Gladiator Wars.

Small games were two Battlefronts: *Flames of War* (SAS special forces WW2) and *Team Yankee* (Gulf War).

Our team GMs were: Dave Reiners, Aiden Journey, Cat Hultberg, Jim Stanton and son, Pat Devine, Bob Edoo, Brandon Farley, Mike Pooler, Greg Pooler, Ed "Rusty" Miller, John Hollier, Scott Landis, Mike Pederson, and Cliff Brunken.

Vendor procurement: Ed "Rusty" Miller, Scott Landis, John Hollier, and Cliff Brunken.

Membership recruitment: Brenda and Dale Zartman and the rest of our team at PAX Unplugged.

All scheduled showcase games were full and had waiting lists. Any that could not get into them we took into our learn to play games: *Flames of War*, OK Corral & Vendetta ride, Horse & Musket, *World of Tanks*, *Wings of Glory*, Gladiator, and *SAGA*. These rocked all weekend long with plenty of players.

We had lots of return customers from past years that said they went to Historicon and Fall In 2025. A lot of current HMGS members commented that it was good we had a presence at a show like PAX Unplugged and I heard a lot of PAX attendees say, "we never knew about HMGS," or better yet, "This is great, I would like to know more."

We pushed Cold Wars 2026 and regional outreach programs with flyers and website information.

We collected over 113 new members, several vendors for future shows and some speakers for the HMGS War College.

Special thanks to our whole PAX volunteer team for a great weekend.

HMGS Outreach: Troop 303 at Fall In 2025

by Cliff Brunken

Boy Scout Troop 303 sent eight scouts and four leaders to attend my *Wings of Glory* WWII game *USS Abele*. They played for 2.5 hours and when they had finished, the *USS Abele* was heavily damaged but still underway.

I also had a father and his 13-year-old son join us from New York City. Feedback: "Cliff, the conference was a smashing success for us. He loved every minute. Even when it seemed he was disengaged, he was actually just absorbing it all. Getting to be the battleship was great -- he was telling all his friends about it. In the afternoon, we played a *Star Wars* game and he loved that too. We're already planning to come back in February."

The Scouts broke for lunch, then joined the HMGS Next Generation Castle Siege game and then went up to Hobby U for some painting. The Scouts had a great experience and they have requested Outreach to return for a games day in the new year.



Bonus photo: New Canaan Bulge gamers, grown-up edition.





The A Team: From top middle: Lil Moon Witch, GM Sean, Ed, Fred, Keith, Steve, Chris, and Dan.

D&D Raid Retribution: The Preparation

by Ed

The Hammer, upon our return to Sheffield, immediately asks for certain spells of concealment. Apparently, none of us can cast them, which means that it will not be hard to find us. Warning about talking out loud about what we brought back from Hell issued via Rary's telepathy spell. Hammer sends servants out for various components.

He goes to the basement of the Party Mansion (woohoo, it has a disco ball) and completes a short rest. He asks for a "protective detail" and casts a big-ass spell: Contact Other Plane. He did not, apparently, go insane from this casting, and so falls into a trance.

The Hammer casts a spell. Image from web.



Upon returning to regular consciousness out of the trance, the Hammer says that retribution for our raid will fall upon us shortly and be physical in nature. "A powerful representative will appear to converse with us about the items we retrieved. We have decisions to make, and the Power that visits us may offer a bargain that allows us to fulfill our aims and live to see another day. We must be on our guard, we must be watchful, and we must discern the difference between the Power that appears to negotiate and any attack on us sent from He who we have offended. Please see to these concerns. I have work to do."

The servant appears with various components and The Hammer immediately begins casting a long ritual spell. A proper Arcana check reveals he is casting Hallow, which has a casting time of 24 hours. The main thing it does? Excludes fiends and other other-planely foes.

Sometime during the first hour, he reverts to what you believe to be his true form -- that of a coal black Tiefling, with white horns and red eyes. Those who observe note The Hammer seems quite watchful during the casting, as if he expects demons to attack at any moment. He calls for water and wine to refresh himself and by the time the spell is done he seems quite haggard and tired, but the Hallow seems to be successful.

Before settling in for a long rest in the now Hallowed basement, The Hammer summons all to his presence, uses the Rary Spell to establish communication, and says “If those following the orders of demons appear here, first use Force against them in this Hallowed space, but say nothing of this to anyone. If the Power appears to speak with us, rouse me immediately. The things we retrieved stay here for now, I have made this place as safe as possible.”

It has been 25 hours since we returned to Sheffield, give or take a few minutes. Assuming the long rest goes off without a hitch, it will be raid return +33 hours.

Nevar in Greyhawk: Rumors

by GM Sean

Beneath the city’s normal bustling rhythm, whispers of worry spread through every corner. The border of Furyondy and the Horned Society isn’t calm. Skirmishes have flared repeatedly along the frontier. Patrols clash with raiders, and entire towns have been hastily reinforcing their militias.

Travelers report unusual activity along the trade routes — bands of horned cultists scouting the roads, harrying convoys, and vanishing before the Watch can respond.

The Orcs of the Pomarj are uniting. One warlord claims to have bound the scattered clans under his banner. Merchants fear caravans will vanish entirely once he consolidates power.

The Frost Barbarians in the far north are more active than usual, marching with strange banners and proclaiming devotion to some ancient idol.

Extraplanar creatures are being sighted near the city’s outskirts. Hellhounds, strange elemental storms, and shadowy figures are seen in the forests as if portals are opening.

Nevar’s usual sources for alchemical ingredients warn about hoarding, thefts, and even touched by things that shouldn’t exist in this plane.

Scurg The First Fang: Bugbear Elevated

by Chris

After a hiatus, Skurg the paladin cleric came back to the party different than before. He smelled a little muskier than when he left. His veins darkened and a new mark on his chest resembled the fang you saw on his shield.

He explained that his patron Vorrack approved of his actions against evil and promoted him to be "First Fang."

From being around him before since Vorrack isn’t a standard god you get he’s a little more chaotic than most and wants equality on the good/evil spectrum. So with the handover of Vecna’s hand he’s not happy but it’s a net neutral since it was already in “evil” hands

Interlude With a Genie

by GM Sean

The air chills and the scent of salt and stormwater fills the space as the genie manifests, rising from a coil of mist and starlit spray, in front of Tazan. The Marid folds his long, web-fingered hands before him and speaks — his voice layered and echoing, as though many distant waves answer at once. “Ahhh, you ask of things best left buried where light cannot reach: Phylacteries, Hand of Vecna, and Keys to Undeath.”

A slow, deliberate smile curves across his inhuman features. “Phylacteries are vessels of defiance, not simply survival. They anchor a lich’s soul between the world of the living and the gulf beyond — bound in objects shaped to obsession. To destroy one requires more than fire or steel. The vessel must be unmade in the place of its owner’s greatest regret.”

The Marid’s expression darkens. “The Hand is not a phylactery — though many mistake it for such. It represents severed ascension and stolen dominion. When wielded, it amplifies intent — necromancy, secrets, and control until it transcends mortal purpose. Liches covet it not for safety but for elevation.”

His tone becomes dead serious. “The Hand makes you visible. Already, threads are tightening around its trail and at least two beings — far older and far greater than you mortal — are bidding against one another for its final claim.”

The air smells briefly of brine and storm — and then he is gone.

Unwanted Attention: Hand It Over

by Russ Lockwood

Back in Sheffield, discussion centered around the phylacteries and Vecna's Hand stolen from Orcus' Lair Number 333. Tazan was all for destroying them all and immediately. "It's all baggage we don't want hanging around. The longer we hold onto them, the more likely we'll be attacked by minions of one sort or another to get 'em back."



Negotiations with a pit fiend.

All agreed that was a nice idea, but those wiser in the ways of magic noted it isn't easy. "You just can't stick a dagger in one."

"I did some research in the local library. A book called *Lizzie Borden and the Phylactery* says all you need is 40 whacks with an axe."

"An old wives' tale," Cristoff replied. "I'll look in the Triple L for an answer."

"Triple L?"

"Legendary Lore Library," Cristoff said. "Back in a flash."

One flash later, Cristoff reappeared with an answer. "We need to go to where Charis began his lich career: The Eye of Stirling. We need blood from a paladin sprinkled atop the phylactery and bury it in sacred earth at dawn."

The A Team put its collective heads together. We know the Eye of Stirling and Scurg's blood will do. But where to find sacred earth? Nevar suggested the Ent Grove -- pure as the day it was created.

"We must ask permission," Nevar cautioned.

Aha! A plan. But first, confirmation came in that Charis and Morgoth had yet to regenerate.

The group teleported to the Eye, doused Charis' phylactery with Scurg's paladin/cleric blood, and teleported to the Ent Grove.

Here, Charis made a plea that he was actually on the side of good and was holding back all the bad entities from other planes.

"Yeah, right. It's like every defeated general writing memoirs putting a propaganda spin on his mis-deeds," Tazan said.

With permission, the phylactery was buried in the Grove's earth at dawn. A faint wisp of smoke arose from the ground and Charis was no more.

Morgoth's Phylactery

Cristoff noted that the dragonlich's phylactery needed to be returned to its original green dragon lair and whacked with an axe.

"What?" Tazan exclaimed. "Just one whack, not 40?"

"Nah," Cristoff laughed. "Just yanking your chain. You need a clerical spell and magic weapon."

And just like that, the dragonlich was no more.

The Lich King's Phylactery

Sorzul the Lich King was in perfect health, or at least perfect for a lich. Destroying a phylactery without first destroying the lich is useless. We waited on that one.

We teleported back to the Eye of Stirling tower.

Vecna's Hand

Cristoff noted he had a spell that would "lose" an item for 100 years. Some thought that was a good idea.

Hammer was willing to trade it and had opened negotiations. Some thought that a good idea.

Tazan, warned by the genie, thought getting rid of it a good idea. "It's just baggage we don't need."

In the case of Nevar, he was not part of the caper that snagged four phylacteries and the Hand, but knew full well how dangerous the artifact was - used or not. Nevar offered an alchemical solution on how to "lose" the artifact irretrievably (knowing that "irretrievably" might not be as permanently lost as it might sound). Cristoff also had a magical solution to banish the artifact for a century. Either sounded good to Nevar. The "Hammer" proposed bartering for it and apparently started this process before sharing the idea with the group.

For Nevar, this could well end up swapping one supernatural foe for another to hound the group for years, but the lure of compensation was also attractive if the bargainer turned out to have no ill will with us. Thus, Nevar cast the deciding vote to barter off the dreaded artifact when assurances were made of no malice towards the group.

By this narrow vote, the A Team decided to trade it. Hammer awaited an emissary.

One soon arrived. A deal was sealed, heavy on the protection aspect and with a 100,000 gold kicker. Our hobbit chef asked for a million gold and it was quickly accepted. That raised questions in the hobbit's mind about the legitimacy of this emissary, but Hammer said he vetted the fiend.

The exchange was made and no sooner had the emissary left than a second emissary arrived saying he was here for the Hand.

There ensued a considerable meta questioning of the legitimacy of the vetting process, but a GM trick was played and there was no going back. Apparently, a dozen dark factions under the same darkest king were fighting for supremacy and we got snookered.

No sooner had this other emissary left that a fiend and four friends showed up at the Eye of Stirling saying "The bad witch Glinda sends her regards."

The pit fiend takes significant damage and calls in friends.

Poke In The Eye Battle

Tazan and Nevar had been on the second floor of the tower watching the interplay. As soon as the baddies arrived, Tazan strung his Skybow and Nevar cast a Haste spell on Tazan.

Tazan nocked a special Fiend Slayer arrow, aimed, and loosed. Thunder rolled over the tower and the arrow flew true and stuck the field. A second Fiend Slayer arrow followed. Two magic flame arrows thudded into the fiend. Then, Tazan invoked his specialty of Action Surge and sent three more magic arrows at the fiend, of which all but one struck.

His six arrows tallied 199 HP -- an astounding number for a first attack on a 300 HP fiend. An additional 46 HPs came from Hammer.

The fiend tossed a fireball into the first floor and then glared at Tazan on the second floor. Tazan quaked with fear and fled to a side window to escape the fiend's glare. The fiend summoned four extraplanar minions.

The other four minor fiends closed in on the tower and started to strike the first floor A Teamers. Tazan leaned out the window and put four magic arrows into one of those minor fiends. The spells and damage came fast and furious: Cristoff's Chain Lightning, Balien's Steel Wind Strike, Nevar's Ice Storm, and more.

Two of the five fiend friends enter the tower. Photo by Ed.

The boss fiend saw how the battle was going. One by one, the minor fiends fell. The minions suffered as well. Finally, the boss fiend's ego would not let him be slain by mere mortals and he winked away, followed by what was left of his attack party.



Aftermath: One Million Minus Half Million

Tazan leaned on the window sill. "So much for the protection promise."

At least items worth a million gold were delivered. The A Team put 500,000 gold into the infrastructure fund for future use. As for the other 500,000, individuals got 50,000 worth to do whatever.

As for Tazan, he obtained a rare magical attachment for his SkyBow that allowed him to shoot faster and with a slightly better accuracy as well as a Bag of Holding.

Nevar received a +3 Cloak of Protection (an item Nevar knew how to replicate). Others calculated what they needed. Other members received suitable upgrades and items.

All members who survived this attack bumped up to 14th Level. Tazan learned a new feat: Piercer (re-roll one damage die). Hey, you never know when you need an extra HP or two. Well I remember a battle with a dragon where all I had to do was inflict just one more HP to vanquish it. Alas, I did not and it waged another round of damage on us.

The last baggage on my list was the genie. We had two wishes, one of which would be to set Marek the Marid free in exchange for never directly (by him) or indirectly (by minions or by information to others) attacking us, Sunstone, or our own allies and hirelings. The other wish we hadn't decided, but it would come first...

Our province of Sunstone.



Reviewing the Treasures from prior adventures, Nevar claimed one of each different potion Balien offered among the 25+ potions acquired. So Nevar's "collection" grew. Even if he was unfamiliar with the recipe for a specific potion, the alchemist had a great track record duplicating any potion he acquired.

End of Campaign

This adventure ended the overall "Charis" campaign. We had freed a province, which we named Sunstone, from monsters and undead and secured its borders. We had rebuilt the capital city, Sheffield, and attracted new settlers. Most important, we had defeated and permanently eliminated the Lich Charis and his dragonlich.

We could continue. Consideration was to turn the power of the group on the Drow to remove them from the area and to assist our Dwarven allies. Balien noted that the A Team will likely need to deal with minions of Orcus in the future.

Or, perhaps we should start as new first level characters, meeting in an inn, with orcs in the hills to vanquish...

Or go back to the sci-fi *Traveller* campaign...

I'll let you know.

In any case, just an outstanding GM job by Sean.

BOOKS I'VE READ

By Russ Lockwood

Arctic Front: Wehrmacht Im Kampf. by Wilhelm Hess. Translated by Linden Lyons. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 232 pages. 2025 reprint of 2021 translation of 1956 book.

Subtitle: *The Advance of Mountain Corps Norway on Murmansk 1941*

I am always up for a read of one of these 1950s *Wehrmacht Im Kampf* books. Written by German commanders, they offer insight into the German way of war within the specific topic.

In this case, it's written by the Quartermaster of the German Mountain Corps and offers a good operational look at the German far north offensive from Norway towards Murmansk. The Corps consisted of two divisions, the 2nd and 3rd, and later a third mountain division, the 6th, was added. Some assorted and associated units were attached and naval and air support was limited.

Supply was a problem in a place without even a decent road network. Summer was bearable as trucks could use "roads" and other tracks for most of the way to the front. Construction and Pioneer battalions did the best they could to build more roads and maintain all of them. I don't know if any manufacturer makes snowplows and snowblower vehicles, but the three companies of the 602nd Snow Removal Battalion would use them. Small freighters could offload in some of the rear-area ports. Chapter 20 covers supply organizations and operations.

For example, in 1941, it took 14 to 20 days for items to move from Germany to Petsamo, and then another eight to 12 days to move from the port to the front line (p173). Talk about requisitioning items in advance!

The German mountain troops performed well against the more numerous Soviets -- up to a point. Combat losses, spotty supply, and plenty of Soviet reinforcements soon had the 1941 German offensive halted. Hess even mentions British carrier strikes. Thankfully, many maps are included that give you a good idea of locations and topography -- enough to figure out how to create tabletop battlefields.

The book contains 20 black and white maps and 10 black and white illustrations.

The German OOB for the 2nd Mountain Division (the 3rd Mountain is identical) uses period German symbols and is in German. If you are not familiar with such, you'll need to look up the symbols and the German words.

I shouldn't be surprised at the effort put into supplying the Corps in a remote spot, but I was. As I knew little about the Norway to Murmansk offensive, I found the combat deployments and operations quite interesting. Another fine *Wehrmacht Im Kampf* reprint.

Enjoyed it.

Wings Over The Fleet: British Naval Aircraft Since 1945. by James Jackson. Hardback (8.5x12.0 inches). 400 pages. 2025.

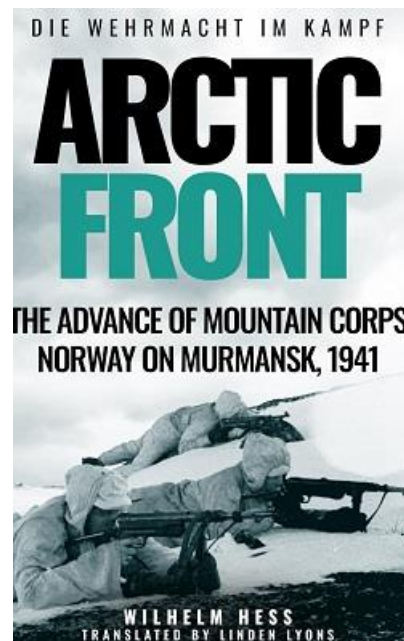
This nice, big compilation of British aircraft takes readers into the design and development of aircraft from propeller to jets. Each chapter is generally a type of aircraft: strike, interceptor, and so on. You'll also find chapters on helicopters, missiles, radar, and anti-submarine warfare.

Most aircraft are conventional, but the development of Vertical Take Off and Landing (VTOL) as well as some less than conventional undercarriage-less planes are quite interesting.

The latter would be paired with a flexible deck for landings. The idea was to save weight and extend range or increase bombload. After a few experimental prototypes, the idea was put to rest. The former became a mainstay of the British armed forces and came with the development of angled aircraft carrier flight decks and jump ramps.

As for the Sea Harrier, the British experimented with a frigate that had skyhooks -- cranes that would swing a Harrier over the side and wait for the VTOL to hover away. When the mission ended, the Sea Harrier would return, hover, and link up with the crane and its hook. The jet could even be refueled while hovering. Alas, it was deemed impractical and the project abandoned (p287).

I tended to skip around as soon as the spec-heavy text rolled in, but rest assured those that revel in such will be pleased as planes went through upgrades



and variations.

Government indecision about programs, orders, cancellations, restarts, and further cancellations tend to give me an overall impression of confusion. Much had to do with cost-cutting as the post-WWII years rolled along deep into the Cold War.

The book contains 200 color photos, 186 black and white photos, 160 black and white illustrations, and eight color illustrations.

It's quite comprehensive and filled with imagery and specifications.

Enjoyed it.

Jewels and Jackboots: Hitler's British Channel Islands. by John Nettles.

Softcover (5.1x7.8 inches). 337 pages. 2024 reprint of 2013 book.

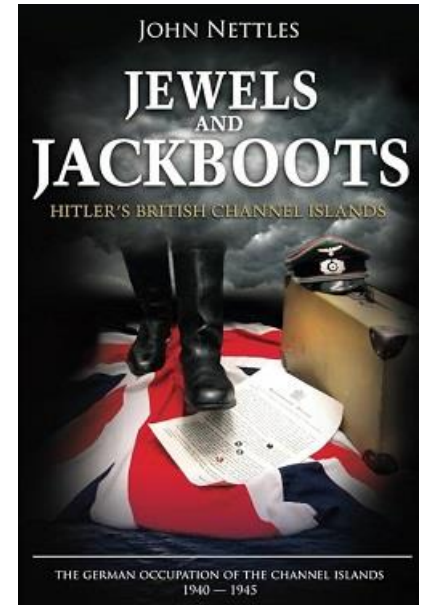
The author is better known as a TV detective, but when shooting *Bergerac* in the Channel Islands, he became fascinated with the islands' history, especially the period from 1940 to 1945 when the Germans occupied it all.

Information about how the British inhabitants coped with escalating food shortages, regulations, and regimentation are not in chronological order or even grouped by island. Instead, individuals' stories roll out all over the place, meandering from one person to another.

The production value of this Seeker Publishing reprint needed an editor to look over it. I found only a couple typos: Nazi Bulge Commander was "Piper" (p128) but should be Peiper and "time if took" (p138) should be time it took. However, two pages are reduced in size with huge margins (p155 and p276) and several pages (p261-262, p265, p268, and p298) suffer from text with only half the opacity of text -- think of it as light gray text on white. Sloppy, even for a print on demand book.

So, nice storytelling about a bit of generally overlooked history and sloppy production values.

Enjoyed it.



The Allied Assault on Hitler's Channel Island Fortress. by John Grehan.

Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 239 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Planned Operation to Eject the Germans in 1943*

If you look at the title and subtitle, you might think this book is about British raids and proposed Channel Island invasion plans to go with the American proposed Operation Roundup, the invasion of France 1943. In general, yes, but not at first. The first eight chapters are all about commando raids, such as Dieppe, everywhere but the Channel Islands. Plans and raids regarding the Channel Islands start with Chapter 9 (p118+).

Once the book starts with the Channel Islands, the British composed no shortage of plans and even the occasional raid. Operations Constellation, Concertina, Coverlet, and Condor were proposed and dropped.

In 1940, the British evacuated the Channel Island civilians back to the British mainland and declared the islands demilitarized. The Germans bombed with six HE-111s and took the islands without a fight.

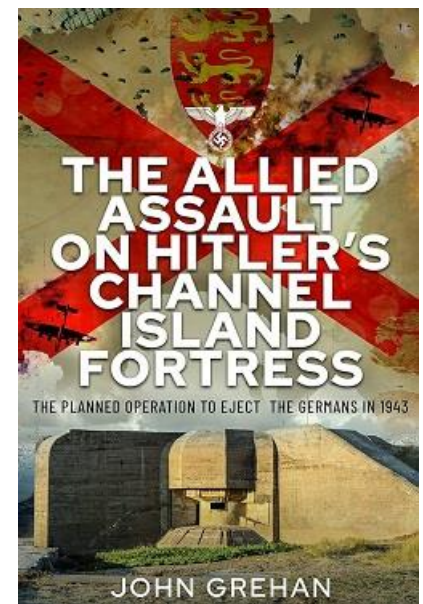
As air bombings and commando raids did little but oppress the British citizenry, the Allies ignored the liberation of the Channel Islands until after the German surrender.

Part of the problem was the massive pretty much bomb-proof fortifications built by the Germans. Another is the citizenry had nowhere to go. It was an island and bombing anything would likely cause citizenry casualties. Mostly, reclaiming the islands wouldn't alter the war situation.

The book contains 48 black and white photos, four black and white maps about the proposed Operation Condor (invasion of Jersey), and one general black and white map of islands. The photos of the fortifications are fantastic.

About half the book is off-topic, so to speak, but the other half is well worth reading about proposing and dropping plans.

Enjoyed it.



Apollo 7 in Photographs. by J. L. Pickering and John Bisney with Ed Hengeveld. Hardback (8.9x11.3 inches). 336 pages. 2025.

Nice, big coffee-table sized book like the *Apollo 1 in Photographs* (see the Nov 2025 AAR), only this presents an archive of Apollo 7 photos with obvious attention to the three NASA astronauts Wally Schirra, Donn Eisele, and Walt Cunningham.

Like the previous book, the photos cover astronaut training, public introductions, more training, launch, and recovery. Coming after the Apollo 1 disaster, it highlights the somewhat kludgy escape system, which includes a redesigned one-piece hatch to escape the capsule, an elevator ride down to a platform, and a sling-ride (we now call such things a zip-line) to the ground (p128, p134-135, and p154). Other systems and procedures were redesigned to mitigate fires.

The jacket blurb says more than 700 photos -- I didn't count them, but that seems an accurate estimate. And they are all sharp.

Give NASA PR some props. At a Nov. 6 Apollo 7 welcome back ceremony at the North American Rockwell factory, up on the stage was cartoonist Charles Schultz (p318). I wonder how many Snoopy in space comic strips came from that jaunt?

If you are a space buff, this fascinating photo-centric history of the Apollo 7 mission will likely be much appreciated and pair well with the *Apollo 1* book.

Enjoyed it.

Reading Hitler's Mind. by Norman Ridley. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 173 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Intelligence Failure That Led to WW2*

Covering the 1930s, British Prime Ministers consistently failed to appreciate that a psychopath like Hitler never made a deal he intended to keep. By the time Chamberlain waved a piece of paper regarding Czechoslovakia, Hitler was already planning to grab the country. Not that the French were going to do anything -- they planned on sitting behind the Maginot Line.

A big part of the British assumption in 1933 was that a war would not start for 10 years (p19). While Germany rearmed, the British did not and the French built fortifications. The British failed to accurately judge the capability of the German armed forces versus the bombast of Hitler's claims.

What they should have paid attention to is the 1934 demand by Hitler that the military AND the civil servants take a personal loyalty oath to Hitler (p25). This step put Germany on the path to war -- a war Hitler wrote about in *Mein Kampf*.

The rest was Hitler's brinksmanship of always threatening a war and he got away with it due to the political failure of the West to stand up to him. Opposing German entry into the Rhineland would have, at least in hindsight, fomented a change of German government. While the Anschluss of Austria was too far away in Western opinion, Czechoslovakia might have been a different story.

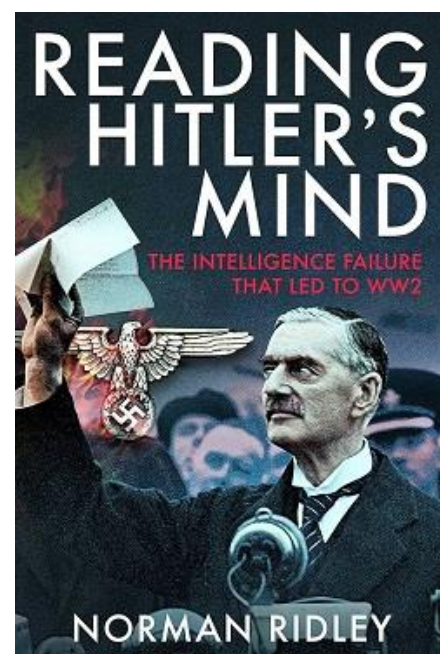
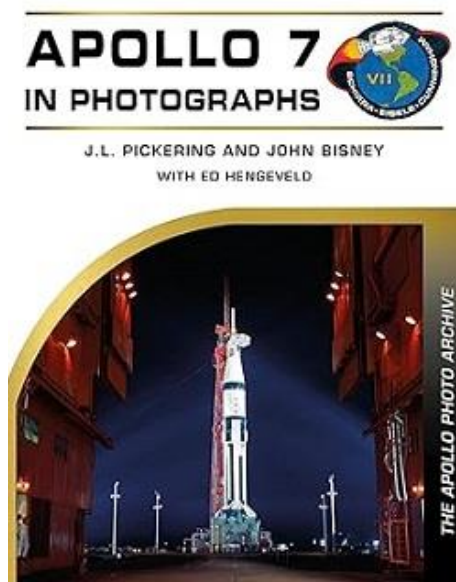
The Czechs had an army, armaments industry to support it, fortifications facing Germany, and a defense treaty with the West. In late June 1938, the German General Staff held wargames about the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The result of a Western attack on Germany in support of the Czechs was a defeat of Germany (p101).

That is assuming that the West had invested in offensive and defensive military capabilities.

The book contains 16 black and white photos.

The moral of history is that caving to demands from a blackmailing bully only causes greater problems later. No one in the West wanted a repeat of WWI, but by abandoning allies, failing to match growing power, and failing to act in defense of allies, the West got a war much worse than WWI.

Enjoyed it.



Devil's Fire Southern Cross. by Jeffrey R. Cox. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 502 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Conclusion of the Guadalcanal-Solomons Campaign October 1943-February 1944*

In movies, when a character faces the camera and talks to the audience, it's called breaking the fourth wall. This book breaks the fourth wall with the readers and it is exceptionally distracting.

It started early and I shrugged the asides off until the following sentence compared the toughness of the B-17 and B-24: The B-17 could "lose all four engines, both wings, the vertical stabilizer, the hull, the hydraulics, the radio, the air conditioning, the cigarette lighter, and the lower lumbar support and still return safely." (p24)

If that had been a direct quote from a crewman, all's well. As an aside, it's over the top -- and it never stops, appearing on just about every other page, if not every page. Some others:

"A convoy of that many transports is not out there for fun. Well, it could be, but probably not, and it was not the reason here." (p49)

"One shell even struck Admiral Merrill's flagship Montpelier, drenching the exposed gunners and wrecking his favorite typewriter. The bastards." (p51)

A couple of these scattered through the book would be fine, but page after page of these, including, and I kid you not, "wisecracking" references to Monty Python, Buckaroo Banzai, Lord of the Rings, Smokey and the Bandit, and other cultural touchstones reduce the otherwise fine prose to distraction. No wise. Just cracking the flow of the prose like the Silence forming a crack marring a smooth wall at the Eleventh Hour. See what I did there? My Dr. Who aside works just like his: not at all.

I don't remember such dross in his previous books. I picked up another of Cox's volumes, *Blazing Star Setting Sun*, and randomly read a dozen pages in the middle. Same attention to detail. Same analysis of quantity and quality of forces. Same riveting battle descriptions. Not a single distracting aside.

One typo: "headvictorious" (p153) needs a space.

The book contains 21 black and white photos and five black and white maps.

Did Cox get bored? Did an editor suggest punching up his prose with these distracting asides? Did he get distracted and write this while doom-scrolling on his phone? I have no idea but it backfired with me. Oh, I soldiered through the text, his top-notch research propelling me onward even as I cringed every other page.

Apparently, past results don't indicate future performance. He doesn't need such gimmicks to write fascinating and well-researched history. The dozen pages from that previous book brought me right into that history, action, and consequences.

This time, ties go to the author. Next time? Lose the asides. Stick with your excellent analysis and commentary. Enjoyed it.

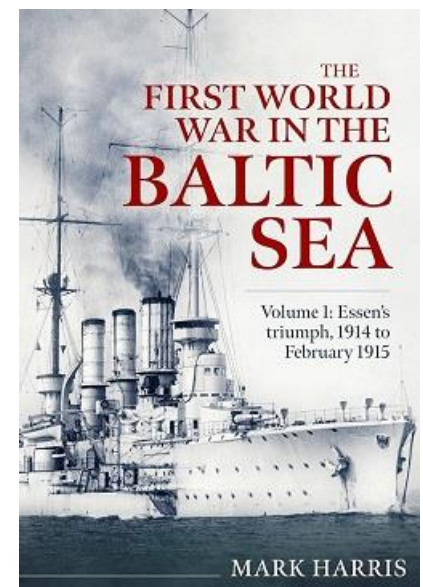
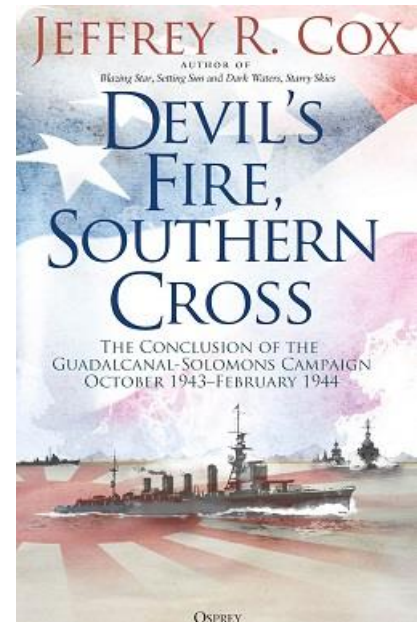
The First World War in the Baltic Sea. by Mark Harris. Hardback (6.8x9.9 inches). 313 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Volume 1: Essen's Triumph 1914 to February 1915*

The first thing to know is that Essen is Admiral Nicolay fon Essen, the Russian commander. His triumph was partially due to understanding the value of minelaying in German shipping lanes and then facing the decidedly "B" Team, and often the "C" Team, of the Germans.

The German Baltic Fleet didn't have the fighting power, or even the prowess, of the "A" Team facing the British in the North Sea. Aging warships and under-trained officers and crews defined the German Baltic Fleet. The war barely started when, on August 26, 1914, the German cruiser *Madgeburg* ran aground in Russian waters. The key here was retrieving the German charts and cipher books. Copies were passed on to the British. Effective code cracking began soon thereafter.

The British also helped by sending tons of high-quality Welsh coal via Arkhangelsk just as stockpiled Russian supplies were getting low. The British even sent three submarines into the Baltic to be based in Russia. British and



Russian submarines, although often laid up for repairs and maintenance, created problems for the Germans at times.

Finally, German arrogance and poor training contributed to poor performance and further losses, including other warships run aground. Minesweeping efforts proved ineffective as German cargo ships fell victims to mines -- ironically, the Germans laid a minefield that claimed Russian ships first.

The retelling of the initial stages of the war deals with the various naval operations, but also how Russia and Germany dealt with Sweden -- an important trading partner for both -- as well as the abysmal winter weather that could and did swamp torpedoboat T.39 and T.50 so bad, their boilers were quenched (p136).

A few tabletop scenarios can be pulled from the text, aided by an Appendix with OOBs and ship specs. A campaign could be ginned up as well.

The book contains 65 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, 19 black and white maps, and four black and white diagrams.

The prose moves the war along, stopping to examine naval strategy and operations as well as battles, feints, and mine sinkings. Well done. I look forward to Volume 2.

Enjoyed it.

Revolts Against Rome: Rebellions and Mutinies in the First Century AD. by John S. McHugh. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 237 pages. 2025.

The book covers nine revolts, from Pannonian Mutiny of 14AD to the Saturninus Revolt in 89AD. The bulk concerns the Year of Four Emperors: Galba revolts against Nero, Otho against Galba, Vitellius against Otho, and Vespasian against Vitellius.

Each receives excellent recaps of political plots and maneuverings followed by the step of convincing legions to back the usurper, and finally the battles that decided the matter. Rebellions don't happen in a vacuum, so external factors such as tribal uneasiness or support receive scrutiny.

You won't get any detailed descriptions of tactical battles, only an overall gist of what happened when rebel and loyal legions and auxiliaries met. But the politics and who really did bicker about who killed who, or who didn't deliver on promises, gets full coverage. You will have to deal with a plethora of Roman names, which sometimes made my head spin, but it's all there.

A couple typos: missing period at the end of a sentence (p36) and "bedridden with goat" (p167) is likely "gout."

It's nicely written with the conspirators and loyalists plotting mutinies and ways to dissolve the revolt without killing too many troops or costing too much money.

Enjoyed it.

The English Bowman in the Hundred Years War. by M. J. Trow. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 234 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Secret Weapon of the Middle Ages*

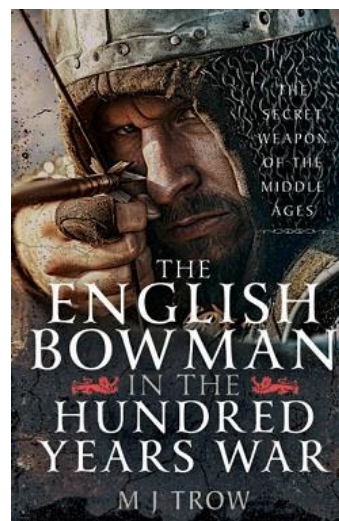
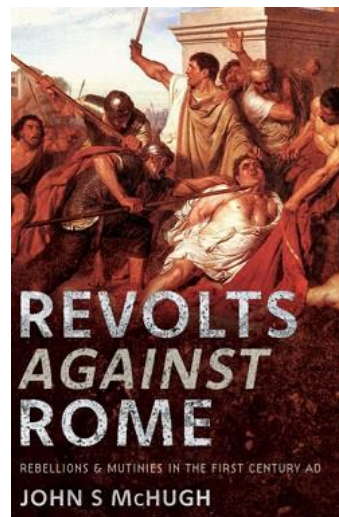
It took a king's edict to mandate the youth of England practice with the bow until they were 17 years old. Then, they were the prime age to go off on campaign -- and England had many campaigns.

The book starts with Bowman 101, covering training, bows, secondary weaponry, armor, and other basics. Then it moves into the various campaigns and battles, from 1346 (Battle of Neville's Cross) to 1453 (Battle of Castillon -- technically a bit beyond the 100YW, but bowman-valid nonetheless). Of course, you get the big three: Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, and a number in between.

A quintet of chapters covers biographies of Edward III, Edward of Woodstock, Bertrand du Guesclin, Henry V, and Joan or Arc. Additional chapters cover the War at Sea, the Free Companies, and the transition to gunpowder weaponry.

It's all well-paced and delves deep enough into detail without smothering you. You'd need additional references for tactical tabletop scenarios, but you can judge the impact of the English longbowmen on the French and Scots in how you treat missile fire.

A couple wrinkles. On page 16 and 18, the text mentions the "Goddamns," which I thought, in context, was a family name. No previous mentions, just another capitalized name. Not true. The "Goddamns" was a French nickname for the English bowmen "because of their blasphemous profanity on the march" (p47). That would have been helpful 30 pages earlier. I had not heard of that nickname.



I suspect without any evidence that the looting, plundering, and raping of the French countryside during raids by the English might have had something to do with how the French felt. The French weren't innocent. During the Battle of Agincourt, French knights slaughtered the boys guarding the English baggage. That was widely condemned at the time.

A couple typos: ". her" (p70) is missing a capital H, and, (p160) has a missing period at the end of a sentence.

One sour note and I can't believe this got through the editing process. At Agincourt, Henry V ordered the execution of the French prisoners. "Today, this act of slaughter would be regarded as a war crime, with all kinds of pinko-liberal outrage underpinned by the Hague Convention..." (p173)

To be kind, it's an inarticulate comment about how the present views a past atrocity during the middle ages. To be unkind, what a thoughtless statement. My "pinko-liberal outrage" is not against examining historical atrocities, but in vilifying those who would argue atrocities are intolerable.

The book contains eight black and white photos, 13 black and white illustrations, and four black and white maps.

I don't want to let one inarticulate phrase ruin what was up to that point a competent examination of the English longbowman, but the phrase hardly appeals to our better angels.

Enjoyed it.

A Bloody Business: Convoy PQ 17. by John Henshaw. Hardback (7.0x10.0 inches). 224 pages. 2025.

The West sent 41 convoys and 13 individual sailings to the USSR during the war. Of the 865 merchant ships, 728 arrived (15.84% loss rate), much higher than trans-Atlantic convoys (4% loss rate). Convoy PQ-17 suffered a 66% loss rate among the merchant ships (p xv).

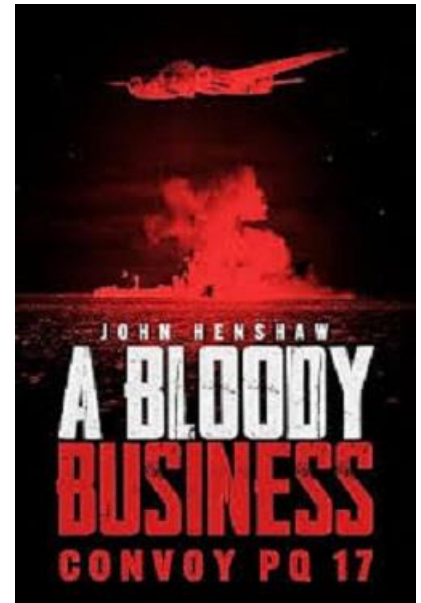
The book contains a full OOB of Allied and German forces involved in the battle over PQ-17, along with specs of all ships. The preparation and sailing, defensive measures, and the attacks and scattering of the ships receive a detailed look. The biggest impact came with the British Admiralty decision to scatter the convoy upon reports that the battleship *Tirpitz* and escorts had sailed to intercept the convoy. It proved a fatal micromanagement of the convoy.

A nice recap of the action of German air and naval attacks allows you to set out a tabletop scenario or two. Certainly, a what-if scenario could include the *Tirpitz* and escorts actually involved.

The book contains 75 black and white photos, 106 black and white ship drawings (overhead and profile), and two black and white maps.

It's a well-written book that dissects PQ-17 down to individual ships and attacks. Well done.

Enjoyed it.



Happy Holidays and Have a Happy and Healthy New Year Filled with Great Gaming! -- RL