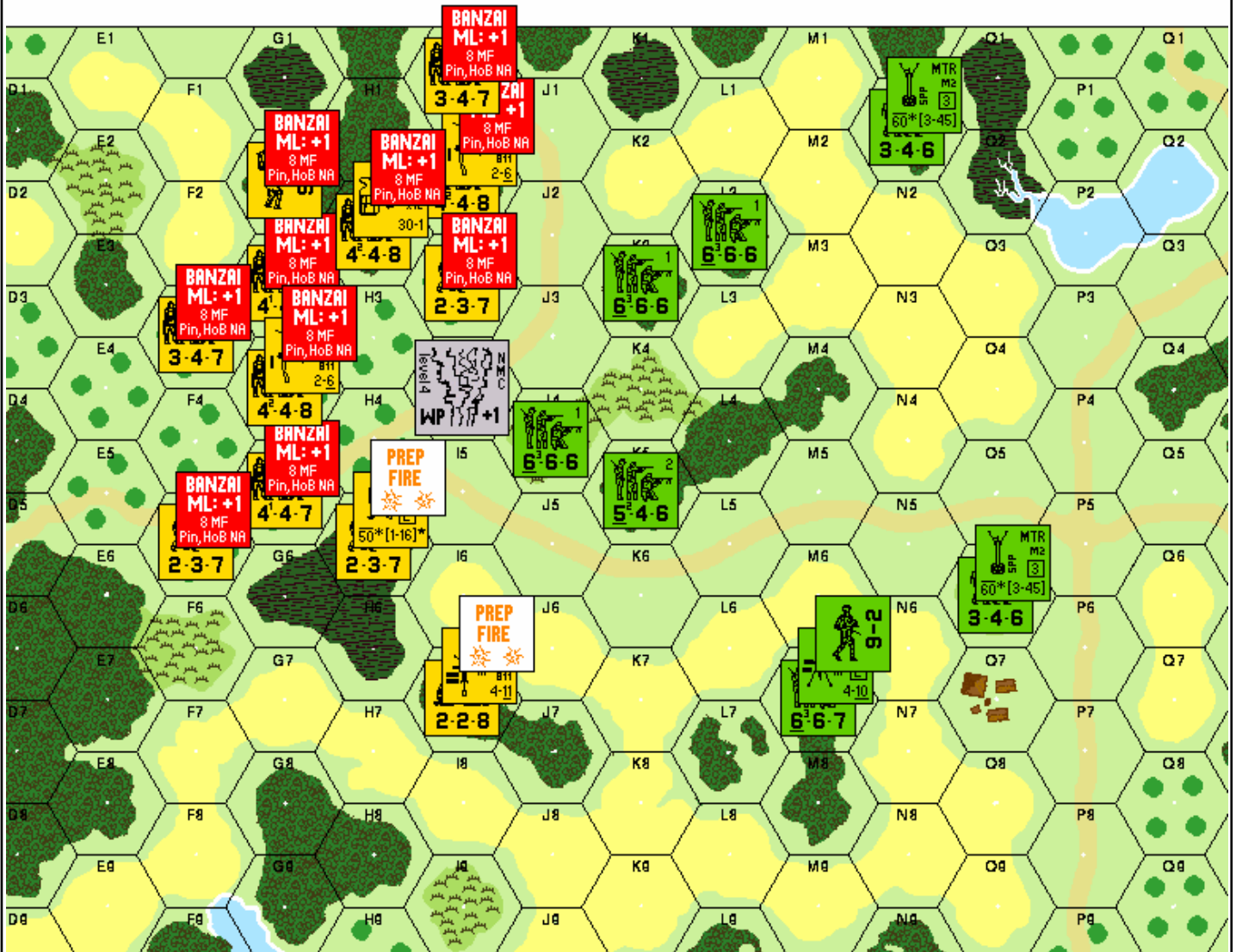


Banzai!!!



The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

June, 2007 Volume 12, Number 2

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Commissar's Corner:

Matt Shostak



Tyson in the Hall. Earlier this year several of us gathered at a local restaurant to bid a fond farewell to club stalwart Sam Tyson, who has since moved to North Carolina. At dinner it was announced that Sam was being named to the Texas ASL Club Hall of Fame. The shadowy, secretive Hall of Fame Selection Committee does not reveal precisely what the selection criteria are, but apparently they did contact Zeb, who did a fantastic job of procuring a coffee mug with the TACHOF logo to present to Sam as a token of his membership. Sam Tyson is the first, and only, member of the hallowed hall.

The Curse of the 10-3

Dan Preston



Luck is a huge factor in ASL. Most of us call it Fate. Some of us have at least one pair of dice buried in a lead lined box in the back yard. Sometimes there is a leader or hero in the counter mix which is avoided and never used unless one of our opponents pulls it out. ASLers never throw anything away, and tend to be a superstitious lot. Never touch my dice. I can use mine, or we can use yours. It took me a whole year to get the whammy off my dice once. Seriously, for a whole year I couldn't roll lower than a 9. Murphy's Law? Audie Murphy, maybe? Or maybe Zeus and his whacky bunch on Olympus were watching and nudging my hand every time and laughing.

Back in the good old *Squad Leader* days, I broke nearly every radio I had. I would roll for contact, and my opponents would start snickering. No matter who I gave the radio to, he would roll a 12. Repair rolls were even funnier. Rally Phase

was more fun than Prep Fire. Fix a broken radio? Not! And that was before the days of chits. Don't get me started on the "all red" draw pile.

Which brings me to the point of this tirade. I call it the curse of the 10-3. If I have a 10-3 leader in my OB, something bad always happens. 90% of the time, if my 10-3 rolls a MC, sooner or later he will roll a 2. It took me a while, but I finally figured out that a 2 DR is one of the worst things that can happen to a 10-3 leader. Best of all, he can become Fanatic. Because of the 10 morale cap, it doesn't really help. Now the bad news: the other HOB DRs have our erstwhile commander becoming heroic, (getting wounded, killed) going berserk, (running straight into the blazing guns of one's enemy) disrupting, (sitting in the road until some 7-0 rallies him) or surrendering (the ultimate irony).

Most of the time, my 10-3 rolls a 2. Mostly mundane, straight or IMCs. Never a rally, because 10-3 leaders don't break that often. But in the thick of the fight, some enemy unit will throw a low FP attack at our battalion commander, and set an otherwise great setup on its ear. 10-3s which represent some historical figure fare the worst. For example, a while back I took the British in *North Bank*. As soon as that sniper activation dr came up a 1, I knew who it was going to hit. Needless to say, Temporary Major Robert Cain would be getting his Victoria Cross posthumously. Of course, he didn't roll a 2 and HOB, but I digress. I was playtesting one of my scenarios which feature a Romanian 10-3, representing Brigadier General Mociulschi. Of course he rolled a 2 and went berserk. He and two squads went running up the hill and the bewildered but accommodating Russians blew them into hamburger.

Which brings us to the redoubtable James Gavin. This guy is always a 10-3. In *Gavin Take* (who is the star in this battle!) a German unit threw a 1MC and he rolled a 2. I went in the bathroom, screamed briefly, and went calmly back to the table. The two squads with Gavin rolled an 11 and a 12 on their berserk checks. On the 1 MC, one of the squads proceeded to roll another 2 and went berserk anyway. This time, there was a broken group of Germans to go beat up, and he dodged a bullet (pun intended). Maybe the curse is starting to lift. If *Swatting at Tigers* is ever updated, maybe I'll play it. And maybe General Gavin will end up like Jack Palance in the movie *Attack!*

In conclusion, no streak of bad/strange/good luck lasts forever. In the case of the curse of the 10-3, at least General Gavin survived the scenario named after him, and even managed to scrape out a win by the barest of margins. Maybe I'll take the side that has the 10-3, and try to get over my superstitious nature. Maybe I'll find a game where he can set up HIP, or keep him out of the way and send him off for exit points. Yeah, right. Maybe I'll give him the radio, just for laughs.

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Player Profile: Rick Reinesch

Banzai: Tell us a little bit about your gaming background. How long have you been gaming? What was your first game? Are there any particular games that stood out over the years?



Rick Reinesch: I've been gaming for over 30 years now, having caught the gaming bug while I was in high school. Living in the middle of South Dakota there weren't many opportunities to acquire games, let alone play against anyone. I finally got an opportunity to enter a hobby store that carried *Avalon Hill* titles and bought *Tactics II*, *Panzer Blitz*, *Panzer Leader*, and *Squad Leader* in one fell swoop, and the rest is history. While in college, I played a lot of *Squad Leader*, *Third Reich*, blind *Flat Top* (which is the only way to play that game), and *Kingmaker*.

I began acquiring a number of games after college since I now had a job and money. Over the years I tended to concentrate on products from specific game companies: In the 80's it was *Avalon Hill* and *Victory Games*, in the 90's it was *The Gamers'* OCS and SCS series of games, and of course everything official ASL related throughout that period. Outside of ASL, my favorite game of all time is *Avalon Hill's The Longest Day*. I've played that campaign game at least 4 times and enjoyed it immensely every time.

Banzai: When and how did you discover ASL?

RR: I 'discovered' ASL when it first came out; having already been playing SL for a number of years, I was aware of its development; having been involved with a number of Bob Medrow's efforts related to *Squad Leader*. Bob was a professor of mine at the University of Missouri-Rolla and I had the pleasure of being involved with a number of playtests and game developments with him. I knew I wanted to make the move up when it came out and bought the rulebook and *Beyond Valor* immediately after their release. Unfortunately, the gamers I was involved with at the time were not interested in playing ASL. Over the years I continued to add core modules as they were released, but did not even crack the rulebook.

All that changed after I moved to Austin. I made contact with the local ASL group through MMP's website. So more than 20 years after first acquiring the game I got a chance to play my first ASL scenario in 2001 and have been hooked ever since.

Banzai: What nationality do you enjoy playing the most?

RR: That's a tough one, as I haven't played a nationality yet that has not appealed to me in some form or fashion. Each nationality has its own quirks and idiosyncrasies that keep this game from getting stale and predictable. But I would have to say I lean more towards the Germans than any other nationality.

Banzai: Describe your favorite kind of scenario.

RR: That's easy - ETO combined arms. Early war, late war, open country, city fight, it doesn't matter. I find the options available for playing this kind of scenario more varied and enjoyable, and one tends to have the ability to recover from luck issues easier. I blame Matt Shostak for getting me hooked on these based on some of our classic matches.

Banzai: What are your ASL strengths and weaknesses?

RR: I think that I've become pretty good executing on defense. I am certain that comes from being on the receiving (and oftentimes brutal) end of the skillful attacks from the strong players we have in the group.

My biggest weakness is definitely my tactics on the offense. I feel I have not yet developed the ability to plan far enough in advance to take advantage of the situations my opponent presents to me. For me, there is a lot of after-the-fact berating for moves and activities I should have done. This is the reason I tend to prefer the defense. I'm still doing a lot of observing and learning.

Banzai: What is the best part of ASL? The worst?

RR: The best of part of ASL by far are the folks that I play against and interact with. They are a great group of guys that show a real dedication to the hobby.

The worst part of ASL, besides my (bad) luck, is OBA. The rules around it are convoluted to say the least and the entire process is tough to follow without the use of the OBA flowchart. It's a great weapon to have-when you can actually get it where you want it to fall. It's just a little too fickle for my taste. I shy away from scenarios in which OBA is the key for victory to either attacker or defender.

Banzai: What are you most looking forward to in ASL?

RR: I am really looking forward to the release of the *Heat of Battle* titles that are in the development pipeline. I've had the good fortune to be a part of playtesting a number of the scenarios for quite a few of the upcoming products, and I am very excited to see what the final products look like. I think there are going to be some classics on the horizon.

Banzai: You're attacking in 1944. Would you rather have four Greyhounds or three Stuarts? Would you rather have three demo charges or two flamethrowers?

RR: I think I'd go for the three Stuarts. They are more heavily armored and have a better cross-country capability. The Greyhounds do have smoke pots, but your odds are almost as good of obtaining vehicular smoke grenades with the Stuarts.

As to the other question, I'll take the two flamethrowers. They can project FP further than a demo charge, they aren't once-and-done weapons (usually), and there are no TEM modifiers.

Banzai: What was your most enjoyable ASL moment? Your worst? Funniest?

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RR: My most enjoyable ASL moment would have to have been my second playing of *The Predators* (CH8) with Matt Shostak. For me, it was such a classic momentum swinging match that still rates as my personal favorite in playing ASL.

My worst ASL moment occurred in a match against Bryan Register a few tournaments back playing *Tenez vos Positions!* (TAC64). I had Bryan on the ropes when we broke for lunch with two turns to go. When we returned, my luck did not. I couldn't roll anything less than a 10 it seemed. Bryan came roaring back to destroy me so utterly that I threw my dice out of the tournament room and walked over and threw my dice cup into the trash.

Banzai: What area of your play would you like to improve on most over the next year?

RR: Well, I've already mentioned tactical planning, but I also realize that there is a large area of ASL that I have not touched yet – PTO. I have played a grand total of two scenarios involving the Japanese, and even at that, those scenarios never involved jungle terrain. So many folks have commented on how great it is to play PTO scenarios. You can't improve on something until you start.

Banzai: You get choice of sides in a scenario. Would you rather have the side with a single behemoth tank like a Panther or Tiger, or the side facing them with larger numbers (say 4) of less stout vehicles like Shermans or T-34s?

RR: I'd rather have the side with the greater number of vehicles. Generally with my luck, I'd malfunction the MA on the behemoth with the first shot. I'd rather increase the opportunities for rolling a critical hit and/or mitigating the loss of a vehicle.

Banzai: Last June you ran the Austin tourney for the first time. What did you learn?

RR: That you can sleep on three chairs pulled together in the corner of the tournament room if you are tired enough. Seriously though, I learned that you can't pull one of these off on your own. These things are a lot of year-round work. There are so many big and little things that need to get done that it requires the support and assistance of a lot of folks – whom I want to thank again profusely. You find yourself acting more like a coordinator; making sure that all the moving pieces come together when they should, and working on ensuring that folks are enjoying themselves once the tourney commences. I won't say that it was easy, but putting on the tournament was certainly rewarding.

Banzai: What advice would you give to players who are just starting out, and what advice would you give to ASL clubs in trying to attract and retain new players?

RR: For first time players, invest in the ASL Starter Kits. In my opinion, the release of the SKs has been the single best thing to happen to the game since its inception. ASL is a significant investment in both time and money. The SKs give you a great feel for the game without the rules overload or

intimidation factor of the full rules. Also, make sure that you play more experienced players. You will absorb more about this game by playing more experienced opponents than you will ever learn from reading the rules. Yes you'll get your brains beat in, but it's worth it.

For clubs, get a regularly scheduled game day established. It gives players a chance to plan far enough in advance on attending and builds a rhythm that keeps players active. Also, get the word out as to your existence through postings at local hobby stores and through the Internet. I've been contacted by 4 new players in the past 3 months through our presence on the Strategy Zone Online, through MMP's club info, and through our Yahoo club listing.

Banzai: What's your favorite AFV (or other game piece) in ASL and why?

RR: My favorite game piece is not an AFV, it is the 81/82MM mortar – pick your nationality. I love that weapon. It provides great offensive and defensive capability at a range and rate of fire that is hard to beat. Even with its firepower halved it hits as hard as the inherent strength of two full squads, it can lay down smoke in multiple hexes in any given phase in a more timely fashion than OBA exactly where you want it.

Banzai: We'll get to your favorite ASL scenarios in another issue, so how about telling us what your other favorite games are?

RR: I'm a big fan of large operational and strategic level games covering World War II. To that end I enjoy the all the games in the OCS series by *The Gamers*, *World in Flames*, and some of the old *Avalon Hill* titles such as *The Longest Day* and *Third Reich*.

Banzai: What are your other interests outside of gaming?

RR: There are other things to be interested in besides gaming and ASL? I have always loved music and have played an instrument in community bands on and off again for years. I am currently playing the trombone in a community band in the area, which is a lot of fun. I enjoy reading, generally about World War II, and have been working on expanding my library of WWII volumes for several years now. I enjoy informal website design and have worked on sites for my family and my neighborhood.

Banzai: Any final comments to wrap up?

RR: Sure! I'd like to encourage ASL players to become active with the club, the game days, playtesting (playtesting ASL is still **playing** ASL), and supporting activities such as demonstrations at hobby stores, attending luncheons and tournaments; especially the tournaments. There's this tournament in Austin in June that I've heard great things about. I believe the best years for ASL are still in front of it, but only if we all contribute to it.

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What's on My Play List

Walter Eardley



In selecting a scenario, I look for several elements including a larger order of battle (OOB), some fun toys on each side and some unique hook. For me PTO is a big attraction, as is a historical map. I really like scenarios where you have to do something other than just kill the enemy or take buildings. I like scenarios with CVP caps because it keeps people from using their cardboard troopers in reckless manner. With that in mind, here is my list:

SP140 Red Valentines. This choice was inspired by Zeb Doyle. I was looking through a bundle of scenarios he brought to Owlcon 007, and it jumped out at me with the funky OOB featuring some fun things on both sides. Since I don't yet own this pack, there is not a lot more I can say about it other than I know he and Tom had a blast playing this at Owlcon. I am going to have to borrow this from someone.

ASL 70 KP 167. This is a classic meaty scenario from *Code of Bushido* played on board 36 and part of 39. I have never played this action but it always looked entertaining. A very stout elite and first line Japanese force with 4 of the 16 squads HIP backed up by some machine guns, some fun light mortars, mines and SAN 6 try to keep a mixed early war force of Philippine and US Army troops with some AFVs from clearing 3 road blocks. The defense has a lot of options for setting nasty ambushes with the 4 HIP squads, 12 AT mine factors and two 37L AT guns. Throw in some nice leaders including a 10-2 and the Japanese should be more than capable of a solid defense. The Allies have a mixed bag of elite Americans (6-6-7s) along with second line and green units representing the Philippine troops. As support, there are 4 light tanks, a 75* Infantry gun and two M3 GMCs (halftracks with 75s). It is hard to believe this only has 51 playings on ROAR.

ASL 8 The Fugitives. Many of you are probably wondering, "What the heck is that old war horse doing on his list?" Because most of the people I play started before I did, we bypassed many of the older scenarios in favor of ones they had not yet played. I have seen this one played a couple of times and always thought it looked like fun. With the variable entry and the rubble placement, this looks like it would have some replay value.

ASL 69 Today We Attack. There are not many times you get a combined arms force of Chinese attacking a brittle Japanese force. Okay, the Chinese tanks are not that sexy, but

beggars can't be choosers. Here the Chinese are going to have to be careful because even the Japanese machine guns are threats to the armor. The nice 37Ls (with rate of fire 3) and the infantry guns are more than a match for them as well. 65 CVP/EVPs might be a tough score to achieve if those tanks go down. It looks challenging from either side.

ASL 117 With Tigers on their Tails. This is another selection inspired by Zeb, through one of his excellent after action reports. The scenario is a huge combined arms contest where a pair of Hungarian Tigers covers the retreat of their infantry comrades and some other AFVs. If those Tigers go down it would be tough on the Hungarians. The Russians have to be careful because the Tigers are king right now and can kill anything in the Russian OOB. The victory conditions are based on exiting 30 VP (and exiting more than the Russians) so the Hungarians have to watch their step also. I would look up Zeb's fine AAR for much better detail on this encounter.

DASL 7 With Flame and Shell. I have played this one once each way and had a blast. It is a classic and deluxe is always fun. With flame throwing Mark IIIs trying to dig out elite Russians supported by antitank guns and some artillery pieces, this one promises to be a bloody down to the wire brawl. For me, this is one of those that I'll play *anytime, anywhere*.

ASL RB2 Blood and Guts. *Red Barricades* was where I cut my teeth on ASL. I have played a half dozen (or more) campaign games (CGs) and most of the scenarios. *Blood and Guts* is near and dear to my heart because it was the first time I beat my arch nemesis Jay Harms on this map. This is in your face Barrikady action where both sides get to use all those fun tricks. What other scenario would you look at as the Germans and think, "I only have to move about three hexes forward. Dang, I am not sure the pioneers, sturm and rifle squads with demo charges, flamethrowers, and a load of machine guns, led by a 10-3 and 9-2 supported by 3 StuGs with one 9-2 armor leader is enough to do the job!" Of course, they are facing an elite force including 6-2-8 assault engineers led by a 10-2 who will probably be directing a .50 cal. Another *anytime, anywhere* scenario for me.

Gavutu-Tanambogo CG. This is the mini CG published in the *ASL Annual 93b*. Seaborne assault at night against caves, anyone? I have been looking at this one for years and always wanted to give it a go. Maybe one year on a Thursday in Austin. At one point in time, there was a very good discussion on the ASLML about this series of scenarios. I don't know if it is still available.

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RBF-27 Romanian Panzers. This looks like a fun early war eastern front tank battle. Anything that has the OT-34 gets my attention. I get the feeling I could pick anything out of *Recon by Fire 3* and not be disappointed. This one just bubbles to the top for me. It looks like an interesting meeting engagement between two elite forces. I always like simultaneous setup scenarios because you can get down to business in a very short time. On the Russian side, you have 4 T-34-M40s and an OT-34. There are also 6 scout cars which should provide nice rout cutting options. The Romanians have 5 tanks with the 37L gun and 3 tanks with the 75L gun, as well as the numbers advantage in infantry. The action takes place on boards 14 and 44 so there should be plenty of room to operate.

J106 Marders Not Martyrs. Yet another selection inspired by Zeb's after action reports, this one looks like good tournament fare: 5.5 turns with smallish orders of battle on each side. There are a few toys and AFVs for everyone. With only 5 squads on the German side supported by the two Marders, there appears to be very little room for error on the part of the Germans. The Marders must avoid the Russian light mortar as well as make sure they get the first shot at the KVs. The Russians have twice the number of infantry but only two leaders. They must exit 3VP of infantry. The new board V is also an attraction.

J89 Himmler's House. Another deluxe classic. Jay and I squared off in this with me as the Germans. On the last CC roll, Jay earned a hard fought victory. A dozen fanatic SS squads with a "District Party Leader" commissar and a 9-2 supported by two 88s and two 105mm artillery pieces defend against a horde of Russians including assault engineers with flame throwers and demo charges, elite rifle squads, and a couple of 9-2s for motivation, supported by Stalins, Su-100s and a couple of OT-34s. With the variable rubble placement and lots of fun toys, I would play either side.

Next CG. I am a big fan of campaign games. While *Red Barricades* is my first love, I think my favorite so far has been *Operation Watch Tower*. The next CG I would like to play is *Operation Veritable*. From the after action reports this looks like it will be a real challenge for both sides. The day *Valor of the Guards* arrives in my mailbox, it goes directly to the top of the CG list.

J111 Prussia in Flames. Bill and I matched up in this battle at one of the game days. We did not have the right overlays but we played it anyway and had a great time. I expect the next time I play this one it will look completely different. What is not to like about the scenario? Some 4-4-7s are trying to evict some 4-6-8s from a building. The Russians are initially supported by 4 ISU-122s with two OT-34s showing up on turn 5. The Germans have elite rifle squads, a

panzerschreck, and some old antitank guns (75s not 75Ls – i.e. can't kill the ISUs). The part I love about this scenario is the Germans receive reinforcements of 3 conscript squads led by a 6+1. Usually it is John Wayne to the rescue. I am sure the Germans are wondering why they sent new recruits instead. The StuG III which arrives the same turn I guess kind of makes up for the colonel and his rear area flunkies.

J88 Escape to Wiltz. Doyle and I played this a few years ago with Doyle pulling out a victory. In this scenario both sides are racing from west to east. The Germans are trying to stop the Americans from exiting. While the Germans don't have a lot of toys, they do have a few machine guns and a couple of panzerschrecks. They also have to run most of the way to get into positions to take pot shots at the fleeing Americans. On the US side, you get some fun little Stuarts and an armored car with the 37LL gun capable of shooting canister. I like scenarios where the action is fluid and both sides have to maneuver. This one fits that profile.

J97 Nice Morning for a Ride. Since I have not played on the *Primosole Bridge* map yet, I thought I should include one of these scenarios on my list. This one looks like a good selection. The Germans get two of those sexy 88s and a RCL (I don't think I have ever used or faced one of these). 8 elite and 8 first line rifle squads led by a 9-2 make up the infantry part of the OOB. While they have a flamethrower and two demo charges, they only have 3 LMGs as support weapons. The British are equally devoid of machine guns and are initially out numbered 2 to 1 even though they are on the attack. A hero on a bicycle is sent back to get reinforcements including 5 Shermans. The CVP cap seems rather tough on the Brits.

So who wants a game?

Style Points

Playing some PTO, one of my 6-6-6s throws a WP grenade onto a concealed Japanese stack in a building. It turns out to be a 10-0 and a 4-4-8 with a DC. The 10-0 takes his +2MC, but rolls a ten with a six on the cdr and so fails. The wound check kills him. Then the 4-4-8 rolls boxcars on his +2MC and ELRs into a 2-3-7. He ends up failing the LLTC and my 6-6-6 advances in and kills him in CC, capturing the DC. It was cool. – Zeb Doyle



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Scenario Analysis: J106 Marders Not Martyrs



Matt Shostak

This scenario has been getting a lot of play and discussion lately, and it's easy to see why. It's in the latest Journal, so it's fresh, and it's a short and sweet firefight suitable for quick tournament play. Moreover it seems very accessible to the player transitioning from Starter Kit ASL to the bigs. I was initially looking to include a standard analysis in this issue of the newsletter in the style that we've all probably grown accustomed to, but that's already been done for this action with Jim Torkelson's excellent study in *Dispatches from the Bunker* #24. So I decided to do something a little different here. One of the key points of discussion in this scenario is whether to set the Marders up on the hill and dare the KVs to engage in a long-range duel. This puts the Marders at risk from the Russian mortar early on. Jim advocates avoiding this setup, and instead being a bit more cagey with the Marders. I also came to this same conclusion (without having read his article beforehand) when I played our own Dan Ryan. Shortly thereafter I was talking it over with Zeb, and he opined that he might not worry too much about the mortar and just go ahead and set the Marders up on the hill anyway, daring the KVs to come out and play. This got me to thinking. Who would likely win if the Marders simply set up on the hill, and the KVs drove up onto the opposite hill and they duked it out? Let the infantry do their own thing while the tanks have a firefight over their heads. Is this the best way to play the scenario? Who knows? Perhaps some matches will develop along those lines. It does seem like the tank battle can play out rather separately from the infantry, at least for a while. So let's consider just this situation where the infantry are busy in their own fight while the tanks engage in a battle across the hilltops, with no major cross-pollination between the two.

Years ago I wrote a program to simulate ASL tank vs. tank matchups. It was a relatively simple thing written in Java and XML, which I eventually deployed as a servlet on my home machine. I had to make a bunch of assumptions in the simulation, but it did a pretty good job, I think, of calculating likely outcomes of duels between single tanks. As I thought of *Marders Not Martyrs* I realized that the situation in this scenario is well suited for modeling with my simulation program. At least, it's well suited if we're just considering the armor battle with little interaction with the infantry, as I've already outlined. Sure, I'd have to write a bunch of new code, but the scaffolding was already in place to do much of what I wanted. Again I'd have to make certain assumptions, but perhaps I could learn something.

So I set about my task and coded in my spare time to try to derive some insight into this battle. First I considered only the 2 Marders against the 4 KVs. Then I added in the Russian mortar. It seems that a key Russian capability in the

early rounds of this skirmish is to use the mortar to suppress a Marder or two before the KVs arrive, and it will most likely be used in this way if the battle unfolds as planned here. Lastly I added in one other element, the German HMG. It will probably be set up at level one in building M7 in many games. Although it will possibly have other Russian infantry targets to deal with, in this situation it seems highly likely that the Germans will want to use it to try to knock out the Russian mortar squad before they can do too much damage to the Marders. I wrote my simulation to run through the scenario any number of times (10000 seems like a good number) to be able to compute averages.

Obviously many assumptions had to be made, and I'll list here as many as I can remember. First, obviously, I had to assume the tank battle would be completely separate from the infantry battle, with the only exceptions being the Russian mortar and the German HMG. I also figured the German HMG would only be able to fire at the mortar through Russian turn 2 Defensive Fire Phase, and that afterwards it would have more pressing targets as the Soviet ground troops pushed their attack home. I assumed that the tanks would blast away at each other for 4 turns. I wanted to give enough time for the action to clearly decide the matter, yet be somewhat realistic. To win this scenario the Russians have to exit at least 17 points off the far side, 3 of which must come from infantry. This is obviously a hint that exiting a KV or two will probably be necessary to win. In fact, I think it's already pretty much accepted wisdom that exiting 2 KVs is probably needed to get a Russian win most of the time. If they're doing well enough to exit 10-12 points of infantry, they're probably winning in a blowout anyway. So if exiting 2 KVs is key, then they have to have time to do so, and it will take two turns to get them off the board from their shootout positions, hence the 4-turn limit to my shootout simulation. I did not account for snipers, burning wrecks, ELR, heat of battle, or wind change. There are probably a few other uncommon events I did not model. However, the simulation does account for rate of fire, stun, shock, immobilization, critical hits, improbable hits, the inability of buttoned up Marders to fire, semi-intelligent target selection (i.e. with multiple targets do not shoot at the one that is already acquired by someone else on your side, all else being equal, etc.), and the availability of special ammo such as APCR by date. I assumed that neither side would fire HE at each other, since it is rather pointless in this case. I further assumed that the Marders would not ever target the mortar squad. Lastly I decided that the simulation should count up the mission kills for each side. I decided that a Russian tank should be considered mission killed if it was immobilized, but not if its main armament was malfunctioned, because it could still exit to score points. For the Marders, it was the exact opposite. Being immobilized is of little consequence to the Marders here, but having a gun malfunctioned is huge (and probably a kiss of death).

Disclaimer: This information is provided purely for entertainment purposes. Use the information at your own

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risk in every sense of the word. I've been in software long enough to know that bugs always seem to find a way in, so I can't guarantee these results. However, I *think* they might be close enough to be fun to talk about.

I wanted to include here a sample of the output of the program, run with the play-by-play option turned on to give a running commentary of what's happening, but it's too lengthy for the pages of this newsletter. Luckily, Sam was able to take my simulation and create a graphical front end to it, so you can watch it yourself on the club web page. Visit <http://www.texas-asl.com/sim/main.php> and see for yourself. This graphical front end is still very much a work in progress, so take it in that spirit. Currently it is a canned illustration of a single run through the simulator. If you have any comments, suggestions, or ASL errors to report about the simulated play itself, email me. For comments etc. about the graphical front end, email Sam.

Since I tackled the problem in 3 stages (tanks only, then add the mortar to the mix, and then add the HMG) I thought it would be instructive to compare the results at each stage. So I allowed for parameters to control whether the mortar and HMG should be included in the simulation. This allows us to see the effect the mortar really has on the action. Since we think that in most cases in order to win the Russians really need 2 KVs able to exit after dealing with the Marders, we can roughly equate a German "win" in this simulation to achieving mission kills on 3 or 4 KVs. It really doesn't matter to the Germans how many Marders are mission killed, (perhaps they are not martyrs as the title suggests, but they can certainly be sacrificed) although it is interesting and those results are calculated as well. Using that metric, we can see that with no mortar involved, the Germans "win" this engagement roughly 59-60% of the time.

Now adding the mortar to the fray, we see that number dip to about 52%. That's not terribly surprising. The Marders are open topped and have all armor factors less than 4, and hence are somewhat vulnerable to the mortar. In those cases where the mortar scores an early stun, shock, or kill result on a Marder, it can make a huge difference to the outcome, but it won't happen all that often -- just often enough to annoy the bejesus out of the German player, probably. What do you know, it's now looking balanced!

Russian tank losses

 number of scenarios with zero mission kills = 872 (8.72 %)
 number of scenarios with one mission kills = 1908 (19.08 %)
 number of scenarios with two mission kills = 1991 (19.91 %)
 number of scenarios with three mission kills = 1336 (13.36 %)
 number of scenarios with four mission kills = 3893 (38.93 %)

German tank losses

 number of scenarios with zero mission kills = 1174 (11.74 %)
 number of scenarios with one mission kills = 1551 (15.51 %)
 number of scenarios with two mission kills = 7275 (72.75 %)
 number of game mortar squad breaks = 0
 number of game mortar squad reductions = 0

Now take a look at the effect of using the HMG as counter battery fire against the mortar.

Russian tank losses

 number of scenarios with zero mission kills = 593 (5.93 %)
 number of scenarios with one mission kills = 1574 (15.74 %)
 number of scenarios with two mission kills = 1865 (18.65 %)
 number of scenarios with three mission kills = 1150 (11.5 %)
 number of scenarios with four mission kills = 4818 (48.18 %)

German tank losses

 number of scenarios with zero mission kills = 3023 (30.23 %)
 number of scenarios with one mission kills = 1523 (15.23 %)
 number of scenarios with two mission kills = 5454 (54.54 %)
 number of game mortar squad breaks = 0
 number of game mortar squad reductions = 0

Russian tank losses

 number of scenarios with zero mission kills = 885 (8.85 %)
 number of scenarios with one mission kills = 1847 (18.47 %)
 number of scenarios with two mission kills = 1917 (19.17 %)
 number of scenarios with three mission kills = 1130 (11.3 %)
 number of scenarios with four mission kills = 4221 (42.21 %)

German tank losses

 number of scenarios with zero mission kills = 2345 (23.45 %)
 number of scenarios with one mission kills = 1454 (14.54 %)
 number of scenarios with two mission kills = 6201 (62.01 %)
 number of game mortar squad breaks = 16170
 number of game mortar squad reductions = 19118

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We see that using the HMG against the mortar squad for a couple of turns nudges the numbers a couple of percentage points back in the Germans' favor. This is not too surprising. Although the HMG will often break the mortar squad, it can't stop the mortar from firing in turn 1 prep, and of course the squad can occasionally rally back to action. To sanity-check the numbers, consider that the HMG will average about 2 shots per fire phase, and will fire for 2 turns, and will do this in 10000 iterations. That's about 80000 shots at the mortar squad, resulting in about 35000 breaks and reductions. I didn't count KIA.

Final Thoughts

In no way do I think this simulation is a full analysis of *Marders Not Martyrs*. Rather, it is a study of a very limited situation that I hope can shed a little light on the scenario as a whole. It has been an immensely fun exercise for me, as both a programmer and an ASL player. I'd love discuss the program with any reader who is interested. I would especially like to learn of any mistakes in the program, so if you can find something in the play-by-play that looks like an error, please let me know and I'll see if I can correct it.

I'm very grateful to have had the help of Sam Tyson, Rick Reinesch, Mike Seningen, and Zeb Doyle in preparing this article. They provided essential testing and proofing of the results, listened patiently to all my progress reports, and deserve my hearty thanks for their assistance. And of course, Sam gets all the credit for the excellent graphical front end to the simulation mentioned earlier. It really makes the simulation pop in a way that simple teletype-style play by play does not.

2007 ASL Team Tournament Update

Rick Reinesch



Our tournament reaches a milestone this year with the hosting of the 15th Annual Texas ASL Team Tournament from Thursday June 21st 9AM through Sunday June 24th, 8PM 2007 at the La Quinta Inn, Round Rock, Texas in the 'burbs just north of Austin. Tournament planning is in full swing. We are lining up prizes and awards and should have a little something for everyone attending. It's going to be a great time as always, so plan on making that trip to Austin!

Austin is a laid back city and our tourney reflects that attitude.

As in previous years, Thursday's games will be informal gaming, with those games counting toward the Maj. Johnson Award (see below). On Friday morning, we will launch the formal phase of the tournament where we'll track wins and losses over the weekend. Players are free to match themselves with anyone and play any mutually agreeable scenario.

The main tournament consists of two-person teams combining skills and abilities to strive for the honor of seeing their name emblazoned on the Austin Memorial Cup and take home some great first place awards. Teams will be fairly assigned at the beginning of the tournament. Success of a team is based upon their tournament wins/losses relative to their comparable strengths. You must Pre-Register (postmarked by June 8th, 2007) to be eligible.

While we take great pride in our "Team" Tournament, we try to take the pressure off players and teammates by focusing on the most important aspects of ASL -- lots of dice rolling and tons of fun! Basically the tournament is a weekend long excuse to play some ASL!

The tourney inside the tourney has players challenging for the coveted 10-3 Award. This honor is bestowed to the individual who perseveres throughout the weekend and bests all comers. Additional awards include the 9-2 Award given to the overall runner-up, and the Major Johnson Award, given to the player who plays the most ASL over the duration of the tournament as determined by a formula that takes into account the number of scenarios and scenario size and complexity. And there will be the dice-based awards as well. We'll be giving away the Audie Murphy Award to the player with the greatest number of snakes and the Col. Klink Award for the most boxcars over the course of the weekend starting on Thursday. We've had multiple winners in the past, so rock the grognards' weekend and take home as many as you can!

We will be offering two mini tournaments this year. A Thursday mini called "Opening Assault" featuring scenarios by our own Zeb Doyle, and a Saturday mini we've traditionally called the "Texas HEAT". The scenarios for the HEAT this year will feature an armored PTO theme. The scenarios we will be featuring this year are *Makin Taken* (J84) and *Armored Probe* (CH6). It should be a lot of fun. Check out the tournament website for all the latest info on the minis. Both minis will start at 9AM sharp on their respective days.

If you are new to ASL, don't let the term 'tournament' scare you off. Starter Kit action will be in full swing during the weekend, so there's no reason not to attend!

The ASL Team Tournament will be returning to the La Quinta Inn Round Rock, 2004 North I-35 Round Rock, Texas, 512-255-6666. When reserving rooms for the Tournament, mention you are with the "Central Texas ASL Club" and you will receive the discounted rate of \$62 per night. We have 60 room nights blocked for Thurs-Sat, evenly split between King-sized and double bed rooms. But don't

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wait, last year the hotel sold out and some players had to scrounge for rooms nearby that cost more!

Registration this year is \$36 for the Thursday-Sunday gaming. Your entrance fee also includes participation in any Mini-Tournaments should you desire to enter. Make sure to meet the June 8th registration deadline to avoid the \$10.00 surcharge for late registration. If you can only make it from Friday through Sunday, your registration fee is \$31.00. Saturday-only play is \$21.

Make sure to keep up-to-date with the list of pre-registered attendees and any late breaking information at our club website www.texas-asl.com. Just follow the links to the tournament web pages.

Hope to see you there!

Favorite Scenarios

Zeb Doyle



Given the immense talent and creativity in the ASL design community, any list of my favorite scenarios would be a very long list indeed. Instead I've tried to compile a group that reflects the very best parts of the ASL experience. All of these scenarios are highly challenging for both sides, give a wonderfully evocative historic feel, and most important, are loads of fun to play. Without further ado, here's my list of ultimate ASL scenarios:

TAC15 Valley Of Thunder. This is an overlooked gem of a scenario that features some classic East Front action. A massive horde of Soviet conscripts and T-34s try to cross the snowy steppe and wrest a village away from a company of early war SS. Some panzers and Stukas arrive as reinforcements in what is sure to be a bloody battle. I'd make one small change to the balance and require the Germans to hold onto one additional building for each turn before turn seven that the Stukas arrive. Regardless, the scenario is a total blast and considering it's freely available on the web there's no excuse not to try it.

BRT4 Rikusentai. From the snowy steppes of Russia, we move to the sweltering heat of Tarawa. This scenario pits an unstoppable American force of 6-6-8s and 10-2 leaders against an immovable group of Fanatic Japanese in pillboxes. Anyone that thinks that PTO scenarios are nothing more than bug hunts should try digging 2-2-9s with .50 cal's and a 10-1 out of pillboxes...it's tough but so much fun!

A117 Maggot Hill. Here the Japanese are on the attack against a dug-in American force with massive amounts of firepower. The step-reducing Japanese can come in from all sides but need to time their attack perfectly to ensure that every American that breaks dies. If the timing is off, the Japanese will be too chopped up to get another chance. This scenario showcases the strengths and weaknesses of the two

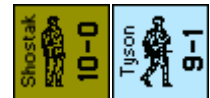
sides extremely well, and the VC option for the Americans to pull out adds even more tension.

J24 Smashing the Third. Back to the East Front with a massive armored brawl between T-34s and Panzer IVs. These tanks, the workhorses of the respective sides, offer a very intriguing matchup as both have subtle strengths and weaknesses. The infantry also plays a vital role and it all adds up to a great scenario that will push your combined arms skills to their limits.

KE20 Steel-Eyed Boys. To finish, we have a brutal battle on the West Front featuring a powerful and mobile group of British attacking against the ultimate defensive squad, the 1945 SS 6-5-8. Although the SS are brittle, the British have to work hard early enveloping the village and rooting the Germans out house by house. The various German VC options add to the tension and force both sides to plan well ahead. As with *Valley Of Thunder*, there's one small tweak that enhances this scenario, although this suggestion is actually from the designer: No German unit may move or advance north of hexrow T prior to turn two, and AFV crews may not voluntarily abandon their vehicles.

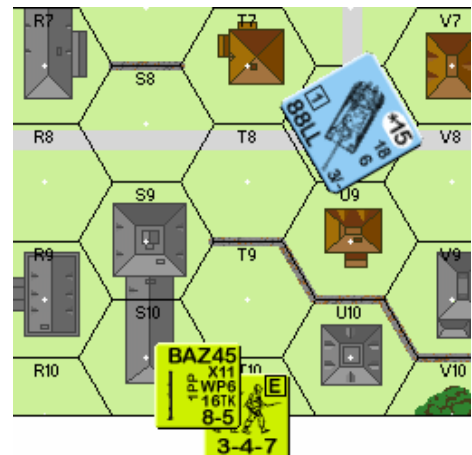
Tactical Tip

Matt Shostak & Sam Tyson



Don't forget about Underbelly Hits (D4.3). When considering where to place a hidden gun, or perhaps a bazooka or antitank rifle team, look for spots where your opponent is likely to cross a wall or bocage hexside, or exit a gully or stream. You can even use boresighting (of the exited hex) if otherwise eligible for it. Since a successful turret hit is treated as an Underbelly Hit and uses the aerial armor factor, it can increase your odds of a kill tremendously. In the example shown, the bazooka-carrying 3-4-7 half-squad lies in wait for JgdPz V to cross the wall into T9, since it would qualify for the underbelly hit since they are within six hexes and at the same level.

A TH result that would normally be a turret hit would instead be an Underbelly Hit, and use the Aerial AF. Hull hits are treated normally. The Aerial AF in this case would be 3, since the lowest armor is 6.



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Club Ladder Results

Matt Shostak



The ladder rankings are no more. After much deliberation and discussion with the club, Sam and I decided to discontinue the rankings. The ladder has served us very well over the years, and I have mixed feelings about letting it go. The three main reasons behind the decision were that many people weren't participating, that it seemed to intimidate newbies, and it actually got in the way of some games being played. It's unfortunate that it could not be kept in the proper perspective, but we'll move on. It is not completely gone, because it lives on as the *Club Game Tracker* on the website. Standings won't be reported, but we can still submit games to take advantage of the wonderful data mining afforded by Sam's work on it over the years. Now there's no excuse not to report your games, so get to it!

you missed any of these you missed a lot of fun. It's like a tournament atmosphere for a day. The Austin group now meets on the first Saturday of every month. To stay informed of upcoming club events, join our email group. You can post a message at central-texas-asl@yahoogroups.com or you go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central-texas-asl> and take a look. For those still not connected, give Matt, Mike, or Rick a call for club information.

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- More articles about ASL
- Player Profile
- Favorite Scenarios
- Club Meeting Recaps

This Happened to Me



This happened to me while playtesting RBF-44 *Steelingrad*. When my opponent's Defensive Fire Phase started, he opened with the AT guns. He took several shots with the first gun maintaining ROF. He still hadn't lost it, and at six shots was above what would normally be expected. It became a point of interest so we started to count the number of shots. By the end of the phase the ROF streak had allowed him to take 26 shots with the AT guns! Remarkably, all of the shots resulted in only one AFV destroyed and one immobilized. -- *Chas Smith*



Playing Toreki in something, *Constant Sorrow* I think. Toreki had a broken unit in a bad position, so he decided to rout and take interdiction. One snake-eyes and one battle hardening later, the unit was no longer routing, but standing in the open waiting to advance back into position. -- *Brian Roundhill*

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Club Notes

Biweekly Lunch Gathering

Our lunch location has **changed!** Don't forget to join us every other Friday at 1300 hours down at Schlotsky's on South Lamar and Toomey (just south of Riverside Drive). The club sends out email reminders, or you can call Matt or Sam for information on the next get-together.

Game Days

The Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas/Ft. Worth groups have remained active, hosting various gatherings for club members to get together and knock cardboard heads. If

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Thanks to Rodney Kinney for VASL, Carl Fung for his VASL counter images, and the VASL Map Cabals for their VASL map images. We use a combination of VASL counter and map images for scenario layouts with permission of use for that purpose.