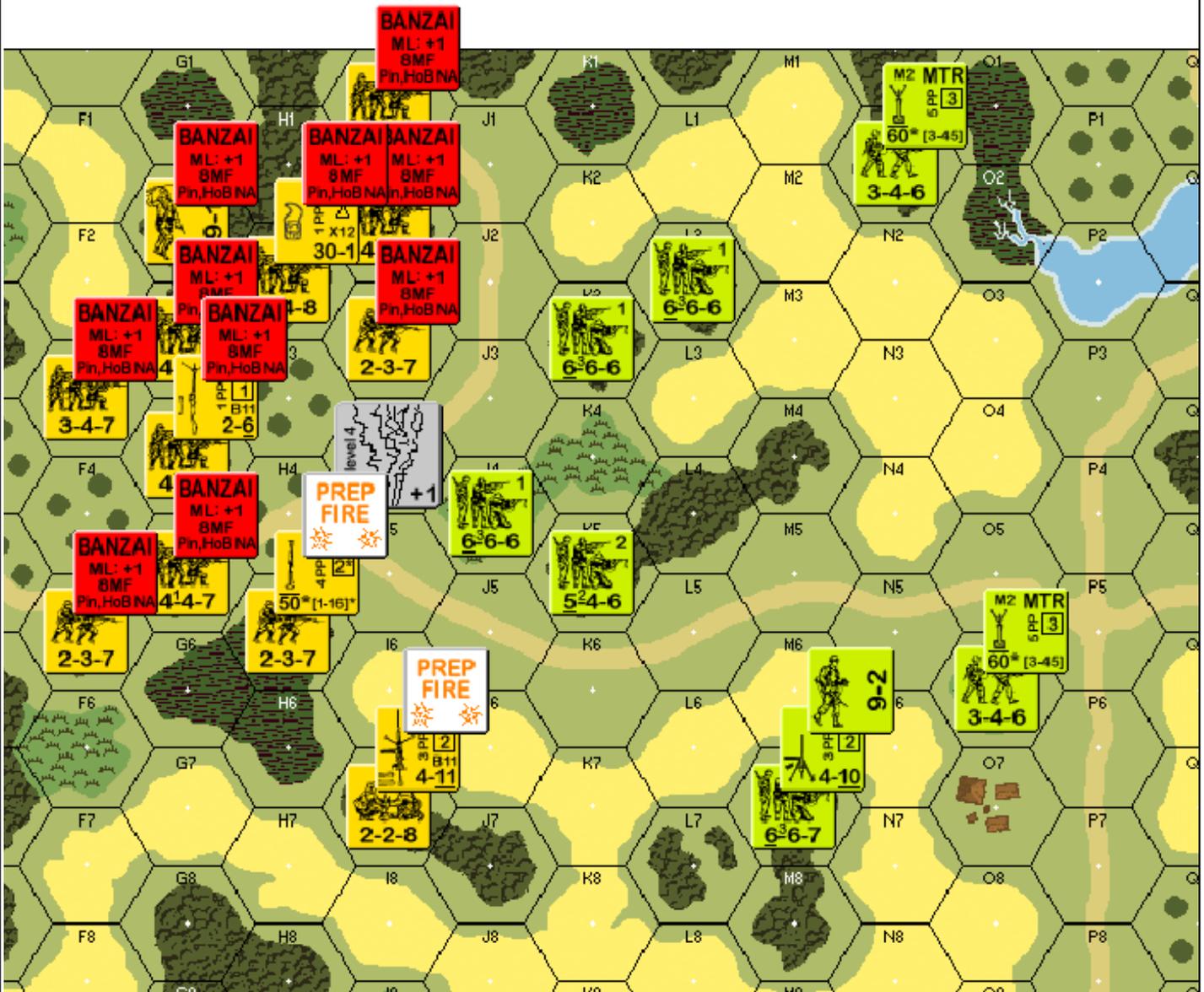


# BANZAI!!!



The Newsletter of the Texas ASL Club

May, 2016

Volume 21, Number 1

This newsletter is **FREE!** Don't let anyone charge you for it

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## EDITOR'S FOXHOLE

**Matt Shostak**



It's been a long time since we last rocked and rolled out an issue of this newsletter, but we hope the wait will prove worth it. In this issue you can vicariously enjoy a couple of Allen King's recent contests, one an eastern front bash and the other a Japanese paradrop to seize a Dutch airfield. A few of our veterans offer their suggestions of things they'd like to see from scenario designers, and of course there's also information about the renowned Texas Team Tournament. Enjoy.

## A RAGING GOOD TIME

**Allen King**



Allen King (Russian) vs Walt Eardley (German) in **Rage Against the Machine (J157)**

Walter graciously invited me to visit his Alpaca/Goat/Llama/Chicken/Dogs/Cats and maybe some other assorted critters ranch in Hempstead recently (12/30/2015). He has, in fact, quite a nice ranch there with a beautiful view of the sunset. Alpacaland deserves better than the likes of me bringing my cardboard machines of destruction to this pastoral paradise, but Walter said he was ready to stop the Russian horde, so the game was on.

**Rage Against the Machine** features a late-war (December 1944) matchup of a combined-arms Russian force from the 19<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps against a mixed infantry force of Kampfgruppe Zoll, reinforced by assault gun elements of the 12<sup>th</sup> Panzer, all trapped in the Courland Pocket. The on-map Russian infantry force is a solid sixteen squads with six 4-5-8, six 5-2-7 and four 4-4-7. As usual the Russian

leadership is minimal for such a horde of infantry, but there is a 9-1, an 8-1 and a lowly 7-0 to hold things together. In addition, entering from off board on turn 1, but actually quite close to the Russian infantry jump-off point, is an imposing array of armored beasts. The heavy hitters include two ISU-122s, three monstrous ISU-152s and three very nice T-34/85s. The infantry also boasts a pair of DCs, a HMG and three LMGs.

The German force is a rather rag-tag lot of eleven squads ranging from elite infantry to conscripts. German leadership is decent with a 9-1, a wounded 9-1 and an 8-0. They have a bit of antitank defense in the form of a PSK, a 75L antitank gun and a plethora of panzerfausts. Russian freeze sleaze is unlikely to be successful at this point in the war. In addition, the Germans receive an excellent platoon of 5-4-8 panzergrenadiers, an 8-1 and three assault guns on German turn three that can enter from the north, west and/or south edges of board 3a. Finally, the SSRs allow the German leaders to be assigned PFs under optional rule C13.311. The first leader to 'faust a Russian AFV automatically battle hardens.

The Russian force appears quite overwhelming, but the armor has a glaring lack of MG armament and the big assault guns have ammo depletion numbers of B11 and B10. Also, only the ISU 122s have smoke rounds (maybe). This is an easily overlooked trait that might ultimately bite the unwary Russian player.

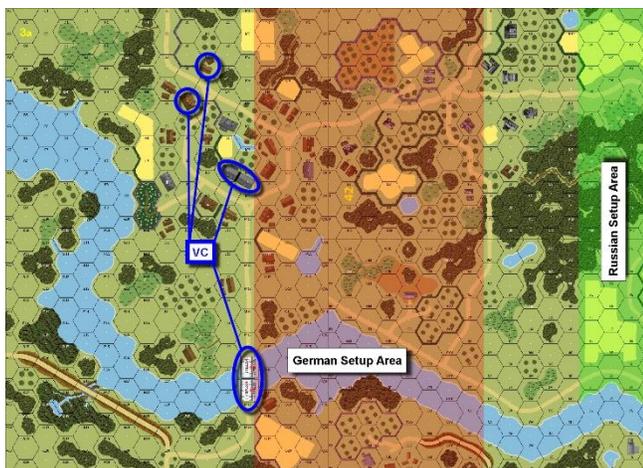
In addition, The Germans get six dummies and, by SSR, any German infantry setting up in concealment terrain get free concealment. Two MMC and any leaders and support weapons stacked with them may set up HIP. Naturally the antitank gun will set up hidden if in concealment terrain.

So, while a cursory glance may make players plead for the Russians, a more careful review will cause an experienced player to opt for the Germans. Walter, being the wise and careful player he is, chose the Germans. ROAR had the scenario 58-49 Germans when we played, so I did not howl with glee when the Russians fell to me. Nonetheless, I do enjoy rolling those large assault guns and tanks across the countryside.

### The Battlefield

The scenario features an area within the Courland pocket that is heavily covered by orchards and a fairly large wooded area at the center/east (Russian setup side) of the maps and a substantial village of stone and wooden housing at the west end of the maps (German end). A church steeple looms at the backside of the village. There are a couple of

first level hill masses mid map, that come into play. The designer has also narrowed the east-west playing area by using the Board 40 and 3a river to narrow the frontage the Germans must defend, while still allowing the other side of the river area to come into play at the German option. German units can set up there and their armored reinforcements can enter from the south board edge (the other side of the river). It is conceivable that the Germans might hide the antitank gun on the south side of the river with an excellent field of fire and bring some or all of his armor into hull down positions on that side of the river. The Russians are confined to setting up north of the river. So, putting aside the German concealment and HIP advantages, the Russians must attack on a relatively narrow front through congested terrain with the added concern of having the Germans enfilade the Russian left flank to mid map. All things considered, that rag-rag German force becomes more formidable as one studies the OB card and terrain.



## Victory Conditions

The victory conditions are straightforward but interesting. The Russians must capture two of three victory objectives. The first objective is a bridge which crosses the wide east-west river. It is on the south side of the playing area. The second objective is the German HQ building in the center of the map and the village. It is a two-hex, stone row house. Both hexes must be controlled by the Russians for them to secure the HQ objective. Finally, the third objective is control of a crossroads on the north side of the village. To control it, the Russians must control two wooden houses on opposite sides of the crossroad street. So, does one go north, center or south to take the required two objectives? The maps involved are 40 (south side long map), 42 (north side long map) and 3a (abutting the ends of 40 and 42). The VC must be met by the Russians at the end of 6.5 turns.

## The Battle

Setup: The Germans set up first and Walter set up about as far forward as he could (Fig. 1). All units were hidden or concealed. One concealed unit was in the HQ building. I assumed it was the wounded leader. There was nothing in the steeple I could see (but maybe a hidden HS with a 9-1 leader and his precious MMG). The German left looked weaker than the German right, but most units were in the mid map area. I was a little surprised by the forward setup as the Russian infantry sets up fairly close (42N row v. Germans at 42H row). So, after a brief review, I decided to test the German center and left (Fig. 2) and, of course, fell right into Walter's trap. While seven Russian turns seemed to provide adequate time to claim two of the three objectives and victory, it did not allow for much milling about either. The Russians have to move and move quickly.



Figure 1 German setup with HQ building in lower center, bridge to extreme lower right, crossroads off map to left.



Figure 2 Russian setup. Village a long way away.

**Russian 1:** The Russian infantry surged forward in the center and on their right (Fig. 3). The right wing aimed at the group of stone buildings and hedges protecting the small, northern hill (covered with an out of season orchard) on board 42. Things went smoothly. Concealment was lost to real German units in 42H5 and 42G3 (if you want to follow along). German fire discipline was magnificent. No German unit lost concealment. The Russian armor split into task forces of 5 and 3 AFVs with 2 ISU-152s and a T-34 moving behind the woods toward the south side of the playing area. The ISU-122s, one ISU-152 and two T-34s moving down the long east-west dirt road on the north side of the map headed toward the village. Due to the potential low ammo on the ISUs and the German ability to skulk in the close terrain, no area acquisitions (ACQs) were made. The concealed German unit on the extreme German left did not take a shot at a Russian 5-2-7 adjacent and in the open. Fire discipline is one thing, but a dummy is another. *Hmmmm*, thought commander King.



Figure 3 End of Russian turn 1. Note the German stack on the Russian far right: suspected dummy.

**German 1:** Strong gusts blew over the area to no effect. The Germans opted to move, rather than fire. The Germans started a major shift toward their left with several units going CX, but little concealment lost (Fig. 4). The Russians prepared to push hard in both the center and their right.



Figure 4 End of German turn 1. Germans scrambled to their left. The lone German unit in village was probably the wounded 9-1.

**Russian 2:** The Russians rushed the scattering Germans successfully. A Russian 5-2-7 was broken, but a hidden German HS with a PSK fired and missed an ISU-122 (need a 6 to hit) and was broken by Russian return fire. A German conscript squad was broken and disrupted and a second conscript was captured in CC, allowing a Russian

deployment. A German 4-4-7 (42G6) was first pinned by fire and then engaged in CC, at 2:1. Sadly, the Russians' typical luck in CC resulted in a melee. Meanwhile, the AFV task force moved around to the south side of the woods and stopped, waiting to see if the 75L antitank gun could be flushed by a nearby HS. No luck. At the end of Russian 2, we had suffered no losses (other than a rout). I felt this was a very good turn for me. The PSK had been located and the troopers holding it routed. One conscript was captured and another disrupted. A 4-4-7 was likely doomed in melee at 42G6. The Germans would be forced to withdraw again. The tempo was being maintained.

**German 2 (Fig. 5):** But would my luck last? The HS with the PSK shot himself dead (a 12 on rally). Nice! The PSK was on the ground, but picked up by another unit in the hex. In prep fire, the hidden German 9-1, a regular squad and the MMG at 42F3 opened up on two adjacent Russian elite squad at 42G3 and broke them both. Ouch; but it could have been much worse on a 16-2 shot. A 5-2-7 also broke from the fire of a squad adjoining the MG nest. Suddenly the Russian drive on the far left German flank was stalling. But, in the Russian defensive fire the German 9-1 and squad broke, relieving some of the pressure there. In the center the Russians eliminated the 4-4-7 in melee, but lost a 5-2-7 HS in exchange.



Figure 5 End of German turn 2. Russian tanks began searching for the 75L ATG. Broken German MMG nest w/ 9-1 near hill on Russian right under DM.

So by the end of the turn, the Germans were down 2 1/2 squads and another one disrupted for only a Russian HS. Both hidden squads had been found and the PSK located.

The German MMG nest was broken (though it rallied quickly). The Germans had completed their shift to the north center and were no longer CX, but their left flank was hanging in the air.

**Russian 3:** It was time to pick up the pace with the German MG force back (Fig. 6). There was no Russian prep fire. The ISU-122s got into position to get ACQs and for the appearance of German armor on German 3. The tanks on the Russian left followed a HS into an orchard on the south side near the river. The location of the antitank gun was still unknown and the German armor could appear about anywhere on the German turn. The orchard was cleared without mishap and the lone German unit there was a dummy. On the Russian right, a T-34 went around the north side hill with a squad and the suspected dummy was revealed. A broken German squad was DM'ed. In defensive fire, the Germans opened up with their 9-1 MMG nest only to break the MG and gack the roll on the CX Russian squad threatening rout lines. The T-34 broke its coax MG and it stayed broken for the rest of the game. Thus started a series of lessons in "How to Break Weapons and Sometimes Fix Them". During the course of play, I broke the MA on two T-34s, but immediately fixed them both. The German MMG broke twice and was fixed once. The StuG III broke its MA on an intensive fire and was recalled. In the center a 2-2-7 tied a 4-6-7 up in melee. An ISU-122 went low ammo on its first ACQ shot at 42d5. So at the end of Russian three, I was feeling pretty good, but things were still very much in doubt.



Figure 6 End of Russian turn 3. Russians began moving around both flanks. German gun still hidden. German center was falling back in good order.

**German 3:** German infantry and armored reinforcements flooded in on the threatened north side with one AFV moving into position to cover the road leading to the north side crossroad objective and all three 5-4-8 infantry squads taking up position in the woods line behind the north side hill (Fig. 7). This clearly threatened to end the Russian offensive in this area. The other two AFV headed for the area around the HQ building in the middle of the village. There was no German prep fire as the pressure in the center was forcing the stubborn German defenders slowly back. In defensive fire, the ruthless Russians fired into the melee hex trying to break the German 4-6-7. Both sides passed a PTC. The Russians killed a HS in the melee and shot down another HS in defensive fire. The Germans were down 3 1/2 squads from their starting force of 11 squads. No AFV had been lost to either side, but things were about to change!



Figure 7 End of German turn 3. German withdrawal continued, but German AFVs and a platoon of 5-4-8s arrived to bolster the defense.

**Russian 4:** On the Russian left, I decided to go for the south side bridge and then turn to envelop the south side of the village and the HQ building objective. The Russians had two half squads and three AFVs to do the bridge job. Would it be enough? An ISU-152 rumbled down the south side road on the north bank of the river. It approached a small orchard and woods near the bridge and boom! -- the 75L was found in the orchard one hex away from the hulking Russian machine (Fig. 8). No APCR meant the German gun had a kill number of 18 (range+1). The AP round hit the Russian hull which had 14 armor factors. It would take a four to do anything. Of course, that's what he rolled. Immobilized. Curses, whined commander King. Would the crew fight on? Yes! And the 152mm was

pointed straight at the adjacent gun crew. Another 152 climbed the hill and prepared to fire at the gun or protect against marauding German AFVs. A T-34 sought to acquire the gun only to malfunction its main armament. More curses! In the north, the T-34 with the broken coax pulled back in the face of likely infantry advance and a swarm of panzerfaust shots to follow. The Russians were able to finish off the disrupted conscript and the remaining 2-4-7 in melee with no further Russian losses. Now five squads of the original eleven were gone.



Figure 8 End of Russian turn 4. German antitank gun appeared and immobilized the ISU-152 on Russian left. The crew stayed in the AFV. Note the malf'd 85L on one T-34. Malf'd coax on another T-34 is visible on the right. That T-34 withdrew due to panzerfaust risk!

**German 4:** The Russians fixed the broken T-34 gun and a sigh of relief went up from my side. The German gun crew decided to try for a panzerfaust and failed on an agonizing 3 roll. There was no other prep fire and little movement other than a short withdrawal in the center to a line of houses in front of the HQ building. The German JgPzIV(L) and the ISU-122 started a duel along the road from 3aN5 to 42B5 that was destined to last awhile as both sides miss good shots or bounced shells off the opposing armor. The antitank gun crew barely broke on a 4MC and survived another 2MC hit. It routed to the woods just north of the bridge objective. The Germans had been pushed back to the last line of village houses in front of the HQ objective building. Did the Russians have enough time to complete the job and capture the HQ building? The bridge would likely fall on Russian 5.

**Russian 5:** In prep fire, an ISU-152 obliterated the broken crew with a critical hit. Another ISU-152 moved onto the north-south road running from the village to the bridge over the river. It turned to challenge the StuGIII(L) guarding the south side of the HQ building. The StuG fired and scored a critical hit, burning the huge ISU-152. A T-34 raced forward and took up station behind a hedge only two hexes from the StuG. Shots were exchanged and the T-34 broke its MA for the second time in the game! The StuG missed on the APCR roll, but still had a great advantage over the nearly helpless tank. I stared at my lame dice and muttered unrepeatable things. On the Russian left, a half squad entered the 75L hex with the intent of capturing it. Another HS prepared to capture the bridge objective. In the center, troops started shifting to the Russian left in preparation for the final assault on the HQ objective. The second ISU managed to lay smoke in 3aP6. On the extreme Russian right, the combatants continued to stare each other down but do little else (Fig. 9).

**German 5:** The tank battles raged on in German prep fire. The StuGIII hit the T-34 two hexes away in 3aN10, but the AP shot clanged off the tough hide of the Russian tank. The StuG intensive fired only to disable its MA. The players looked at each other in amazed frustration. The JgPzIV hit the ISU in the turret, but only shocked the crew. A German HS fired the PSK from smoke at 3aP6, missed, and pinned when it took the backblast. Russian DF shots of 20 and 16 only battle harden the German squad in 3aP7 and create a hero. The Russian commander wept in despair. Suddenly the Russian player realized the tempo for capturing the HQ building was behind schedule and there were still tough customers in the way. Only two moves left.

**Russian 6:** A minor miracle occurred. The shocked ISU recovered and the T-34 crew again fixed its MA! Life was good. In prep fire, the T-34 hit and killed the German StuGIII. The StuG was recalled, but I hoped to burn it for the smoke. Ominously, the ISU-122 fired and missed the



Figure 9 End of Russian turn 5. Russians have overrun the antitank gun, but lost an ISU-152 to a critical hit on the left. The T-34 near the pond had fixed its MA only to break it again. Klutzes! The Russians were stymied on the right, making slow progress in the center.

JgPzIV. Another T-34 fired, hit and broke the fanatic squad and killed the newly minted hero. Walter's luck was only bad on that roll. The way to the HQ building was open. A Russian squad battle hardened to fanatic on the right flank. The T-34 there and the fanatic squad drove toward the crossroad objective. This drew the attention of the German commander who now realized he was defending the wrong crossroad. Troops moved away from the area of the HQ building to ensure German control of the right crossroad. This was to prove a subtle, but important, occurrence in determining the outcome of the game. The Russian HS waltzed unhindered across the bridge objective. The JgPzIV finally won the duel with my ISU-122, drilling it in the turret and killing it. It then turned to face the T-34 behind it with a MG shot. The Russian infantry in the center drifted further to their left in preparation for rushing the HQ building.

**German 6:** The Germans prepared for the final defense of the HQ building. Nothing much happened in the German prep fire, but the Russian defensive fire KIA'd an 8-0 and a HS. In a remarkable turn of events, a T-34 scored a critical hit on the forward HQ hex for a 30 -3 shot on one or more defenders (there was a HS w/ PSK, a good squad, a broken squad and an 8-0 in the hex). Then a 12 for a dud! Or so we thought. Neither of us realized this was not a dud at all as the target was infantry. I haven't looked at the rule, but apparently that dud only happens against armor. Oh well. So, the Germans had their MMG (broken), squad, 9-1 two hexes to the north side of the Building HQ. They had a HS w/PSK, a wounded 9-0, a broken squad under DM, and a full elite squad with a LMG in the front row house hex and no one else anywhere in the building. The Germans advanced the full squad w/LMG into the back row house hex. Unfortunately for the Germans, no unit moved upstairs. Had one done so, it would have made the Russian effort to secure the building very difficult. The Russian fanatic squad was in one of the crossroad houses, but had practically no chance of securing the second house and thus the objective crossroad. But from the Russian perspective, this was good as he had drawn off a squad and a half and both AFVs from the HQ building. The stage was set for the final push against the HQ and a lot depended on whether the Germans could fix that MMG and rally the broken squad in the HQ building.

**Russian 7 (Fig. 10):** The Germans did not rally the key squad nor fix the MMG. These failures were ultimately fatal. The Russians did not prep fire as we simply focused on the outcome of the fighting around and in the HQ. Two T-34s were available to attack the HQ building and an ISU-122 was available to freeze the MMG nest or go on to attack the HQ building. First, a Russian elite squad attempted to crawl across the street and place a DC in the front HQ hex. The PSK-bearing HS nailed them and broke

the unit leaving two residual fire factors in the street. First blood to the Germans. The Russian commander slapped himself in the face and sent a T-34 crashing into the building and overrunning the German troops there. The tank did not fall in the cellar (which I was 3 for 3 doing). The Germans did not hurt the tank, nor did the tank do anything but break its coax MG. The second T-34 came adjacent to the back hex of the HQ building on the south side. The German squad went for a panzerfaust, rolled a four, then another panzerfaust attempt and another four. That made four straight rolls for 'fausts that failed by one pip on the die. It was Walter's turn to wail and weep, but gentleman that he is, he soldiered on without complaint. The ISU-122 headed for the MG nest with frost in its eyes. The Germans responded with a street fighting close combat that destroyed the ISU without smoking it. But now all that was left was final fire and FPF. A 4-4-7 crossed the street adjacent to the nest. The Germans final fired at 4-2 and missed. The 4-4-7 continued to go adjacent to the back HQ hex. FPF broke the leader and squad for no effect on the brave Russian squad. In advancing fire, the T-34 unleashed a hail of fire on the 4-6-8 at the back HQ hex. The MGs just battle hardened them and created a hero (groan). Then the 85mm spoke, hit and broke the squad leaving a lone hero to defend. The Russians were able to get sufficient infantry adjacent to get a 6:1 and 4:1 on the ensuing CC battles, but they had to win them both to secure the objective and victory. Two rolls later, it was over and the Russians had eked out a narrow win on the last gasp turn.



Figure 10 End of Russian turn 7. The game ended as the Russians eked out a last-turn victory. The tank in the road (bypass near HQ building) was really in the front hex of the building. A couple of other marker counters are out of position, but you get the idea.

**Conclusion:** This is basically a nice scenario with some replay value due to the various victory conditions and entry points for the German reinforcements. Also, the Germans

have a great deal of flexibility for initial set up. However, as ROAR reflects, I do think the Russians have the tougher job here. Had Walter HIP'ed or even placed a HS in the upstairs portion of one of the HQ building hexes, we agreed that it would have been almost impossible for the Russians to carry the day. Despite what looks like a tasty OB, there are subtle weaknesses in the Russian steamroller. First, those AFVs have relatively little MG power. While their MA hits hard, the restricted terrain makes skulking fairly easy for the Germans. Those giants also have ammo worries, especially the ISU-152s. No matter what they do, the Russians have a fairly narrow avenue of approach to the objective hexes, while the Germans have a lot of deployment options to frustrate the Russian advance. Finally, the platoon of 5-4-8 German infantry is strong enough to really mess up the Russian advance. So while it is a fun scenario and worth a replay, I think the Germans have a 55-45 edge.

Thanks Walter for the game. I really enjoyed playing and just visiting with you and the ranch animals. That was great fun.

## DESIGN NOTES

### The Grogs

*We asked some players what they'd like to see from scenario designers. Here's what they said.*

### Matt Shostak

I'd like to see more scenarios where the defender gets a lot more dummies than is typical, for increased fog of war.

Far too many scenarios have no hidden defenders at all. Allowing one hidden squad on the defense should be possible for most designs.

Some sort of casualty cap on the attacker is usually a good idea, with obvious exceptions for the Russians and Japanese. Taking the objective but losing too many men and equipment would often not be regarded as a great success, and furthermore as a game mechanic it gives the defender something else to try to achieve besides just hanging on. For those who don't like the VBM freeze maneuver, a cap on the number of vehicles that can be lost is a nice way to discourage overuse of the tactic yet still leave the decision in the hands of the players.

Being able to choose or purchase parts of the order of battle is fun and interesting.

### Zoltan Grose

Off the top of my head:

Small actions in the ETO with more/all HIP defenders. Perhaps those will need more than the usual number of turns. Gives that "probe the unknown" feel. Variable defender order of battle could ratchet up the tension even more. The attacker needs to take the village crossroads, but are the MGs in the church? Or maybe in the farmhouse? I think it makes the player think and act more like a real company commander.

More scenarios that use a CVP cap of some kind so that attacker/defender ratios can be more realistic while denying the attacker human wave tactics to achieve the goal at all costs. Taking a village at 50% casualties is going to get a commander sent to the rear (or the Eastern Front) pretty fast.

88s vs tanks in the desert where you get to take meaningful shots at 15+ hexes. Seems so iconic but don't seem to be many of those.

Scenarios with both sides attacking an objective (like Scenario A+B).

Dense, small urban brawls (e.g. O9 which I think is an excellent scenario) are the bread and butter of ASL but seem to have gone out of fashion or been dominated by larger scenarios. AFVs + infantry on both sides in tight corners make for some compelling gameplay and can flex a lot of the cooler things that can happen in ASL.

### Allen King

I like the Squad Bleeder concept that is currently showing up in the Journals. The idea of partially or even totally variable OBs (based on purchases from a points bank for each side) is intriguing to me. These types of battles might best be done as meeting engagements where both sides have been unable to patrol the area before contact. Another situation that is susceptible to this type of arrangement is the hasty attack or coup de main where the attacker has some knowledge of the disposition and strength (aerial recon, partisans) of the defender, but the defender has almost no knowledge of what is coming at them. These situations are indeed subject to substantial fog of war and happened all the time in battles in WW2.

In addition, I would like to see more scenarios using air support. German philosophy, particularly early in the war, was to substitute air attack for standard artillery; hence the development of the Stuka and its early war success. When the western Allies went on the offensive they accompanied their land forces with an aluminum sky. In fact they almost never invaded unless they were within land-based fighter

range to ensure that they owned the skies. Yet it is fairly rare to find air involved in scenarios. That is not reflective of either German (early) or American (late) doctrine. Close air support was common in cases where the ground forces had not outrun airfield development (Race across France being one of those situations).

## Walter Eardley

I like when the squad mix used is not all the same on a side. Some higher quality, most in the middle and some lower quality: 2x468s, 8x467s and 2x447 for example. I think it better represents true unit quality.

First OBA card is automatically black which is then removed. I especially like this for the attacker.

.50 cal's ... What is not to like about a .50 cal?

6-board scenarios. Lots of room to maneuver.

Interconnected scenarios. Play one and then use the left over forces in the next or make the next one depended on the results of the first.

## Matt Zajac

As a start, I just submitted two scenarios to Pete and team for the Ponyri module and I tried to force them to be historically realistic. By that I mean in one scenario the defending Russian Sr. Lt called a rocket strike on his own position to deny the final German assault. So, I simply made an SSR that required it to arrive on one of two randomly selected turns, and centered on his building (the schoolhouse). I wanted the timing historically correct in the scenario and not a randomly generated black chit draw. Further, I wanted both players to feel the "stomach churn" of rockets hitting their troops - and not leave it as a option for the Russian player to use or not depending on how his game was going. ASL artillery rules are fiddly enough just trying to get it to appear - much less get a result.

Another challenge I'm designing for is a Finnish - Russian scenario where the victory is purely terrain-oriented. Basically the Finnish border guards have to withdraw across a board or two and burn a number of buildings - i.e. scorched earth. However the fire rules - particularly for starting fires - are tough. Even adding Molotov cocktails to the Finns wouldn't fully replicate what I'm trying to do. So I've got to figure out how to get fires started faster - and since we're talking about wooden / thatch buildings I think it's realistic to tweak the starting fire rules by SSR.

Last, I'd like to see more scenarios using cavalry and/or partisans - and *Poland in Flames* did add some - but I'm thinking more of the vast Eastern front expanses where

Soviet cavalry brigades ran rampant. Need to check my sources, but a German kavalrie versus Soviet cavalry action would be interesting to see.

Another quick thought - definitely enjoy and would like to see more of the variable OB scenarios - also helps with the fog of war challenge that you mentioned.

## Eric Gerstenberg

I would like to see more scenarios which include multiple tiered victory conditions. VC's which change, or can change as play progresses. Examples of such scenarios I've played are from the "Action Pack series" and include "Kleckerweise" AP 57, "Texas Flood" AP 77, "Thai Hot" AP 83, "End of the Beginning" AP 92. These are the new paradigm of scenario design, being 6 years old or less, and the some of the most exciting -creative ones I've played .

## GAME TRACKS

Don't forget to log the games you've played in the club's game tracker. It's easy to use, and a fun and convenient way to follow all the action of Texas ASL. See what your comrades have been playing, track your own games, and surf the various stat breakdowns. Want to know what scenarios have been played most often in the club? You can find out there. Such a nifty tool needs data, so make sure you enter your results. Simply click on the Game Tracker link on the club website at <http://texas-asl.com/>.

## JUST DROPPING IN



### Allen King and Matt Shostak



### Langoan Airfield – BFP39

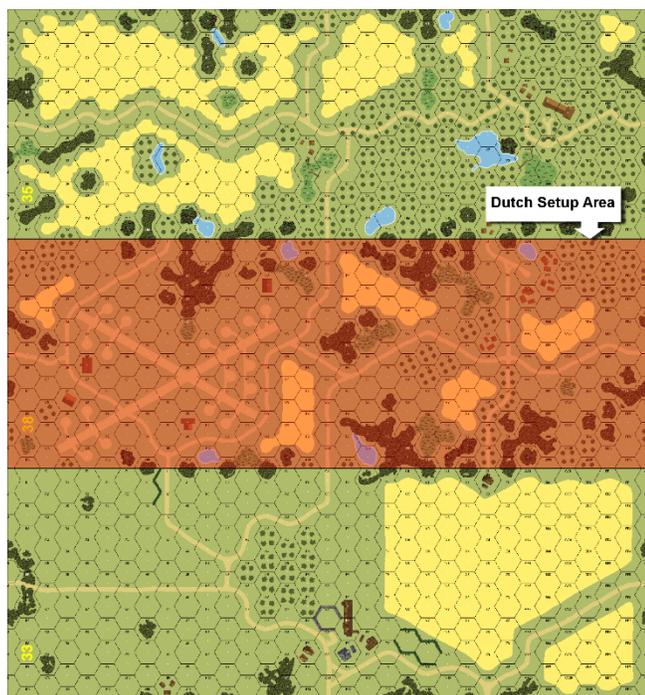
*Two of our club's players share their thoughts after a recent game. Allen King's comments are in normal type, while Matt Shostak's are italicized.*

### Intro

It is always a pleasure to play Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) with Matt Shostak. While it inevitably results in my defeat at the hands of whatever side I face, Matt always helps me learn and understand the rules better than I did

going into the game. However, I sometimes feel I shortchange him as he barely has to break a sweat to beat the devil out of me. So, on my ninth ASL “learning experience”, we engaged in **Langoan Airfield [BFP39]** from Bounding Fire Production’s (BFP) scenario package, *Blood and Jungle*. I drew the Dutch defenders.

*Likewise it’s always fun to play Allen. Ever the gentleman, his enjoyment for the game is infectious, and I have him to thank for getting me back into it after a long period of inactivity. After a stint on the Eastern Front with The Second Belt (another excellent BFP design from Crucible of Steel), Allen was looking for some variety so we perused Blood and Jungle for interesting actions. It certainly doesn’t get much farther from the beaten path than a Japanese airdrop. I don’t know how many scenarios depict Japanese paratroopers descending from the sky, but it can’t be more than a handful. Here, they drop like early-war German paratroops, meaning their arms canisters fall separately, so they have some work to do to arm themselves once they land. It’s also one of those rare PTO scenarios where No Quarter is not in effect. Due to the large influence of luck on the initial drop and drift I would not play such an action in a competitive tourney round, but otherwise it’s great fun and worth a try just for the experience.*



## The Battlefield

The scenario is played on three boards (35, 38 and 33) lined up horizontally in that order from north to south with the board number down. The center board features a fairly large airfield with some light jungle to the north and east and large fields of kunai further out to the north, east and southeast. Four small, but important, wooden buildings are placed around the airfield. These buildings must be captured as part of the Victory Conditions (VC). Board 35 (north) is liberally dotted with palm trees. Palm trees dominate smaller parts of Boards 33 and 38 (south and east of the airfield). Scattered bamboo appears on all the boards. Despite these PTO terrain features, the boards are generally safe for the coming Japanese air drop.

## The Attackers

Yikes, I thought, as I examined the Japanese OB: fourteen elite squads and two crews with two MMGs, three light mortars, three LMG and a DC led by four SMC including a 10-1. I began muttering fervent prayers for a wind scattered drop causing substantial losses. However, because these troops drop in the style of pre-1942 German paras and are thus only partially armed (reducing their initial strength), I thought I might be able to neutralize some of them before they reached weapons canisters or fully armed. BFP has thoughtfully produced counters for these partially armed paras and provided them with this excellent scenario package. Because of aerial range and the short range of my squads, it wasn’t likely I’d be able to shoot them in the air and get the -2 for hazardous movement.

*Indeed they look formidable on the page, and it’s always fun to command elite troops. The flip side of that, though, is that they usually are given hard assignments, and this is no exception. The initial drop is a crapshoot that can go anywhere from perfect to terribly wrong, and once on the ground the Japanese have to gather weapons and ammo, assemble, and storm the objective. They don’t even know where the pillboxes are, precisely, until they land. Despite the disparity in troop quality I didn’t think it would be easy for the paratroopers.*

## The Defenders

And then. I looked at the Dutch OB and asked myself, “Are there any real soldiers here”? All seven squads and two half squads are inexperienced, green troops with an ELR of 2

and no reduction counters. To ELR a squad is to disrupt a squad. I'm supposed to keep fourteen elite Japanese paras at bay for seven movement phases with this lot?? I felt faint and visualized my record with Matt going to a nice round 0-10. Oh well, ASL is fun even when you lose. However, there were also some promising aspects to the Dutch armory. There were three 1-3-5 pillboxes with three MMG and three crews to man them. In addition, there were three trenches and four foxholes as well. But, the MMGs and the crews had to start in the pillboxes, so they would not be useful until the Japanese hit the ground. The Dutch can HIP a squad equivalent, so I could HIP both half squads in concealment terrain and try to sneak one into a VC location that the Japanese had captured and bypassed. So, one went into bamboo next to a VC building north of the airfield and one was illegally placed in a light jungle half hex on the south side. I removed him to start the game. Not an auspicious start, at all. Finally, the Dutch receive an armored car with a AA MMG on turn three.

*Oh, they're real soldiers alright. Sure, when they break they have a good chance of disrupting which will pretty much eliminate them from the fight, but they can still shoot and will have a firepower advantage until the Japanese can rearm. They also sit on the objective and have some soldiers hidden. The crews aren't green like the rest of the force, and three MMGs are to be respected. Bunkers can be difficult to eliminate; it takes time that the Japanese will find in short supply. The hope for the attackers is that once the fight is truly joined, ELR and encirclement, coupled with Japanese élan and banzai charges, will cause a quick collapse.*

### Dutch Initial Assessment

So, how to set up to cause the Japanese as much grief as possible? Does one scatter the meager Dutch infantry all around the boards in hopes of getting a -2 hazardous movement shot at the Japanese as they float down or is it better to concentrate and meet them around the VC areas? Well, others may decide to handle this differently, but with the short range of the green Dutch infantry, MMGs in pillboxes, aerial ranges used while the Japanese descend and few light MMGs, I decided to concentrate around the airfield, its buildings and especially in a manner to protect the VC pillboxes as long as possible. In effect, the Dutch scattered a bit initially, but the design was to punish any drop that fell on or adjacent to the airfield itself. The

pillboxes must be placed within two hexes of the airfield, so I placed all three where they faced inward (toward the airfield, rather than outward). This configuration would create a deadly crossfire on and across the length of the airfield. It would also present a more difficult firing aspect for the Japanese as they would have to fire at the +5 side of the pillbox. A trench was placed on top of each pillbox to allow a squad to duck into the pillbox in Japanese defensive fire and allow the squad decent protection when it popped back up for the Japanese movement phase. I resolved not to waste the armored car and would attempt to get something out of it late in the game. So, we'd hope that Matt either deliberately landed in the open airfield area (unlikely) or some of his three wings would scatter with some of the sticks landing in the open airfield area. Then it would be a matter of skulking as much as possible and defeating the inevitable Banzai charges and close combats. I wasn't particularly hopeful of a successful conclusion given Matt's skill and the quality and size of his OB, but I took some solace in the fact that ROAR showed the scenario at only 7-6 Japanese.



Figure 1 Dutch initial defense

### Japanese Initial Assessment

*I can't disagree much with Allen's initial assessment. In fact, that kind of defensive setup and philosophy is exactly what I expected with the exception of the use of the armored car, which I thought was too conservative and tentative.*

Going into the game, I expected the Dutch to be waiting in and around the airfield, hoping to play for time as they fell back to and/or made a stand at the pillbox bunkers. The Japanese plan was to try to place one wing on each of the 3 sides of the airfield to maximize the chances for encircling the defense. There's only a 1-in-8 chance of all three dropping on target, but an ideal drop like that would make things very rough on the Dutch. Of course, all 3 could miss too with a 1-in-8 probability, which would probably make things unwinnable for the Japanese with a bad scatter. The rules and SSRs almost dictate that all 3 wings will be roughly equally strong. Facing the airfield from the Japanese point of view, the weakest wing was to drop to the left of the airfield, the second weakest to the right, and the strongest (meaning it had the 10-1 and the two MMGs and crews) was to drop in the center, "below" the airfield. There wasn't much point in planning much more than that, since the luck of the draw could put the paratroopers pretty much anywhere, but the odds are good (7-in-8) that at least one wing will drop in the right place.

## The Result

Air drops are fun and fairly straightforward by ASL standards. BFP has made things easier by providing the reduced strength counters and adding only a few rules relating to normal airdrop activities. Matt set up his three drops with five sticks each and white parachutes began to dot the sky over Langoan Airfield.

**Turn 1:** The three wings fell into the mild breeze blowing from the north. One drop came down in Kunai well north of the airfield and my primary "jungle redoubt" just north of the airfield (pillboxes facing southeast and southwest). The second drop came down in good order well west of the airfield. Neither scattered to another board and the sticks drifted only slightly. Both drops were basically picture perfect and without casualties. The third drop scattered from its intended drop zone on the south board to the southern part of the airfield itself (Fig 2). These guys were in immediate trouble from Dutch MMG fire and the fire was effective. Two Japanese squads were striped. One stick at the western end of the drop was destroyed. This stick was believed to contain a 9-0 leader and a squad. So, at the end of the Japanese drop, the Dutch were pretty happy in that one drop group was seriously hampered and could not move freely (required to "fully arm" the squads).



Figure 2 Japanese Airdrops

*The first two wings dropped just where planned, but the ill-fated third wing missed its mark, and how! Just look at them lined up along the airfield as if on parade! That did not bode well. Indeed a leader was either killed or wounded on the initial drop (my memory is hazy on the exact details), and a squad was either striped or eliminated. Luckily the MMGs in the pillboxes could not shoot at the descending paratroopers, but they could shoot them up once they were on the ground. The plan changed a bit now; this weak wing, now even weaker after taking losses in the drop, would just try to hold on and not get killed for a couple of turns, until the other wings could exert enough pressure to grant them more freedom of action. The rules for rearming paratroops are that the more they move around, the better their modifier is for rearming. It's actually quite easy if done with cover or not under fire, but exposed in the open like this, I did not want to hand the Dutch any easy kills, so that wing resolved to take what they could, minimize risk, and hang on for a while. The 10-1's wing landed in the best order, and it looked like they would easily be able to gather weapons and ammo, including the weapons canisters, and form up for the attack without too much trouble. The right-flank wing also landed reasonably well but the one bit of*

bad luck was that the weapons canisters all landed away from the airfield, meaning it would cause a delay to go get them because the troops have to move away from the objective to recover them. I briefly considered forgetting them altogether and just moving forward, counting on rearming and winning with the inherent firepower of the troops, but decided against it and went for the canisters after all, figuring the delay would not be significant, since the other troops would still need time to form up properly, and that I might regret not having those weapons in the endgame.

In Dutch 1, the Dutch MMG fire reduced a striped squad to a HS on the airfield, but a Dutch squad attempting to engage a partially armed squad in CC, was broken and eventually was captured for his efforts. The Japanese managed to recover a mortar and assemble it. The Dutch infantry that covered the eastern end of the airfield moved toward the main jungle redoubt just north of the airfield and awaited the assembling Japanese.

*I understand why that Dutch squad stayed to fight, because there was a chance of a good payoff, but the risk was that they might not survive the encounter either, and that's precisely what happened. It probably would have been better to keep withdrawing that unit while it could somewhat safely do so.*

**Turn 2:** The Dutch watched as the Japanese units scrambled around to fully arm and to recover weapons canisters to the north and east. Despite laying smoke on the airfield to partially shield his exposed troopers, Matt's run of rolling high on morale checks (MC) continued to his pain. Dutch DF wounded a 9-0 leader. Pinning these troops down kept them from fully arming.

Dutch 2 saw the mild breeze decrease to no wind so drifting smoke would not aid the Japanese approach. Dutch preparation fire striped yet another squad and pinned the active mortar. Otherwise, all we did was maneuver a bit to keep the unharmed northern and eastern drops honest and continue to pin the southern drop in place.

*It's funny how often the wind will decrease just when you don't want that to happen. Certainly drifting smoke would have been more beneficial for the attack, although it was not a disastrous event. There wasn't much that Japanese*

*could do in the early turns except try to organize and rearm.*

**Turn 3:** By this point, the entire drop that landed on the field were dead, reduced or a half squad and the remaining leader was wounded. The Dutch squad that was broken on turn one was captured by the Japanese. The Japanese were closing on the main redoubt from the north and east. These units had fully armed and gathered a lot of weapons. In other words, they were loaded for bear and ready to avenge their bothers pinned on the airfield tarmac. (Fig 3)

*I think at this point that wing still had a couple of squad equivalents, but there was not much they could do but wait for the endgame. They had a knee mortar that they used for a bit of smoke cover, and harassed one of the bunker areas with a few shots, but didn't manage any lucky critical hits.*



Figure 3 Japanese trying to organize an attack.

Dutch 3 saw the Dutch armored car (AC) enter at the far northwest side and motor toward the east – west road to the airfield. It was studiously avoiding any fire from the Japanese. No effective Dutch fire was available as the Japanese were sheltered by smoke, kunai or palm tree hindrances. But, the pattern of approach was becoming

clear. It was at this point that the Dutch determined there was indeed a chance to win his game given that the Japanese actually had to occupy the trench-protected pillboxes. We were about to start turn four and the Japanese were not in a position to launch a major banzai attack. So, hmmmm, maybe.

*Once you actually experience it, you can see how difficult a task it is for the attackers. On the first turn they can't do anything but drop, and the next turn is usually spent moving around to rearm and organize. The third turn they can finally start moving toward the airfield, and getting close enough to actually threaten it. That leaves only 4 turns to take all 4 buildings and the bunkers. Pillboxes actually take longer to control than you might think, because you have to actually enter them to control them. Combined with a trench to form a bunker and it can be a formidable position indeed. Time is terribly short for the Japanese here, and although I thought I could still win the scenario, I surmised it would take some good luck to do so (Fig. 4).*



Figure 4 Japanese assembled to finally launch serious attacks against the airfield

**Turn 4:** The Japanese suffered no further setbacks and had clearly moved into position to banzai my secondary redoubt (one pillbox) at the western end of the runway. The group on the airfield continued to do little but throw smoke my way, but the mortar there fired its last smoke/white

phosphorous rounds that turn. The Japanese at the eastern end of the airfield prepared a death star of two MMG and crews and aligned to advance across the open terrain to the east side of the main redoubt (2 pillboxes in light jungle).

*The nature of the terrain and where the troops dropped meant that yet another turn was spent more on maneuvering than fighting, which was not good news for the attackers.*

Dutch 4 saw a little maneuvering to fend off a squad coming at the redoubt from the NE. In addition, I advanced a HS into the kunai in front of my secondary redoubt at the western end of the airfield (consisting of two squads, a HS and a MMG/crew). I knew a banzai would be incoming on Japanese turn 5.

*This small move was Allen's best of the game. Despite his praise in the intro about learning from me, I misinterpreted the banzai rules to my advantage on the following turn. Had I not done so, the quality of this little move would have been even more obvious. Putting this picket half-squad in front of his more valuable MMG position helped protect it from the inevitable charge.*

**Turn 5:** And so the real fighting began. The Japanese send a DC hero toward my secondary redoubt, but the Dutch HS got lucky and killed him, thus leaving the DC on the ground. The rest of the banzai (8-0, three full squads) came charging in. One squad was reduced to a broken half squad, the other squads were striped and the 8-0 was killed, but they took out all the Dutch units. The pillbox would be occupied on turn 6.

*Had we played the banzai correctly it may still have been successful but probably with more losses. The lesson to be learned here is that with my rusty rules knowledge, I thought I could move in a certain way in a banzai, and as I read the rules I found a passage that justified that belief. Confirmation bias thus satisfied, I did not read further and find the excerpt a few paragraphs later that disallowed my intention. Meanwhile the previously pinned down attackers were finally freer to move about because of this banzai, and they took advantage by quickly occupying two other victory buildings.*

Dutch 5 saw the entire secondary redoubt taken. Technically the pillbox was still mine, but there was nothing to defend it with. One VC pillbox down. However, the surviving Japanese still would have to cover four or five hexes to get to the western side of the main redoubt. I felt confident that I had damaged Matt's force in this area enough to give me a chance to hold the last pillbox if I could divert or kill some of his troops coming from the east side. The Japanese coming in from the east would likely get the eastern pillbox, but I still felt good about holding him off on the western side. So, I loaded up the western side and prepared for the next banzai attack already formed up to grab the eastern pillbox. Plus, I still had a HIP half squad hiding in bamboo next to a victory building if he were to get careless and commit all-out to the last pillbox.

*That's pretty much how I saw it too. A victory was still mathematically possible but not likely. The 10-1's group was strong and would likely overwhelm the few defenders facing them with relative ease (Fig. 5).*



Figure 5

**Turn 6:** As expected, the Japanese to the east of the Redoubt commenced an “in line” banzai attack and the remainder of the group from the south created a diversion to draw some fire. The survivors of the west side group double timed through the open and closed in on the west side pillbox. The south side survivors drew off some of the Dutch fire and the west side attackers closed adjacent to the defenders unscathed. Ouch. Throughout the game, I had the better dice, but they failed me a bit here and Matt made some good 2MC rolls to keep his two striped squads from reducing (or breaking). The in-line banzai lost the lead

squad outright to MMG fire, but the others entered the hex and easily won the CC. The Japanese would grab the second pillbox in turn 7 movement and already had the four VC buildings.

*As expected, this attack went very well. Even losing a squad wasn't that detrimental since there were plenty of other troops available. The Dutch crumbled here just as hoped in the pregame analysis (Fig. 6).*



Figure 6

Dutch 6 saw the HIP HS occupy one of the VC buildings and remain concealed. The Japanese could get a considerable force to it, but the armored car pulled into position to at least slow the attackers. Further, it would at least keep some of the Japanese away from the last stand in the west side pillbox. The Dutch 9-1 and a squad with a LMG occupied the trench above the pillbox and the crew and MMG advanced into the pillbox. The Japanese were pounding at the gate, but I saw it would be difficult for Matt to actually occupy the final pillbox. This would deny him victory.

*There never was time to search for hidden units nor were there enough troops to spare to garrison each building, so the recapture by the Dutch was not a surprise. I was not unduly worried, however, as there were enough troops left from the victorious charge to come back and retake the building. What really made the difference here was being unable to wipe out a lot of Dutch defenders at the last stand position. Had the Japanese MMGs gotten a nice little string of luck with rate, they could have eliminated enough of the*

defenders to make taking the final bunker a real possibility. Still, a great prep fire phase next turn could save the day.

**Turn 7:** The last Japanese move brought the expected troops into play on the west side (Fig. 7). My DF was totally ineffective with either missed shots or passed MCs by the Japanese. His fire broke the Dutch units in the trench above the pillbox. They died for failure to rout. He won the CC against the remaining crew and 7-0 leader, but could not occupy the final pillbox. The armored car MMG broke a HS attempting to break the concealment of the HS in the VC building, but the 10-1 and a slew of surviving infantry which took the eastern pillbox arrived to take out the Dutch boys and recapture the building. But, the inability to occupy the last pillbox was fatal to the Japanese cause and the Dutch just managed to win.

*Prep fire was not effective enough. The only chance was to eliminate the units in the trench outside the pillbox, and break the crew in the pillbox, so that an advance inside could win the game. Earlier in the game I had had good luck with WP grenades, but here that luck ran out—three tries to toss one in the pillbox failed, as did advancing fire. In close combat, the pillbox defenders were eliminated but time had run out.*



Figure 7

## Afterword

With seven movement phases and a strong force versus an outnumbered, green Dutch defense, it appears that the

Japanese are in an overwhelming position in this scenario. I'm sure some players have skipped over the scenario for just that reason. They shouldn't. As the record shows, the pressure is really on the Japanese to move very quickly toward the VC buildings and pillboxes. In addition, given the peculiarities of the pillbox location, it really takes two turns for the Japanese to conclude the occupation of a pillbox. That is a lot of time. Further, if the Japanese scatter badly, it can be quite difficult to arrive fully armed and with weapons assembled to effectively attack even the green Dutch.

Looking back, Matt and I agreed that he might have landed a bit too far away and spent too much time recovering all the weapons. But, I stress "might". He arrived ready to attack in force by turn 5; it was just slightly too long to ensure capture of all of the strongly manned Dutch pillboxes.

From the Dutch perspective, I am sure I'd defend as I did again without a lot of variation. From this view, the scenario does not appear to have great replay value. However, Matt correctly pointed out that it does have strong replay value in that the Japanese landing zones will vary widely and the results of the landing could lead to a drastically different game. After consideration, I have to agree with him. While my position was almost completely passive, the Japanese position is going to likely vary widely from game to game. We highly recommend giving this excellent scenario a try, especially if you are looking for something a little different in the ASL experience.

*Although a lot depends on the initial drop, this one looks tough on the Japanese, mainly because of time. The extra time needed to actually control a pillbox is the key factor. Considering that it takes 3 turns before the attackers can really start doing anything, there just isn't a lot of time left to do all that needs to be done. Had all 3 wings landed on target, I think the Japanese would have won this one. It hurt having one third of the attacking force able to do so little. But it could have been worse, heck, all 3 wings could have been out of position, so who knows? It ended with all of the defenders killed or captured and the Japanese in possession of the airfield, which feels pretty historical.*

*Allen played a very good game. His defense was solid and well planned. He used the bunkers to maximum effect, popping in and out from pillbox to trench as the situation warranted, and putting extra bodies in the way for the last*

stand, making it very difficult to overcome. His advance of a picket half squad in the face of a coming banzai was a subtle veteran move. The armored car, though, could have done more. It was expendable and could probably have been better used more aggressively; for example it could have parked next to the pillbox in anticipation of using its AAMG at point-blank range to stop the banzai.

Of course I didn't play a perfect game either. One thing I would do differently is ignore the weapons canisters if they did not fall at least somewhat along the way toward the objective. Time is more important in this scenario than those weapons. Allen may also be right that the Japanese might be better served by trying to land closer to the airfield. But not too close, as that ill-fated wing discovered!

I think this scenario has a very high replay value. For one thing, no two drops will be alike, so the attackers will kick off differently every time. It might also be fun to chance a crazy gambit, like trying to drop all 3 wings directly on the airfield. That could be a hoot and a hairball. Even for the defense, though, there's plenty of variety possible in different setup combinations of the bunkers and the hidden defenders. I highly recommend this one. Give it a try, or tries, and if you're so inclined send us an after action report and we can compare and contrast how it went with this playing, right here in the pages of Banzai!!

My thanks to Allen for being such a fun opponent and for putting together a fine AAR.

## TACTICAL TIP

Hunker in that bunker. Using a trench in combination with a pillbox to form a bunker provides more flexibility for the occupants while still offering decent cover. Often the occupants will want a better field of fire, in which case being able to easily pop out into the trench is convenient. Then when extra protection is desired, go back into the pillbox. Shuffling units back and forth between pillbox and adjacent trenches is a good way to adjust to changing circumstances on the battlefield. To learn more about the finer points of pillboxes, see Zeb Doyle's excellent article in Banzai 15.2.

## THIS HAPPENED TO ME

During my trip to March Madness up in Kansas City this year, I had the great opportunity to play local KC talent, Kevin Adams in **Wise's War [AP118]** out of *Action Pack #12*. I had the attacking Americans and Kevin defended as the Germans. The VC are pretty simple; the Americans win immediately if there are no Good Order German units in the German set up area. The match for the Americans went well overall, taking many Germans prisoner, or killing outright. The second to the last turn I had the last Germans cornered in the large multi-hex building on board 45, and I had just broken the last HS running around in the back corner of the board and had routed him upstairs into a 2 hex building with 2 squads and a -1 leader awaiting outside. Mop Up time for the easy win, or so I thought.

German half of the turn, Kevin rolls for self-rally on the HS under DM; a 3. Damn. He's back. No problem, I've got a lot of American FP just outside and more help on the way. The Germans in the large multi-hex building hunker down. The last half turn I break the remaining Germans in the multi-hex building, now just the HS is left standing. That self-rally now looms large. I am able to lay some Prep Fire on him and get a 1MC. The HS passes. Damn, so close. I move the US squads and leader into the building and upstairs Adjacent to the HS, and am able to move another US squad downstairs below the German HS. He's now upper level encircled. Final Fire and Advancing Fire is ineffective for both sides, so I'll need to finish this HS off the old fashioned way.

I advance into CC with a squad and the leader, leaving a squad behind upstairs and the other squad downstairs below the German HS. If he does happen to get Ambush, he won't be able to Withdraw for an easy win. So I now have a German HS who can't Withdraw, with a 3 to 1 minus 1, and he will be attacking back at 1 to 4, and even if I don't kill him all I have to do is tie him up in Melee as that will keep him out of Good Order for the victory. I'm liking the odds of winning this. Roll for Ambush. No 'bush. As the Attacker I roll CC first – need a 9 to win, get a 10. Damn. No problem, his only chance of winning this thing is snakes. Down go the dice. Clunk, rattle – snakes...

It's never over till the fat one sings.

Rick Reinesch

## 2016 TEXAS TEAM TOURNAMENT PREVIEW



Rick Reinesch

The planning for this year's tournament is wrapping up nicely and it promises to be just as much fun as in years past, so make those plans now to attend the 24th Annual Texas Team Tournament in Austin, TX, June 23-26, 2016. Last year we had record participation with 60 players from points all over the country registered for the tournament. The website (<http://www.Texas-ASL.com>) has been updated with information on tournament activities, the hotel info and the registration fees. We are constantly updating all that information leading up to the tournament, so make sure to check in regularly for all the latest. Note that the last day to get our great hotel rate is June 9th, so don't delay! And while you are checking out the website, make sure and preregister; you never know what goodies I will come up with for those doing so.

As in previous years, Thursday's games will be informal gaming, with those games only counting toward the Major Johnson award. On Friday morning, we will launch the formal phase of the tournament where we will track wins and losses over the course of the weekend to crown the team and individual winners.

Our tournament runs an open format; players are free to match themselves with anyone, and play any mutually agreeable scenario. As the TD, I seed the team part of the tourney so that every team has an equal chance at the top prize. Each team consists of three players which makes for a great race to the finish with the final team winners generally not being determined until those final matches on Sunday. The way we score the team award is not based on total wins or losses but on the difference between the two. So a team with 10 wins and 4 losses has a score of 6. But a team that goes 6 and 0 also has a score of 6. This team though would come out ahead of the other team because of a better win percentage overall, but both are certainly in the running. Check the website for all the details on how the team tourney works. Moreover, while we call ourselves a team tournament, individual play is still paramount. We offer plenty of individually based prizes, from the individual champion and runner-up, to the Major Johnson award given to the individual playing the most ASL over the weekend, along with any number of mini-tourneys.

And speaking of minis, we will have a bunch of them this year. Ok, let's call this one a maxi. While we tried to get Critical Hits **Omaha East/West** going last year, life intervened for a number of the participants, so we'll try it again this year. Here is your chance to immerse yourself in some seriously monster ASL for the entire weekend using

the streamlined rules that John Hyler and his merry band pulled together. Based on their playtesting, this has sped up play considerably and has also increased the realism of the game. Give this one a whirl. We will have it set up in a room all to itself, so there will be plenty of space to spread out. Get in touch with me if you want to give this a try!

We are also setting up a Thursday playing for 3 players of **Whom Gods Destroy** from *Journal II*. I'll probably throw in something special to be randomly presented to one of those players that choose to partake. If you are interested in getting in on this unique opportunity, drop by the Texas ASL website and send me an email to let me know. We'll get coordinated ahead of time so that you can be prep'd to hit the ground running that Thursday.

Thursday and Friday mini play will be featuring that time honored institution – *Ferocity Fest*. For those that like their play brutal and deadly, this is not to be missed. Players will be paired up, one Axis and one Allied, to remove any issues with scenario balance. Your objective is to do better than the other players of your side, either Allied or Axis. The individuals with the largest number of points at the end of scenario play will be the winner for each side. It's that simple. We'll be posting the specific scenario(s) as they are determined. This year we will be featuring **Tramvanaya** which will players a sneak preview of one of the scenarios from Bounding Fire's upcoming **Into the Rubble 2**. This mini is always a load of fun and well worth the effort. And I give away some great prizes for 1<sup>st</sup> place and runner up.

We will kick off Thursday mini play promptly at 9am, June 23rd. If you are interested in participating in any of the minis, please contact the Tournament Director (me) directly. We'll post participants for the minis online as they come in. You can find my email address in the Club Notes at the end of this newsletter.

But that's not all for the minis. We will also be sponsoring an SK mini on Saturday for those folks new to ASL and would like to try their hand at some formal SK play. We'll have it as a classic pairing bracket using scenarios from the SKs and SK expansion packs, with one person besting all others and walking away with the prize.

Saturday will also be featuring a Squad Bleeder mini, which should be a lot of fun. So if you are looking to fill your Saturday, give this one a try. I'll have signups for this one during the tourney.

For the regular part of the tourney, remember that above all else we are an OPEN tournament; play what you want against whomever you want, or even as much (or little) as you want.

That being said, there are plenty of prizes to be had. We give out the Major Johnson Award to the player who plays the most ASL over the course of the weekend. We provide

awards for the best team over the course of the weekend as determined by the best point differential between wins and losses (as noted above). And then there are awards given to the overall individual champion and runner-up. But even if you aren't in the running for any of those awards, you can still try for the Audie Murphy Award given to the most snakes over the course of the weekend, or there is the Col. Klink for most boxcars. We also give an award for close combat victories. But not just simple "I won" points, we give extra points for winning those close combats with style (or brutality, take your pick).

As always we will be holding a drawing on Saturday of the tourney for all of the merchandise our sponsors so graciously provide. As in years past we will be holding this drawing at 3:30 Saturday afternoon. I would encourage everyone to head out to our website and check out the listing of these fine folks, and make sure to consider them first when you are making your purchases.

Also happening over the entire weekend will be a silent auction of all of the late Tom Gillis's ASL gear. The

proceeds of which will go to the Wounded Warrior project in Tom's name. Check out the website for the Excel file will everything available. Here is your chance to fill out that ASL collection, help a great cause, and honor Tom's memory all at the same time. We will open the bidding Thursday morning, and wrap it all up Saturday evening at 6pm.

Registration this year is \$36 for all Thursday-Sunday gaming, \$31 for Friday-Sunday; and \$21 for Saturday only and can be done via PayPal through our website. Your entrance fee includes participation in any Mini-Tournaments you desire to enter as well as dibs on all of the great swag we give out. We are at the Wingate Conference Center at 1209 North IH-35 in Round Rock, TX with a fantastic room rate of \$82/night.

You can check everything out by following the ASL Team Tourney link from the Texas ASL home page at <http://www.Texas-ASL.com> . Hope to see you in June!

## CLUB NOTES

### Biweekly Lunch Gathering

Lunch gatherings have been more sporadic lately, but they still happen. Stay tuned to our yahoo groups email list. 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

you missed any of these you missed a lot of fun. It's like a tournament atmosphere for a day. The Austin group meets on the first Saturday of every month. The DFW group has been meeting on the second, the San Antonio guys on the third Saturday of every month, and the Houston group on the fourth Saturday of every month. To stay informed of upcoming club events, stop by our club website, [www.texas-asl.com](http://www.texas-asl.com) or better yet join our email group. You can post a message at [central-texas-asl@yahoogroups.com](mailto:central-texas-asl@yahoogroups.com) or you can point your favorite browser to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central-texas-asl> and take a look. For those still not connected, give Matt, Rick, or Sam a call for club information.

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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.

## NEXT ISSUE

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

And much more!