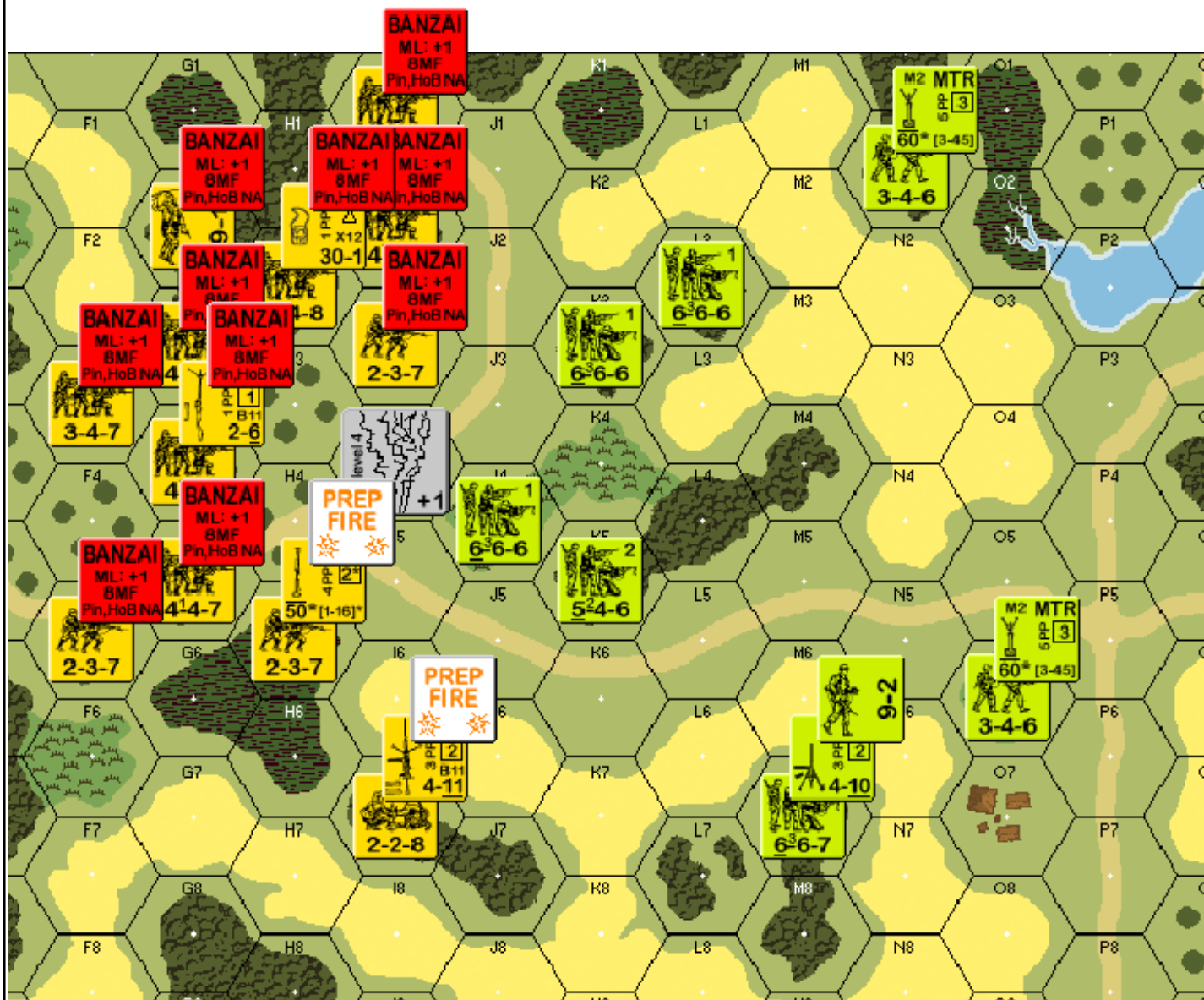


BANZAI!!!



The Newsletter of the Texas ASL Club

October 2020 Volume 25, Number 2

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

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EDITOR'S FOXHOLE

Rick Reinesch



Welcome back to another edition of the newsletter of Texas ASL, *Banzai!!*. I hope everyone is staying safe from Covid-19 and getting at least a little playing time in. We have a great issue lined up for you. I have pulled together some basic ASL fundamentals to assist new ASL/ASLSK players in getting up to speed. Vinny Maresca has provided us another seminal article, this time on how to represent the Waffen-SS in ASL. I'm sure this article will be just as widely referenced as his earlier article on the Italians in ASL (*Banzai!!* 19.1). We profile Texas ASL Hall of Famer Ed Beekman, and wrap it up with another ASLSK contribution from Peter Di Cioccio. All that and more await you in this issue of *Banzai!!*. A heads up regarding the next issue of *Banzai!!*. We received it a little late for this issue, but there is very detailed and inciteful analysis of RO5 *Men of Steel* from the indomitable Rich Spilky headed your way. Be on the lookout for that very special edition of *Banzai!!* coming soon.

BASIC GAME FUNDAMENTALS

Rick Reinesch



A lot of new players are unaware of some fundamental ASL game patterns like skulking, always using assault move when moving one hex, etc. For a player just getting into ASL or ASLSK, what are some of the fundamental game patterns/tactics that they should know? I pulled some of these together from my own experiences and from advice gleaned from the forums. Not exhaustive by any means, but hopefully applying these fundamentals can help new players move up the ASL learning curve a little quicker.

On the Attack

- Real Men Don't Prep Fire: This principle is that as the attacker you want to dish out your damage in the AFPh and
- Smoke: If your units have smoke capability, use it. Use Infantry Smoke to cover your advancing units, or

DFFh, because shooting in the PFPh is too costly. You win in ASL by moving, not shooting. You can shoot in his turn, but you can only move in yours.

- Timing: The game has a clock. You have X turns to get something done. If you must capture an objective, establish mental markers across the board at the start of the scenario on how far you should be at the beginning of each game turn towards getting to that objective. One way you can do this is by calculating the distance in MF/MP to the victory area (e.g., getting offboard/building control, etc.) and breaking that down by turn. You can also define intermediate landmarks (such as buildings or crossroads) to get to by certain points during the scenario, and then letting that drive your plan of progression toward reaching the overall objective. This provides you an immediate gauge as to whether you are falling behind in your timeline or not. Too many new players do not realize they are running behind until turn 4 of 6, and by then it is too late.
- Pacing: Learn when to press, when to pause, and when to bring a lot of fire power to bear. This pattern is really the combined application of the first two (Timing and Real Men Don't Prep Fire). Its effective application will move you a long way toward becoming a skilled player.
- Move with Purpose: Consider the order in which you move your units. Your goal should be to get the defender to commit his fire early, thus increasing the freedom of movement of your follow-on units. There is no rule that says you must move your units in order from left board side to right board side.
- Scout: This is in line with the previous fundamental. Use half squads (or expendable units for those nationalities that cannot deploy) as scouts to "bump" concealed defending units and strip "?" (ASL/ASLSK), or search (ASL) or reveal hidden obstacles and fortifications. Move with the goal of forcing the defending player to fire upon your infiltrators and thus potentially tying down his firing unit(s), or force the defender to leave the infiltrator alone and give your infiltrating unit an opportunity to establish a good attack position (i.e., moving to put the defender on the horns of a dilemma). While use of units in this manner may often result in their loss, this can be rationalized as a calculated risk (see the next point); one that when properly executed will not detrimentally impact your overall plan of attack, but where the resulting gain outweighs the loss.
- Understand risk vs. reward: Ask yourself if you take an action what good will it do, and what do you stand to lose by doing it? Part of your calculation should include the fundamentals of the IFT DR "bell curve" probability results vs the TEM situation. This is a more advanced fundamental and one that really comes from playing – a lot. Just be aware that as a player it is a level of understanding to strive for.

Ordnance/Gun Smoke to blind dangerous enemy MG, AFV, and Gun positions. When possible, if a squad has any MF left at the end of its MPH, try to have the squad place smoke in its hex.

- **Be Aggressive on Advance:** During the APh, look for opportunities to move some units into daring positions which could be good places to fire on an enemy in your upcoming DFPh (e.g., an adjacent, open ground hex). Force your opponent to make a difficult choice about that half-squad that advances up adjacent, or the 6+1 carrying a FT/DC that gets into an attacking position. You want to make the defender's upcoming turn a tough choice between prep firing or moving away to safety.
- **Dash:** Always use Dash when your move meets the criteria (ASL).
- **Assault Move:** When moving a single hex, always use Assault Movement when your move meets the criteria. There is no reason to give a defender that additional -1 DRM on any shot. And if you only need to move one hex, you can wait until the Advance Phase and possibly not subject your unit to fire during the DFPh.
- **VBM Freeze:** Use VBM freeze to keep defenders from firing outside of their hex (A7.212 ASL; 3.2.2.1 ASLSK) (ok, I know there is no bypass in ASLSK, but the same principle applies in ASLSK wherein the vehicle would simply stop in the hex).
- **Learn About Bounding Fire:** For players new to tanks, understand the capabilities and modifiers associated with Bounding First Fire, paying special attention to the implications of Moving/non-Moving and Stopped/non-Stopped. Too many new players do not realize how easy it can be to hit in Bounding Fire.

On the Defense

- **Cover Avenues of Attack:** Use mutually supporting defensive positions (i.e., do not be too sneaky putting that unit out there by himself unsupported [EXC: see *Set Speed Bumps*]; it rarely works out for the best). Set up your defense to project multiple fields of fire onto key avenues of attack. This includes using MGs to segment the battlefield. Do not present the attacker the opportunity of opening up a hole in your line because you left that key avenue of attack defended with a single point of failure.
- **Fire Discipline:** Highly situationally dependent, but it is important to understand the basics. A smart attacker will try to get you to commit your defensive fire (see, *Move with Purpose*), thereby locking down your defending unit(s) and giving him greater freedom of movement for his follow-on units. You need to dole out your defensive fire judiciously.
- **Listen to That Little Voice in Your Head:** Know when to fall back and set up your second (or third) line of defense. Too often when defending forward, as the Defender you do not realize until it is a turn too late that you should have

moved back towards that rear VC building, and now your units are cut off and lost. If you are asking yourself if you should move back to your next defensive line, move back - it may already be too late.

- **Residual FP:** Understand the concept of Residual FP. Generating resid across the greatest number of hexes in front of your units or across that avenue of attack should be your goal, especially if those hexes are Open Ground. Remember to lay down fire lanes, which are essentially long lines of resid hexes. While most resid may wind up only being 1 or 2 FP in strength, when applied with a -1 or -2 modifier it will give any attacker pause. If your units can spray fire, shoot an empty hex in addition to your intended target to place 2 hexes of resid from your shot. If that attacking vehicle is attempting to enter your hex (VBM freeze) and you know he is going to have infantry following up behind it, even if you can't affect the vehicle you can still shoot at it before it enters your hex, thus leaving resid in that adjacent hex. You may wind up not being able to shoot out of your hex due to Target Selection Limits (A7.212 ASL; 3.2.2.1 ASLSK), but your resid can still perform that defensive fire for you.
- **Set Speed Bumps:** When making initial contact with the Attacker, do so with the smallest effective unit. In general, this is usually a HS or your most expendable unit. As a deployed forward defensive position, this unit will either strip "?" early (ASL) or cause the Attacker to disperse or redirect his movement (i.e., the speed bump).
- **Play the Shell Game:** The goal of HIP and Concealed units should be to misdirect your opponent, create HIP ambush locations in key terrain choke points, and generally confuse your opponent as to your actual force disposition. Plan your force disposition accordingly.
- **No Shame in Hiding:** Learn how to skulk. The Attacker cannot hurt what he cannot see.

In General (for both the Attacker and Defender)

- **1-2-3:** Learn how to count counters. Keep track of your opponent's forces, especially if he has OB-provided concealment markers. Counting can help you understand where your opponent's SWs might be located, as well as key MMCs and leaders.
- **Read the SSRs and victory conditions, then read them again, then read the VC a couple more times during play.**
- **Read Your Owner's Manual:** Read the Chapter H notes for every vehicle and Gun for both sides in the scenario. AFVs and Guns can have special ammunition, smoke capability, extra squads, or removable SW that can come in very handy or require special defensive considerations.
- **7-0s Are Good for Something:** Place your mediocre leaders in "rally centers" behind your front line to quickly get brokies back into the fight.

- **Rout'em If You Got'em:** In conjunction with the previous fundamental, know your rout paths relative to leader positions (i.e., rally centers). Make sure you can reach those rallying leaders in a single rout phase. Losing an opportunity to rally one or more broken MMC because they are too far away from your leaders can be a deal-breaker to winning a scenario.
- **Be Willing to Take Casualties:** Learn when it is necessary to break a few eggs, especially if those eggs are half-squads or leaders with DCs/FTs. Sometimes you must sacrifice units to accomplish the greater objective. One is always going to lose some units, just try to maximize the upside of those losses. You need to understand that sometimes the VC mean you can lose every single unit and still win.
- **Concealment Is Your Friend:** Re-gain & Retain Concealment wherever the situation permits (ASL).
- **Help Is at Hand:** At least at game start, have a reserve force in mind (however small), and plan to use it at some point during the scenario. Still, it does no good to plan on a reserve but be so stingy in its use that it never gets into the fight. Timing is the tricky part on this one.
- **Keep Your Head Down:** Look for ways to keep broken enemy units under DM. Fire at them with an LMG, have a leader/half-squad/vehicle move ADJACENT, etc. Remember you must be able to inflict at least a MC with any fire against them to re-DM them.
- **He's Dead, Jim:** Dead enemy units are much better (for you) than broken enemy units. Look for opportunities to convert broken units to dead ones by eliminating for failure to rout or through additional attacks.
- **Counters Have Cooties:** Avoid stacking as much as possible. Never move stacked, otherwise you risk that unseen line of sight (LOS) zapping multiple counters at once with negative DRMs. If you do not stack, you can generally compensate for the FP loss by forming multi-location/multi-hex fire groups ("amoebas") to get to higher FP columns on the IFT. A smart opponent will try to break up such fire groups. Since units in a line are vulnerable to being broken up into smaller fire groups, try to form your large fire groups in such a way (without stacking) that allows you to continue to leverage the maximum number of units in your fire group even if you lose one of the participating units. This amoeba strategy is one that the Attacker tends use more frequently than the Defender, as the Attacker will be firing in the AFFh at half FP and possibly with positive DRMs.

The reason that the amoeba is a good pattern is because of how the IFT works. A basic question that is always asked is, "Is it better to fire a bunch of units as a fire group or separately?" In general, the way the IFT is structured at the lower FP columns (24 FP and below) it is better to fire as a fire group if you have a net positive DRM on the IFT. It is better to fire separately if you have a net negative DRM,

and it is about even between the two modes if the net DRM is zero. The influence of a negative DRM is even greater at the lower FP columns (12 FP and below) if you are looking for a K/# or KIA. While the DR for NMCs goes up/down one tick with every column change, the K/# & KIA results stay at the same DR for several columns. So, for example if you have a choice between a 4 FP down 2 attack, or two 2 FP down 2 attacks, the chance that you will get a K/# or better about doubles with the latter approach. Of course, you must deal with mandatory fire group restrictions, but then you aren't stacked, right?

- **That's No Moon...:** So, we just said, "don't stack", but especially on the attack, it can be very effective establishing a "Death Star" of your best minus leader stacked with your best machine guns to punch a hole in your opponent's front line.
- **Know the Tables:** Become familiar with the To Hit/To Kill tables and the modifiers. Know why it is best to have ambush locations at 6 hexes or less, know the TK# for your 75L and its best facing when hunting T-34s, or the best setup in which your lowly LMG stands a decent chance of knocking out that early war tankette. After a while you will develop a sense on whether a particular shot falls into the low-, moderate-, or high probability percentage category, freeing you to play and have fun and not feel bogged down in rules minutiae.
- **Review Murphy's Laws of Combat** (https://www.strategypage.com/humor/articles/military_humor_murphys_laws_of_combat.asp). They may all be a bit tongue in cheek, but they have a direct applicability to ASL/ASLSK given some thought.
- **And finally, Just Play:** Newer players tend to say "I don't know the rules" so they hesitate to play. ASL rules are learned through repetition, so just get out there and play. Unless you are JRV or Klas, nobody knows all the rules (no matter what they tell you), so just have fun and play. Write down rules questions that you have during a game and research the answers afterwards. Or jot down a rule citation that comes up during play that you thought never existed, even though you'd read the rule book 10 times. If you cannot find the answer in less than five minutes, agree on an approach, and keep going. You can look it up afterwards and not bog down your play trying to have that "perfect rules game" - it's a myth.

FIFTY SHADES OF BLACK

Vincent Maresca



An interesting discussion took place on the gamesquad.com ASL forum asking the simple question, "when did the SS 6-5-8 squad come into being?". The responses prompted the following article. While most elite WW2 fighting formations have been

covered in ASL design articles, little is out there regarding the controversial Waffen-SS. For those saying to themselves, “oh no, not another ASL SS fetish piece”, we must remember that Hitler’s ever-growing distrust of his Heer generals meant that the more politically reliable Waffen-SS commanders and their formations took on a greater role as the Third Reich’s fire brigades, particularly from 1943 onwards, participating in most key engagements and were therefore more prevalent in ASL scenarios in the second half of the war. This article seeks to better understand the general composition of the Waffen-SS divisions in ASL terms and provide the basis for a better representation of the composition of their infantry formations in scenario designs.

While portrayed as supermen in German (and sometimes Allied) propaganda, in reality there were a wide array of SS formations and fighting qualities derived from their various equipment loadouts, nationality composition, and motivation levels, influencing the answer as to when it was appropriate to use a 6-5-8 SS MMC to represent them. This article is a first step in attempting to objectively characterize the wide spectrum of Waffen-SS formations and how they fit within the ASL system, providing designers with a greater variety of unit quality and more informed decisions regarding unit composition and ELR structure as designers develop their orders of battle (OOB) for a given scenario by unit and by year. This study will attempt to show that Waffen-SS formations should not always be represented by 6-5-8 squads, but in fact these formations evolved over the course of the war to consist of a variety of elite combat formations, secondary anti-partisan formations, and gangster formations characterized by “brutal depravity” by Osprey Publishing (see the 36th SS Dirlewanger and 29th SS Kaminski Divisions, below). Thus, this article develops suggestions for the various Waffen-SS infantry formations by year through analysis of qualitative divisional formation differences and changes in squad quality over time due to alterations of ethnic composition, equipment, combat performance, unit history, acts of mutiny, losses, and penchant for atrocities against local populations.

The foundation of this article is based largely on the unit type assessments discussed by Paul Weir and posted on the gamesquad.com ASL forum, with additional insights from Jon Halfin’s Waffen-SS articles in his ASL fanzine, *Point Blank!* (Volume 1, Issues 2, 3, and 4), and two articles in the ASL fanzine *On All Fronts* (OAF; No.73 [1988] & No.76 [1989]) regarding the fighting qualities of the myriad of Waffen-SS formations. In addition, published scenarios containing Waffen-SS units were consulted and their data incorporated into this study. The bulk of the research for this project is manifest within the following tables. The goal is to quickly allow designers to cross-reference these tables when putting together an initial Waffen-SS infantry unit order of battle by formation and year, with subsequent fine-tuning through research of specific unit performance data for that given engagement. Finally, a gradient of squad types is provided creating greater depth to any order of battle and giving designers other options besides only elite 6-5-8s for depicting Waffen-SS formations.

First, it is helpful to summarize the ASL rules that apply to the Waffen-SS (A25.11 and 25.12). SS units are Elite (A1.25) with underlined morale (A19.13 [no unit replacement but Disrupt {*EXC. vs Russians*}]) and add +1 to their broken Morale Level. However, SS Crews and SMCs are represented by regular German counters, minus the increased broken Morale Level. SS MMCs are entitled to Assault Fire (A7.36) capabilities in 1944-45, PF starting 10/1943+, and ATMM from 1944+. SS will not surrender to Russians via the RtPh method (A20.21), do not become Disrupted while opposing Russians (A19.12), and may perform Massacre (A20.4). SS weapons and AFVs have their Depletion Numbers increased by one for being Elite (C8.2). Finally, SS Combat Engineers (A25.12) are considered SS (A25.11) and are represented by 8-3-8 MMC with a +1 broken Morale Level and an ELR of 5 (regardless of the ELR of other German MMC in the scenario [*EXC: E1.22*]), but are not automatically considered Assault Engineers.

While the SS 6-5-8 is the default counter for SS units, A25.11 & Chapter A, Footnote 31 makes reference to early-war Waffen-SS formations (and other pre-1944 SS formations requiring rest and/or refit) which can be represented by 4-6-8/2-4-8 SS squad/half-squads with a +1 to their broken side Morale Level. While the exact period defining “early war” is not defined, the 1995 SASL rules for Friendly Campaign Companies (Table 18.1) introduced the 6-5-8 into 1941+ SS Companies. However, 1941 seems a bit early for the greater firepower represented by the 6-5-8 squad type since these early-war units were not outfitted with SMGs, but instead were generally armed with secondary and/or captured equipment. The ASL Rule Book provides players and designers with ELR 5, SS 4-6-8 early-war MMC (or pre-1944 depleted SS units), late-war (1944+) SS 6-5-8 MMC, and SS 8-3-8 MMC Combat Engineers. Existing ASL rules seem to imply using SS 4-6-8 MMCs from 1939 to 1942 and SS 6-5-8 MMCs during 1944-1945 leaving a gray area in 1943, and thus we are left with our initial question. This question of the proper applicability of SS 4-6-8/6-5-8 squad types has been around for a while, and in 1989, OAF suggested representing all SS units as 4-6-8 until 1943, Elites as 6-5-8 in 1943+, and 6-5-8 for 1st Line units in 1944+. While this flexibility does exist in the rules, it is no exaggeration to state that a large majority of published scenarios containing the Waffen-SS consist of ELR 5, 6-5-8 squads with the occasional 8-3-8 combat engineer included.

While Beyond Valor in 1985 provided the de facto SS 6-5-8 squad, 1999’s A Bridge Too Far (ABTF), and later in 2012 Festung Budapest (FB), greatly expanded the SS order of battle by including MMC counters for Elite SS 8-3-8, SS 6-5-8, SS 5-4-8, SS 4-6-8, and SS 4-4-7 MMC squad & HS types. It is interesting to note that ABTF did not introduce Conscript SS counters, but instead SS 2nd line squads ELR replaced to standard German 4-3-6 non-SS (R6.21), non-Elite, inexperienced (A19.3) Conscript squads.

ABTF modified the ASLRB rule that SS units did not suffer ELR replacement due to their underlined morale and instead introduced rules for unit replacement similar to non-SS standard

formations (A19/R6.1-6.21) in an attempt to simulate the fragile nature of depleted late-war SS formations (see AFTB Footnote #9). Specifically, the Morale # of non-Crew SS MMC is never considered underlined for any purpose [EXC: Assault Engineers who always have ELR 5 [EXC: E1.22/R6.1]]. With these modifications, an SS MMC subject to ELR replacement would no longer be split into two half squads (per A19.132), but replaced by a lower quality SS squad type through a new ELR reduction/replacement sequence: MMC SS 6-5-8→SS 5-4-8→SS 4-4-7→[non-SS] 4-3-6 MMCs (R6.21; FB15). While Battle Hardening (BH; A15.3) in ABTF is typical of the standard reverse progression; non-SS 4-3-6s Conscripts in ABTF bump up to SS 4-4-7s. In FB, however, Conscripts are raised to 2nd Line, non-SS 4-4-7 squads. The Battle Hardening sequence for non-Conscript SS is similar in both FB and ABTF, with FB's progression defined as SS 4-4-7→SS 4-6-8 and ABTF's as SS 4-4-7→SS 5-4-8→SS 6-5-8. It is interesting to note the overall quality progression distinctions between these two modules demonstrates the contrast between ABTF's elite, but understrength, Waffen-SS 9th "Hohenstaufen" and 10th "Frundsberg" Panzer Divisions, and FB's lower-quality Waffen-SS 8th "Florian Geyer" and 22nd "Maria Theresia" Cavalry Divisions and the 4th SS "Polizei" Division.

Modeling lower-quality Waffen-SS formations is nothing new. Kinetic Energy in 1998 represented lower-quality SS formations by employing non-SS Axis Minor counters for the SS 7th "Prince Eugen" and SS 25th "Hunyadi" Divisions, whose ranks were raised from Axis Minor forces. OAF (No. 73) recommended ignoring Conscript 4-3-6 squads and instead representing inexperienced Waffen-SS using Finn 5-3-8s (with no broken side self-rally). Third-party producers have also introduced 1st line, 2nd Line, and/or Green SS 4-4-8, SS 3-4-7, and SS 4-2-7 MMC squads, and even Conscript SS 4-3-6 MMC squads with underlined morale (but no +1 broken morale) reflecting that while they were not great soldiers, they were still motivated to fight.

Any analysis of the military quality of Waffen-SS formations must be tempered with the fact that they were constituted not only based on their military training but also by their ideology and fanaticism, although late in the war regular Heer and Axis Minor units were conscripted to fill out Waffen-SS ranks. In

addition, Waffen-SS formations were initially equipped with obsolete, second-rate equipment, or arms and vehicles from conquered countries such as France, Hungary, Czech, Austria, Russia, and other countries. For example, Bounding Fire Production's *Poland in Flames* provides an interesting discussion on obsolete WWI MGs used by SS formations during the early part of the war. In fact, most of the early motorized Waffen-SS divisions were provided with secondary equipment and only the most elite divisions were eventually modernized by 1942, on parity with their Heer counterparts. It was not until 1944-45 that SS formations were given priority allocation of new weapons. The subsequent waves of raised Axis Minor Waffen-SS brigades and divisions during the second half of the war continued the practice of employing indigenous and captured equipment when fitting out many SS formations.

This brings us back to the gamesquad.com discussion in which Paul Wier suggested a hierarchy of Waffen-SS formations which he ranked from "premier" down to "abysmal". Paul's initial, but insightful and detailed observations forms the foundation for this article. Working in parallel with Paul's downward grading qualitative structure for the Waffen-SS, the author structured the various Waffen-SS divisions into the standard four ASL unit quality classifications - Elite, 1st line, 2nd line, and Inexperienced - based on their formation structure, combat history, acts of mutiny, atrocities against local populations, and previously published ASL scenarios (see Table 1).

Table 1 is not the first attempt at placing Waffen-SS divisions into some kind of ranking, as OAF (No. 73) provided a similar table of divisional ASL Classifications in 1988. Table 1 was compared to the OAF table after development and, to the relief of the author, most divisions fell into the same or similar classification. There were some anomalies such as the criminal units of the 36th SS Dirlewanger and 29th SS Kaminski Divisions which were rated higher in both the OAF table and in published scenarios. However, based on the research for this article, the division positions in Table 1 were finalized using the divisional criteria discussed above. Scenario designers in the future and/or those more versed in Waffen-SS history may provide more supportive documentation for updating the division standings in Table 1.

Class	Division #	Date	Division Name	Class/Date Division	Notes
ELITE	1st	1938	<i>Leibstandarte</i>	PzGr 7/1942; Pz 10/1943;	Δ
	2nd	1939	<i>Das Reich</i>	Inf 4/1940; PzGr 11/1942; Pz 10/1943	Δ
	3rd	1939	<i>Totenkopf</i>	Inf 10/1939; PzGr 11/1942; Pz 10/1943	Δ (originally outfitted with Axis Minor equipment)
	5th	1939	<i>Wiking</i>	Inf 1940; PzGr 11/1942; Pz 10/1943	
	9th	-	<i>Hohenstaufen</i>	PzGr 2/1943; Pz 10/1944	Δ
	10th	9/1943	<i>Frundsberg</i>	PzGr 1943; Pz 11/1943	Δ
	11th	1939	<i>Nordland</i>	PzGr 10/1943	
	12th	6/1943	<i>Hitler Jugend</i>	Pz 3/1944	Δ

Class	Division #	Date	Division Name	Class/Date Division	Notes
1 ST LINE	6th	2/1941	<i>Nord</i>	Inf 2/1941; Mtn 9/1942	Δ Treat as 2 nd line 1941 (only)
	8th	1941	<i>Florian Geyer</i>	Cav 9/1942	Treat as 2 nd line 1942 (only)
	15th	2/1943	<i>Latvian 1</i>	Inf 10/1943	Destroyed 7/1944, rebuilt 9/1944
	16th	2/1943	<i>Reichsfuhrer SS</i>	Pz Gr 10/1943	Δ
	17th	-	<i>Gotz von Berlichingen</i>	Pz Gr 11/1943	Largely destroyed by 1/1945
	18th	6/1941	<i>Horst Wessel</i>	Inf 1/1944; PzGr 10/1944	
	19th	5/1943	<i>Latvian 2</i>	Inf 4/1944	
	20th	10/1943	<i>Estonian 1</i>	Inf 1/1944	
	23rd	10/1943	<i>Nederland</i>	PzGr 10/1944?	
	27th	5/1943	<i>Langemarck</i>	Inf 10/1944	*
	33rd	8/1943	<i>Charlemagne</i>	Cav 12/1944	*
2 ND LINE	4th	-	<i>Polizei</i>	Inf 10/1939; PzGr 6/1943	Δ Treat as 1 st line 1944 (only)
	7th	1941	<i>Prinz Eugen</i>	Inf 4/1942; Mtn 10/1942	Treat as 1 st line 1944 (only)
	14th	-	<i>Ukranian 1</i>	Inf 10/1943	
	22nd	-	<i>Maria Theresia</i>	Cav 4/1944	
	24th	12/1944	<i>Karstjager</i>	Mtn 1945	*
	28th	6/1943	<i>Wallonien</i>	PzGr 9/1944	*
	29th	9/1944	<i>Italian 1</i>	Inf 3/1945	*
	31st	-	<i>Bohmen Mahren (Batschka)</i>	Inf 8/1944	
	32nd	-	<i>30 Januar</i>	Inf 2/1945	Δ*
	34th	12/1943	<i>Landstorm Nederland</i>	Inf 9/1944	*
	35th	-	<i>Polizei Grenadier</i>	Inf 2/1945	Δ
	38th	-	<i>Nibelungen</i>	Inf 4/1945	
CONSCRIPT	13th	-	<i>Handschar (1st Croatian)</i>	Mtn 3/1943	
	29th	1942	<i>Russian 1 (Kaminski Brigade)</i>	Inf 8/1944	*
	36th	1941	<i>Dirlewanger</i>	Inf 2/1945	* Comprised of penal personnel
	37th	-	<i>Lutzow</i>	Cav 2/45	* Remnants of 8 th & 22 nd SS Div
	25th	-	<i>Hunyadi (1st Hungarian)</i>	Inf 1/1944	*
	26th	8/1944	<i>Hungaria (or Gombos)</i>	Inf 1/1945	*
	30th	7/1944	<i>Weissruthenien (Russian 2)</i>	Inf 8/1944	*
	33rd	11/1944	<i>Hungarian 3</i>	Cav 1/1945	*
	21st	-	<i>Skanderbeg (1st Albanian)</i>	Mtn 5/1944	* Disbanded 12/1944 and sent to 7 th SS Division
	23rd	-	<i>SS Kama (2nd Croatian)</i>	Mtn 6/1944	* Disbanded 10/1944 and sent to 13 th and 31 st SS Divisions
Inf=Infantry; Cav=cavalry; Mtn=mountain; PzGr=panzer grenadier; Pz=panzer *understrength formation Δ predominately German personnel and equipment					
Table 1. Waffen-SS divisions characterized by ASL class.					

Table 1 places the Waffen-SS combat divisions into a hierarchy from the very best military formations (top of the Elite class) down to the most abysmal formations operating more like criminal gangs than military formations (bottom of the Conscript class). Based on the previously cited ASL sources, unit research, combat performance, and data from hundreds of existing published ASL scenarios, Table 1 was developed and subjectively ranked by the author into the four standard ASL unit Classes and ranking by quality from top to bottom within each Class (top being the best military formation). Unit Class drives unit squad composition (Tables 2-5), while order within a given class drives their ELR rating (Table 6). Additional guidance is provided in the table notes by identifying those units composed principally of German personnel and equipment (Δ), while others were comprised largely of foreign volunteers and Volksdeutsche (Germans living outside Germany) who were fitted out with captured or Axis Minor equipment. In addition, there was a large number of late war Waffen-SS “divisions” in name only lacking their full complement of men and equipment, which are marked with an asterisk (*). While some units are specifically called out, these newly formed units should be treated as having a slightly lower combat performance within their stated class at the time of their divisional expansion (see

Table 1 for the date the division was formed). Finally, treat the upper half of the Conscript Class (Table 1) as Green [A19.3].

The order of battle tables by ASL class type (Tables 2-5) encapsulates the bulk of the comments from Paul Weir and the articles referenced above, plus an analysis of the existing plethora of published Waffen-SS ASL scenarios. Tables 2 to 5 provide the base Waffen-SS squad type by year (Primary) followed by the secondary squad type (Secondary) that appeared in lesser numbers. Finally, the Tertiary column provides squad types that would have been present in very small percentages in a given order of battle for that year (either units phasing out, depleted, or new units being introduced). Thus, while the Primary squad type may be used as the sole squad type for a scenario, including Secondary and Tertiary squad types in the OOB will make for a more dynamic formation and provide a more historic gradient of squad types within a specific formation, which were never at 100-percent of paper strength anyway. Finally, these unit strength representations can be modified higher for reinforced units or lowered for those that were depleted in combat. In one final note, contrary to the counter, it is recommended that pre-1944 SS 5-4-8 counters do not have Assault Fire [EXC: Elite, see Table 2].



























































































ELITE	Primary (60-80%)	Secondary (30-40%)	Tertiary (10-20%)	Assault Eng/ Storm Troop †	ELR
1939					3
1940					4/3
1941					5/4
1942			(Late 1942)  &/or 		5
1943			 &/or 		5
1944					5/4
1945			 &/or 		4/3

Table 2. Typical Elite Waffen-SS OOB Squad type distribution by year with ELR

† - has Assault Fire (A7.36) ◇ - no Assault Fire

1 ST LINE	Primary (60-80%)	Secondary (30-40%)	Tertiary (10-20%)	Assault Eng/ Storm Troop †	ELR
1940					3
1941					4/3
1942			 ◇		5/4
1943	 ◇		 &/or 		5/4
1944			 &/or 		4/3
1945			 &/or 		3/2
Table 3. Typical 1st Line Waffen-SS OOB Squad type distribution by year with ELR † - has Assault Fire (A7.36) ◇ - no Assault Fire					

2 ND LINE	Primary (60-80%)	Secondary (30-40%)	Tertiary (10-20%)	Assault Eng/ Storm Troop †	ELR
1941		 ^C			3/2
1942					4/3
1943			 ◇		4/3
1944			 &/or 		3/2
1945			 &/or  ^C		2/1
Table 4. Typical 2nd Line Waffen-SS OOB Squad type distribution by year with ELR † - has Assault Fire (A7.36) ◇ - no Assault Fire					

CONSCRIPT	Primary (60-70%)	Secondary (30%)	Tertiary (10%)	Assault Eng/ Storm Troop	ELR
1941					2/1
1942					3/2
1943					3/2
1944					2/1
1945					1
Table 5. Typical Conscript Waffen-SS OOB Squad type distribution by year with ELR. These units would not receive Assault Fire capability in 1944-45 (A25.11)[EXC: † - has Assault Fire (A7.36)]. ◇ - no Assault Fire					

Tables 2 through 5 provide the representative squad type for either assault engineers (sturmpanzer) or storm groups (sturmkompanie) for that particular year and Class. Per A25.12, any Elite Class can be designated as Assault Engineers [H1.22]. The tables provide notes on when it is appropriate, by year, for squad types to have underlined FP for assault fire. For example, a 1942 1st Line Waffen-SS scenario order of battle may look something like this: 10x4-6-8, 4x4-4-7, 2x5-4-8. And if an account noted combat engineers, the presence of a storm group, or the direct assault against a fortified position, adding 3x 6-5-8 with 2x DC and FT would be appropriate.

	Elite		1 st Line		2 nd Line		Conscript	
1939	3	3	3	-	-	-	-	-
1940	4	3	3	3	-	-	-	-
1941	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1
1942	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	2
1943	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	2
1944	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1
1945	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	1

Table 6. ELR by class and year

A note on the ELR values presented in the tables is important here (Tables 2 through 5 and summarized in Table 6). For non-ELR 5, non-crew infantry units, the SS MMC/HS no longer have underlined morale and are subject to ELR replacement, per A19.13. Looking at Tables 2 to 6, the first

number of the ELR split represents the ELR for units in the upper half of their unit Class bracket (Table 1), and the second ELR number is for units in the lower half of the same unit Class. For example, the (lower half of the Elite Class) 10th Frundsberg Division has the same ELR as the (upper 1st Line class) 8th Florian Geyer Division. However, the (lower half of the 1st Line Class) 20th Estonian 1 Division will have an ELR one lower than the (upper 1st Line class) 8th Florian Geyer Division. If there is only one number, it applies to units throughout the entire Class. The purpose of splitting the ELR between the upper and lower portions of the unit Classes is to soften the transition between the subjective division of units into ASL Classes. Therefore, while there may be an equipment difference between the lower half of the Elite formations and the upper half of the 1st line units, the morale (unit quality) between the two would be expected to be similar. There is no hard line between where the separation between the upper and lower half of the ASL unit Classes begins, so specific research will have to guide this decision. Finally, ELR Replacement should follow the progression outlined in ABTF/FB, while Battle Hardening (BH) for Elite and 1st Line formations should follow the procedures in ABTF, and 2nd Line and Conscript units should follow the BH progression in FB.

Through a quick review of Table 1, an overall, but generalized quality pattern becomes visible, characterized by a declining quality hierarchy starting with panzer divisions at the top, followed by panzer grenadier units, and finally Waffen-SS infantry/police/cavalry/mountain formations at the bottom. This quality assessment needs to be tempered with the facts that early Waffen-SS divisions were principally armed with secondary

**Table 7: Table of Organization
Waffen-SS (Mot) Infantry Battalion June 22, 1941**

Unit	ASL Equivalent
Bn HQ Company	9-2/9-1 8-0/7-0 2x 248 HS 1x motorcycle 1x Kfz 4
Signals	3x 228 Crew 3x Kfz 4 1xPhone; 2xRadio
3x (mot) Rifle Company (each) Company HQ	9-1 8-1 8-0 1x 248 HS 1x motorcycle
Motorized Infantry Platoon Platoon HQ Section	9-1 8-1/8-0 1x 248 HS 1x motorcycle 1x Kfz 4
3x Infantry Platoons (5 squads each)	9x 468, 4x 548, 2x447 3x 228 Crew 1x Radio 4x LMG 3x 50mm MTR 15x Trucks
Machine Gun Platoon MG HQ Section	9-1 8-0 2x 248 HS 2x Kfz 4
2x MG Sections	4x HMG 4x 228 Crew 2x Trucks
Mortar Section MTR HQ Section	8-1 1x 248 HS 1x Kfz 4
3x Mortar Sections	6x 81mm MTR 6x 228 Crew 6x Truck

equipment and average officers prior to 1942, Elite SS formations came into parity with regular Heer formations beginning in late 1942, and by 1944 Waffen-SS formations were receiving priority in men and equipment. A second general trend is that as the number of SS formations increased, the unit quality decreased as divisions built later in the war (particularly the 1944-45 period) were composed in large part from unit remnants, allied troops, training units, convicts, and conscripted personnel – although most of these “divisions” were never fully formed and existed in reality as brigade-level units. The third general trend in the data suggests that Elite and 1st Line formations were involved largely in front-line combat.

Finally, Tables 7 & 8 illustrate an Elite Waffen-SS infantry battalion in 1941 and 1944, respectively, based on the tables above. These tables illustrate that a Waffen-SS rifle battalion was a relatively stable formation and is provided here as a guide for scenario designers.

**Table 8: Table of Organization
Waffen-SS Panzer Grenadier Battalion 1944**

Unit	ASL Equivalent
Bn HQ Company	9-2/9-1 8-0/7-0 2x 248 HS 1x motorcycle 1x Kfz 1/20
Signals	3x 228 Crew 3x Kfz 1/20 1xPhone; 2xRadio
3x Panzer Grenadier Company (each) Company HQ	9-1 8-1 8-0 1x 248 HS 1x motorcycle
Motorized Infantry Platoon Platoon HQ Section	9-1 8-1/8-0 1x 248 HS 1x motorcycle 1x Kfz 1/20
3x Infantry Platoons (5 squad each)	9x 658, 4x 548, 2x838 3x 228 Crew 1x Radio 6x LMG 15x SPW 251/1
Heavy Weapons Platoon MG HQ Section	9-1 8-0 2x 248 HS 2x Kfz 1/20
2x MG Sections	4x HMG 4x 228 Crew 4x SPW 251/1
Mortar Section MTR HQ Section	8-1 1x 248 HS 1x Kfz 1/20
5x Mortar Sections	6x 81mm MTR 4x 120mm MTR 10x 228 Crew 10x SPW 251/1
AA Platoon AA HQ Section	8-1 1x 248 HS 1x Kfz 1/20
3x AA Platoon	6x 20mm AA 6x 228 Crew 6x SPW 251/1

So, when did the Waffen-SS 6-5-8 come into being? For Elite formations, this started in late 1942 when these units were brought into parity with regular army [Heer] units and individual SS squads began receiving more modern equipment, including a second LMG. There is a general trend upward in the percentage of 6-5-8s through 1943, starting with Elite formations and then trickling down to the lower unit classes until 1945. However, 2nd Line and Conscript units were never built for front line combat, so the 6-5-8 would only exist in those formations as storm troop elements, and even that inclusion would be questionable.

The implications of ELR Replacement within the tables above for Waffen-SS formations brings an interesting and more historically accurate dynamic to the wide range of formations

present during WW2. Hopefully, designers and players will find these tables useful as they demonstrate the diverse nature of Waffen-SS formations as they were raised, evolved, and destroyed throughout the course of the war.

PLAYER PROFILE: ED BEEKMAN

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?

EB: In elementary school, a classmate one street over had a simple Civil War board game with plastic soldiers, cavalry and cannon. We played it once. I thought it was so cool. In high school another friend had a *Strategy & Tactics* subscription. I bought a couple of the games he did not want that came with the magazine. I still have them – *Cassino* and *Kharkov Spring Offensive 1942*. I remember annihilating my friend's Germans in *Kharkov* when I risked all to cut almost every German supply line. It was *Cassino* that really had an impact on me. When I brought the game home and was looking at it my mother asked me what it was. She said my great uncle had served in Italy in the 45th Engineers. There were only a couple of American units in the game; engineers to clear the roads for the British armor. One of those units was my great uncle's. Suddenly I had this personal connection. I also bought SPT's *War in Europe* in high school for \$40, what a deal! But the real hook was *Squad Leader*, which leads into the next question.

Banzai: When and how did you discover ASL?

EB: In 1979 my best friend's father gave him this game called *Squad Leader* for his birthday. We unboxed it and thought "this is cool". We played *The Guards Counterattack* and didn't look back. Within the year we had played every scenario at least once. I still remember his T-34 from hell that almost single handedly won *Hill 621*. I beat on that tank constantly for no effect. Every return shot had an effect on my units. I eventually bought the game and all the expansions as they came out.

When ASL came out we thought, how could anything improve upon SL and all its expansions? We were still having fun with SL and didn't consider upgrading. After college graduation and being transferred to Fort Worth for work I decided to see what ASL was all about. I was shocked to find that, yes, *Squad Leader* can be made better. I met Glen Gray (RIP), who lived around the corner and we played several times. Then John Hyler invited me to join the local ASL group, where I was regularly whipped by him, Randy Schurz, and Jim Ferrell. I discovered I had been playing what I call "Inbred Jed" ASL. I'd only played against a couple of opponents and we misread and misplayed the same rules together. The local players got my head set straight, or mostly straight, on the rules.

Banzai: What nationality do you enjoy playing the most?

EB: I don't think I have a favorite nationality although I do have a soft spot in my heart for the Russians. Or should I say a hard spot as I tend to get into a Russian state of mind playing them and willingly sacrifice units to achieve victory. I like the Japanese because you get to be a sneaky bastard with them. Americans are fun if you like using those higher columns on the IFT.

Banzai: Describe your favorite kind of scenario. What kind of scenario do you find less enjoyable?

EB: I tend to prefer "pillow fights" and Tin Can and Popgun scenarios. Low intensity, weak armor, and weaker AT capability. Maneuver is much more important because your fire isn't capable of much. Plus you can have the satisfaction of taking out the enemy's main battle tank with a good MG hit. You only need one hand to figure out your final TK#. If you need both hands and some toes, read on.

I do not like desert scenarios as a rule although there are a couple I have enjoyed. I don't enjoy late war heavy metal engagements as much as most. Something about the "if you hit it, it dies" that doesn't resonate with me. The risk calculation is simply reduced to: can I be easily hit and if so don't do it. You end up playing cat and mouse trying to make the other guy move and die.

Banzai: What would you say are your ASL strengths and weaknesses?

EB: I love the end game, figuring out how to win when over a barrel. It is so much fun pulling out a win when you and your opponent doubt it can be done. I have even offered to switch sides on occasion when the opponent doesn't think they can win on the last turn. Nothing better than winning with only one GO squad and once I won after losing my entire OB. I remember a world class player telling me after our game he thought I had a 15% chance of winning going into my last turn. I surprised him by making it a 55% chance (I needed a 7 on the last CC but rolled boxcars). We both thought it was a great game.

My weakness is where I don't "grok" the scenario. This results in a deficient set up, forcing the early shifting of forces, breaking concealment to fall back, etc., which gives the opponent time to push his advantage. It also invites "what the heck to I do now?" thoughts that are not conducive to good play.

Another weakness is rushed play and blood lust. If I don't read the scenario card thoroughly, reread the VC during the game, don't consider the importance of order of play (Smoke first, then OBA, then...) I miss important moves or shots I need to take. When I "smell blood" it can lead to focus on the kill rather than victory. I have started my Prep Fire going for the easy kill, forgetting to call the needed OBA or Smoke on the other side of the board first. Ooops, **big** mistakes. I am learning to take a few calming breaths first.

Banzai: What is the best part of ASL, and what is the worst?

EB: I love not having absolute control over the units. Nothing like having the squad waiting in the stone victory building who

is going to throw his DC at the enemy when they move adjacent. Then it all goes out the window when he goes berserk and dies turning over his DC to the enemy who will use it against you. Now you need to scramble to come up with a Plan B. Chapter E is a blessing to ASL. Any scenario using a section or more of this ASLRB chapter adds spice to the game. At night, your units can wander off the wrong way or a fortuitous starshell can stall your advance for a turn. Don't feel bad, your opponent has the same issues. Nothing is certain in ASL, a critical hit can result in a dud round. I have had an opponent survive a 30 -2 shot then break me on the following 4 +1 shot. It makes every game memorable.

The absolute best part of ASL? The players. Even though we are figuratively killing each other in the game, we start with a hand shake and when time allows afterwards, we review the game to see what we did well and could have done better. We help each other improve our game and enjoy camaraderie with each other. Our humor can be outrageous. The worst situation can feel better when you can laugh at it. We all have great, this happened to me war stories we share. In the end it is only a game.

The worst part of ASL is finding a scenario that is balanced for you and your opponent's play style. There are absolute **dog** scenarios out there. There are also scenarios that ROAR has rated unbalanced that I have played that seemed balanced. There are others ROAR says are balanced that I find totally unbalanced. One reason for this I think is there are different levels of ASL expertise. There are scenarios that are balanced for inexperienced players but real barkers for seasoned players, and vice versa. Plus there are so many scenarios, not complaining mind you, to pick from I don't have time to play them more than once. Some scenarios demand a second playing because you only figure out what to do after playing it the first time.

Banzai: What are you most looking forward to with regard to ASL?

EB: I always look forward to hosting ASL game days. They are always a good time. I also hope ASLOK is going to occur this year. I have been attending ASLOK regularly for about 10 years. I must have this year's t-shirt since my name will be on it twice. I grew up in the area, my mother lives 15 minutes and my best friend lives 10 minutes away from the hotel, so accommodations are inexpensive for me. [If you are interested in going, I drive up every year and am willing to give you a ride, you just need to come to me as I don't pick up.] ASLOK is the Holy Grail, Mecca, and Nirvana of ASL wrapped into one and always a fantastic time. Everyone should attend at least once in their life.

Banzai: What's your favorite game piece in ASL and why?

EB: I would say it is the M24 Chaffee. Its like a mini-Sherman. In game terms it has the same 75mm gun with smoke, WP, plus a smoke mortar. It is smaller than a Sherman with weaker but still respectable 6 AF and it is **fast**. With 18 MP it can beat a German halftrack in a drag race. With a working Gyro and rapid traverse turret, this is a deadly tank. You don't want to stand toe

to toe with a big cat but you can float like a butterfly and sting like a bee. At the Texas Team tournament years ago I destroyed two Tigers with a Chaffee in a single MPh along with a Conscript HS killing itself with a PF trying to stop me. My opponent was so impressed he gave me an ASL pin which I still cherish.

Banzai: You're playing the Russians in a 1941 scenario, facing a German combined arms attack featuring several AFVs. Would you rather have a KV-2 or a platoon of two BT-7 M37s and two BT-7As? Now turn that around: which combo would you rather not have to face if you were playing the Germans?

EB: As Russian I would want the BT tanks. First, I would take four B11 tubes to one B12 tube. With movement over 20, the BT can outrun anything the Germans have. Their movement nears twice that of typical German panzers. The KV can only plod about with 9 MP, forcing a head on attack or acting as a slowly retreating pillbox. Its movement is only about 2/3s of the typical panzer. The BT-7A has a radio, freeing it from platoon movement restrictions. The BT guns are fairly equivalent in punch to the best German guns. Their armor is weak compared to some panzers but still equivalent to most in '41. Sure, the BT has to be buttoned up to fire but with a sole KV, would you have the crew risk getting its head blown off to get a better shot? BT-7 M37s have ROF of 1 while the 7As and KV have no ROF. However the KV cannot Intensive Fire, it gets one shot, no more. Intensive Fire is risky with the BT but at least you can do it. The BT 7A has the bonus of a good Smoke depletion number, something very rare among early war Russians. Finally, the Russians tend to be the defender in 1941 with terrain needing to be occupied. The BT can get behind the Germans and cut routes without having to fire a shot. The German then has to decide to use his tanks against yours or against your infantry. In the former case this will ease pressure on your infantry. In latter case your tanks may be freed up to attack the Germans from behind. Imagine playing FrF19/BoF4 *About His Shadowy Sides* with 8 BT tanks instead of 2 KV-2s. The Germans would be driven insane having to deal with 4 Smoke capable vehicles covering the Russian infantry advance. Heck, the BT tanks would still have plenty of time to have most entry hexes covered before the German tank reinforcements arrive. With good shooting the game could be "over" by turn 4.

As Germans I would prefer going against the KV2, not the BT tanks. As stated above, the KV is slow with no ROF nor IF. It has limited AP although its HE is still the equivalent of the very effective Western Ally 6 pounder's AP. Germans should use any doorknocker ATG to attempt Deliberate Immobilization then try to get a rear shot with tanks being sure to go for any APCR first. If CE, you should win Gun Duels if the KV has to turn its NT equivalent turret around and considering its huge size, getting a hit should not be a problem although the kill, even from the rear, is problematic against its thick hide. If you can't hit the side of a KV2 there's something wrong with your aim. Once the KV takes its shot you can continue to swarm it since it cannot IF. Persistence will eventually take down the beast. Just an immobilization or shock will aid your infantry getting in a CC

kill. Since there will be only one KV, all your efforts can be concentrated on it.

Banzai: You get to choose your side in a scenario set in the battle for France in 1940. Both sides have combined arms and a decent allotment of tanks. Would you rather command the French side to use their Char B1-bis, Somuas, and Renault tanks, or the Germans, with their PzIs and PzIIs, and a few PzIVs and Pz38ts?

EB: I would prefer the Germans. Yes, on paper the French have superior tanks but in use they become inferior to the Germans. The French tanks tend to be slower with red MP and are radioless. Platoon movement slows them even more. An often overlooked weakness of French tanks is their weak MG armament which makes it harder for them to fend off infantry assaults. I consider the Somua the most dangerous of the tanks listed with good speed, armor, and rudimentary radio. A force consisting mainly of Somuas just might tempt me to take the French. The Germans should be able to run semi-circles around the French tanks, engulf them with smoke, and move on to attack the enemy infantry. My main reason for taking the Germans has nothing to do with the armor. It is called *Advanced Squad Leader* after all, not *Advanced Armor Leader*. The French infantry broken morale drops by one which makes them difficult to rally. Break the French infantry and their tanks become a lost cause.

Banzai: How do you like PTO scenarios?

EB: I like PTO. Playing the Japanese can be particularly fun. Banzai charges, DC and Tank Hunter heroes, Stealth, HtH combat, a Japanese HS able to take out a Marine squad in CC. What's not to like? The terrain tends to be constrictive allowing the Japanese to conceal and sneak up on their foes. Japanese also don't break unless HS which makes them a relentless foe. Going against the Japanese can be nerve wracking. Your units should always have a buddy with them when they go into the jungle. A case can be made against late war bug hunt scenarios where the Japanese remain holed up in their caves and have to be blasted out one by one. Yawn, boring. Even scenarios in China, which aren't typically PTO can be fun, with Dare-Death squads giving a nasty surprise to the Japanese.

Banzai: What was your most enjoyable ASL moment? How about your worst, funniest, coolest, and/or craziest?

EB: When you've played as long as I have you have many great moments. I think the best moment was in the *Der Commissar's in Town #2* mini final at ASLOK 2017. The scenario was SP255 *Anatoly's Ambush*. I was the attacking Germans. There is a choice of two VC, either have no Good Order Russian MMC in any of the three victory location buildings in town or no good order Russian tanks on or adjacent to the road outside of town but I also had to exit a number of tanks off the opposite board edge. I didn't want to get in a city fight so I put all my eggs against the road and pushed. With a couple of turns left, I just needed to take out a few more Russian tanks but my troops were running out of steam. My tank MAs started to malfunction, my

troops failed PAATCs and the last HIP BT tanks ran out to the road from town behind me. I was about to start the game's last player turn. My opponent crossed his arms, leaning back with a smug smile on his face. I did the same. We had a few observers looking on confused when I told my opponent I was about to do something cruel to him. I should have taken side bets on who would win, I think I would have cleaned up. I started to see if I could clear the road but the Russian infantry had arrived to keep my infantry away from their tanks. It wasn't going to happen. I told my opponent lets end this. He thought I was conceding. Instead I took my two halftracks drove them from half a board away and parked both in bypass in the sole Russian occupied any of the VC buildings. He couldn't kill them both in a single CC with a Pinned Russian Conscript. He couldn't avoid being locked in Melee which is not good order. I gave him time to review the situation and in the end we shook hands as he conceded the game. At the awards ceremony someone asked me how the commissars did. I thought for a second then said, not well, I killed as many as I could because I was always the German. My opponent came to town the next year and I arranged an ASL game against a local player for him. He asked me if everyone here was as sneaky with halftracks. Apparently not, he won his game.

The best game I ever played was DTF1 *Keren Masala*. This game came down to the last 5 Melee rolls of which I could not lose more than two and had to win at least one. It was back and forth all game long, I was ahead, then my opponent, then me, then my opponent, and then it was anyone's game. It was very intense with no noticable mistakes by either of us. The strangest moment was when one of my Fanatic Elite Italian squads, with nothing else to do, took a 4 +5 shot at a British HS about to Advance into a victory location on this, its last turn. I rolled snakes and the HS failed the PTC which freed up my fire base to clear off other victory locations on my last turn. My opponent was yelling, "Who in the H*LL takes a 4 +5 shot!?!?" I could only answer "Me?" It wasn't stupid only because it worked.

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

EB: Currently I am working to improve thinking ahead at least one turn and try to put myself in my opponent's position to figure out what he might be planning. This should help me keep from making rash, rushed mistakes and move/fire in the correct order to minimize risk to my units. I also want to work on thoroughly reading the scenario card so that I don't miss certain nuances that might be critical in the game. I will also try to review the victory conditions at the start of every turn so as to keep my eye on the ultimate goal instead of riding off half cocked trying to massacre the enemy when it may be counterproductive.

Banzai: Is there an area you think is under-represented in ASL?

EB: Two theaters I think are under-represented. The first is the Finnish wars with Russia, although this has been improving since *Hakkaa Paalle!* Second is the Sino-Japanese theater. The

largest offensive in this theater, equivalent to Bagration or the Bulge has only *one* scenario covering any of its actions. I hope to have a scenario from it for a future North Texas Shoot Out scenario pack.

Banzai: Dice glass or dice tower?

EB: Definitely dice glass. Mine is 6" tall and 5 1/4" in diameter. Now that's a dice glass.

Banzai: Axis Minor scenarios: overrated or underrated?

EB: Is it a fun scenario is a more apt question to me. I've played scenarios where the Axis Minors collapse like a bunch of little girls fresh from Sunday school and others where they tore the Russians a new one. They have their place in the ASL pantheon but they are called Minor for a reason.

Banzai: What ASL products have your attention these days?

EB: I hear *Death to Fascism 2* is coming. I've played half the scenarios in the first pack and highly recommend it. It is excellent. I'm excited to hear a sequel is on its way. Other than that I'm just looking to complete my collection of *Schwerpunkt*, *Friendly Fire*, and *Rally Point*.

I am also always looking to see if MMP has board 41 in stock. Mine took a walk a several years back and it has been temporarily out of stock ever since.

Banzai: What's your outlook on the North Texas Shootout for this year? Details? Anything special planned?

EB: I am currently polling the local and not so local players (I'm open to everyone's input) on what to do this year. I DO NOT want to cancel but a face to face tournament may not be possible. Instead I may have it online via VASL. The advantage will be the ability to draw more players from further afield with no scenario list. The disadvantages will be limited the prizes available for the All Around ASL Player event and no t-shirt. Shipping cost would be problematic. The only special plans will be to have a tournament, even if it takes a month to complete.

Banzai: The North Texas ASL gang produced their first scenario pack last year. Any advice you can give to others looking to do their own pack? Anything on the horizon from NTASL related to releasing another pack?

EB: My advice is give yourself plenty of time to do it right. I gave us 5 years but we did about 90% of the work in the last year. Pace the work so you aren't caught up in a last minute rush. Playtest, playtest, playtest. Try to get a mix of different levels of expertise and play styles to playtest. Parse every word and check every rule reference. My goal was fun and balanced scenarios. I think we got the fun right, only time will tell on balance.

We are planning another pack for 2024. It will be like the last pack and will be called *For a Few Scenarios More*. We already have a scenario in playtest and a couple more with work in the earliest stages. We are always looking for scenario submissions.

Contact me if you are interested in helping in any way (playtest, hint, hint).

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?

EB: My advice to new players is to play the game, don't just watch. Play against experienced players. They will show you the ropes, chains, whips, electrodes,... Often the best way to learn is by having it done to you. You just need to know Chapter A and B to get started and they can be subtly difficult by themselves. Don't distract yourself with other chapters until needed. Most importantly play the game. VASL is full of players to learn from. Attend local game days as well. Not only will you improve your ASL skills, you will make new friends.

To attract and retain members, clubs need to have someone ready and willing to work with new players. Set expectations. New players shouldn't expect to win regularly but those occasional victories are especially sweet. Use social media like Gamesquad forums or even, eeeww, Facebook to gain group exposure. Get on the Central Texas email list and include them in your ASL communications. Go to tournaments outside your area. I've met local players at other events. I travelled 1200 miles and met a player who lived just 20 miles from me. Most importantly, make sure to let everyone know when and where you meet. Don't be judgmental if players don't make it all the time, they may have real life issues that are more important than ASL. Just be there for them when they can play.

Banzai: What were your worst and best runs of luck?

EB: My worst run of luck had to be in J35 *Siam Sambal* in an ASLOK mini. Everything I fired broke. My 81mm mortar fired at a kill stack in the jungle. Boxcars. My 50mm mortar fired. Boxcars. My 75mm ART fired. Boxcars. My air support arrived with the Vichy lined up marching down the road. I make the spotting check, every hex of the strafing run loaded with targets. First attack DR. Boxcars, airplane recalled. I fixed the 81mm. First shot. Boxcars. I took pictures of two sets of 4 DRs. Each totalled over 40. The lowest of the 8 rolls was a 9. I couldn't fire without breaking something, rarely passed a morale check, and once broken couldn't rally. I wasn't sure who was laughing harder in the end, me, my opponent, or anyone watching.

My best run of luck was probably in J105 *Borodino Train Station* on VASL. I was the Russians and thought the game was lost as the last German turn was coming to an end but decided to play it out. There were 4 melees to be resolved before my last turn. All 1:1 for me. I won all 4 including two with snake eyes. The resulting leaders would enable one squad to move far enough to be worth VP and a battle hardened engineer squad to move CX adjacent to the German squad covering the road I had to cross with MGs. I needed a 1 to smoke this key location and I got it. When my first squad moved onto the road, the Germans fired the first MG. He rolled doubles, cowered, left no FL nor could he fire further than my evil engineers who had just smoked him from an adjacent hex. I had enough troops in position to

casually walk across the road for the win. We were both wondering what just happened. A supposed guaranteed German win had just changed into a Russian victory.

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

EB: At my current rate of play I have a hundred years of unplayed scenarios. When would I have time for anything else except a game or two of *Bang!* at the Texas Team Tournament? The last non-ASL wargame I played had to be Victory Games' *Central America* decades ago. My friend and I were playing "what if" the Sandinistas had a full out invasion of Honduras. After turns that were equal a week of real battle it was so one sided it was boring, so we ad libbed. We figured by now the Americans should have a full Carrier task force in position to intercede. The war was over the next day as the USA controlled the skies, destroying anything that moved while the Marine division had sliced across from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico behind the Sandinistas.

Banzai: What are your other interests outside of gaming?

EB: I am active in Toastmasters, a leadership and public speaking organization, in which I have achieved their highest honor, Distinguished Toastmaster. For five years I have volunteered to facilitate a Toastmasters youth leadership program at my church's school. The impact on the students has been extremely rewarding. If you want to improve your speaking ability, Toastmasters can help you.

Banzai: Any final comments to wrap up?

EB: Roll low but more importantly, have fun. It is still only a game, albeit the best game.

RULES TIP

During the enemy MPh, a squad possessing a MG fires only the SW at a target. The MG is then marked with a First Fire marker, but the squad is not. Then later, the squad uses its inherent firepower and the MG to engage a target that is farther than the closest KEU. A couple of things to note in this situation; first, the MG would suffer sustained fire penalties since it has already first fired, but more importantly since it is using Subsequent First Fire the MG is restricted to firing at a target at or closer than the closest KEU. So while the rules don't call for the squad's FP to be halved and it could fire it's inherent FP at a unit further away than the closest KEU, if it wants to include the MG in its attack it will be restricted to firing at the closest KEU. And even though the squad is not under a First Fire marker, if it fires the MG as a part of its attack, the squad will be marked "Final Fire" after the attack, along with the MG.

SK CORNER: NOVICES ON AFVS - PART IV



Peter Di Cioccio

Novices with Learner's Permits

Advanced Squad Leader is a difficult game without using Armored Fighting Vehicles. Adding AFVs to a scenario complicates gameplay, due to the versatility and complexity of these powerful game pieces.

Too many gun platforms

An easy mistake to make is to envision an AFV as a highly mobile gun. A novice would just find a good spot for an AFV and just use the main armament to blast a target each turn. Although effective in certain situations, using an AFV in this manner every time is not using them to their full potential. What an experienced player could do, is to start the AFVs move, and use the smoke dispenser strategically. Then, it could move on to be adjacent to an enemy squad, stop, and shoot with point blank fire. Afterwards, the AFV could roll up on an enemy AFV, and with an adjacency bonus, have a pretty good chance of destroying the enemy AFV.

No coordination with infantry

Infantry and AFVs can be used together as a team to achieve goals and victory conditions. Coordinating these pieces on the board isn't easy, and experience is needed to progress. Depending on the scenario, an attacker on the first turn might attempt placing smoke in the prep fire phase to add cover for the attacker's infantry movement. Since AFVs move farther than infantry, they can catch up on subsequent turns. Meanwhile, the attacker's infantry can help clear the way for the AFVs to move forward with less risk of destruction.

Dos, don'ts and do-overs

Novice players may think their AFV is worthless if the main armament is broken. There's a one in six chance that a repair attempt will result in permanently broken main armament. Often there are other uses for an AFV with a broken main armament. An experienced player could reposition the AFV to cut off the opponent's rout paths. An AFV equipped with a smoke dispenser could use that to dispense smoke in strategic locations. An AFV with machine guns could continue to attack with them, or use them for interdiction purposes.

Experienced players will sometimes use special ammunition to get two attempts at a hit. If a low dice roll is needed, a second roll gives another chance for a hit, although the special ammunition would be depleted. Experienced players can perform surprising tactics with AFVs. An experienced player could risk a bog check to go through a woods hex in an effort to avoid fire from a gun. Another tactic would be to drive an AFV into an enemy squad's hex to prevent it from firing outside of its hex at other infantry.

Conclusion

Don't try to improve in all areas at once. Focus on one aspect of play until competency, or mastering, then move on to the next. Recognizing your weaknesses is the crucial first step.

CLUB NOTES

Lunch Gatherings

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 or better yet join our email group. You can post a message at 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!